

T H E

AMERICAN PREACHER;

O R, A

COLLECTION OF SERMONS

FROM SOME OF THE

MOST EMINENT PREACHERS,

NOW LIVING,

IN THE UNITED STATES,

O F

DIFFERENT DENOMINATIONS

IN THE

CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED.

VOLUME I.

ELIZABETH-TOWN, (NEW-JERSEY)

PRINTED BY SHEPARD KOLLOCK, FOR THE EDITORS,
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M.DCC.XCI.

P R E F A C E.

TO THOSE, who have seen the plan and circular letter sent abroad for the execution of this work, little information will be necessary; but for the information of those, who have not seen them, it may not be improper, or out of place, to say—that the following were the objects in view, and those which were published as the foundation and intention of the work.

“ I. To bring into public view many excellent discourses now in manuscript, promising great benefit to the interests of Religion.

“ II. To unite in one work some of the best performances of the day, as a specimen of the pulpit talents of the time.

“ III. By uniting the several most important religious denominations in one work, to open the door for the more extensive exercise of CHRISTIAN CHARITY among CHRISTIAN BRETHERN.

“ IV. To afford Christian families a compendium of Christian instruction.

“V. To prevent the farther importation of printed Sermons, by encouraging the publications of our own country.”

SUCH were the real, and, we trust, justifiable reasons, by which the public were invited to encourage the plan.

BESIDES the influence the plan itself might be supposed to claim, it was supported by the following recommendation.

“HAVING *duly considered the plan of the*
 “AMERICAN PREACHER, *now offered for*
 “*the approbation of the public, we take the*
 “*liberty of signifying our concurrence in the*
 “*same: not doubting but it may well execute*
 “*the objects it proposes.*”

WILLIAM LIVINGSTON, *Governor of*
the State of New-Jersey.

GEORGE CLINTON, *Governor of the*
State of New-York.

WILLIAM SAMUEL JOHNSON, *President*
of Columbia College, and one of the Se-
nators of the United States.

ELIAS BOUDINOT, *L. L. D. Member*
of Congress.”

THE success of the plan and circular letter, is sufficiently testified by the existence

of the work in its present form, as well as by the respectable list of subscribers who have supported it.

It is not pretended that all the preachers of the Gospel in the United States, who are justly entitled to distinction, both for the purity of their doctrines, and elegance in style; are among the number of those who have supported this work: but we believe, that those who appear in the following pages, will be pronounced to have well supported the cause they were so indulgent as to undertake.

SUCH has been the reception of our plan in the present instance, that we feel ourselves justified in announcing to the public, a FOURTH VOLUME; and, in a word, a SUCCESSION of volumes, so long as the present disposition to encourage the work shall continue.

IN support of this plan we plead an inclination, more fully, to execute the objects just now recited, as giving origin to the work: and we add, a desire:

I. To form such a collection of discourses, as may amount to a system of Christian faith and practice.

II. BY this system to raise an opposition to error and heresy of every kind.

III. To direct the present prevailing disposition to liberality in matters of religion, into a proper channel; and open the door for Christian communion, upon principles ACKNOWLEDGED and UNDERSTOOD.

IV. To lay a foundation for the universal agreement of the Christian Church, when the high prospects of futurity shall be unfolded.

WE pretend not to a spirit of prophecy, but find a willingness to hazard a conjecture, that, under the supreme and superintending providence of God, some such small beginnings or dawnings of light, may, eventually, be considered as announcing the approach of MERIDIAN DAY.

WE are not backward to say, that such religious union, and influence as this work labors to accomplish, will add no small DIGNITY and SUPPORT to the POLITICAL INTERESTS of our country. To the influence of law, it will add the energy of conscience and moral duty; to the subject, it will administer safety and protection from the encroachments of arbitrary power; and to

all under its influence, will shed the richest of CIVIL and SOCIAL blessings.*

WITH the deepest veneration, we DEDICATE our labors, and those of our brethren, to the GOOD PROVIDENCE of ALMIGHTY GOD, and to the PATRONAGE of the PIOUS of every denomination, into whose hands this work may come—trusting, that those who favor it, will, in the perusal, find their

* “ A transient view of those states and kingdoms, which have made the most striking figure in the history of the world, and which have been most renowned for the felicity of their government, will convince us that Religion was by them, always, considered as a matter of great importance to CIVIL SOCIETY.

“ The greatest politicians, and most celebrated legislators of antiquity, depended much on this, to give sanction to their laws, and make them operate with vigor and facility.”

REESE: *On the Influence of Religion in Civil Society.*

“ Our holy Religion, by regulating and composing the passions, enlightening and exalting the mind, and purifying and meliorating the heart, conduces in a high degree to the peace and well-being of social life: It makes good men—from thence, the transition is easy and natural to regular citizens and obedient subjects. “ Where private virtue cannot be found, it is in vain to look for public: and laws are of little efficacy without good example.”

Governor PATTERSON'S *Answer to the Congratulatory Address of the Presbytery of New-Brunswick.*

“ Another important consequence of this discovery, is an enlarged liberality of sentiment among men. The liberality to which I refer, is discernable in the spirit of religious toleration, which spreads like a flood over the face of the earth. This toleration, when it becomes universal, cannot but accomplish matters of the highest importance to the WORLD. Truth and reason will then burst with irresistible energy from the dark clouds of superstition and bigotry—dispel the mists of error and absurdity, and bring the GREAT FAMILY OF THE WORLD, to an uniformity of religious belief and worship.”

ALFRED: *On the Progress of true Principles of Freedom, and good Government.*

attention amply rewarded; and, in the end, enjoy the high prospects it permits them to entertain.

WE return our grateful acknowledgments to those REVEREND GENTLEMEN who have contributed to the execution of this work thus far—not doubting, that the contemplation of having added something to the support of the great truths of the gospel—of having administered instruction to the ignorant, warning to the impious, and edification to the saints—but above all, the contemplation of having laid a foundation for the progress, unity, and perfection of the kingdom of the Redeemer, will afford higher reward for their services, than it is in our power to give.

In behalf of the interests of this work,
 subscribe
 to the cause of truth, a friend,
 and to the public,
 a devoted servant—

DAVID AUSTIN.

Elizabeth-Town,
 Jan. 1, 1791.

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O N

MINISTERIAL CHARACTER AND DUTY.

B Y

JOHN WITHERSPOON, D. D. L. L. D.

Col. N. C. P.

2 C O R. iv. 13.

We also believe, and therefore speak.

TO understand what ought to be the character, and what principles should animate the conduct of a Minister of the Gospel, cannot be without profit, even to a private Christian. It will teach him whom to prefer, when he is called, in providence, to make a choice. It will teach him to hold such in reputation for their office-sake, and to improve the privilege of a regular gospel ministry, if he himself is favored with it. And I think it must incline him to make daily supplication to the Lord of the harvest, to send forth faithful laborers into his harvest.

But though there were no such general advantage to be derived from it, my particular charge, and the very aspect of this audience, would easily justify me in making this, for once, the immediate subject of discourse.

Now if we would know the character of a faithful Minister, we cannot better, or more immediately reach our purpose, than by looking into the character, and observing the conduct, and springs of action, of the Apostles of our Lord, who received their commissions immediately from himself, and were not only the first, but the best and most successful Ministers, that ever were employed in the church of Christ.

The Apostle Paul, whose call was so singular, and whose labors were so distinguished, has, in his Epistles to the several churches, planted or watered by him, given us a great light into the chief aims he had in the exercise of the ministry. In this chapter, and the preceding part of this Epistle, he shews the Corinthians, with what visible faithfulness and sincerity he had acted, and what diligence he had used in promoting their eternal happiness.

To save time, I forbear going through the connection of his discourse and only observe, that in the words of our text, he shows what kept him faithful and influenced him to so much diligence in the work to which he was called, by alluding to an expression in the 116th Psalm. It is written, *I have believed, therefore have I spoken. We also believe, and therefore speak.* In this he intimates, that our inward persuasion of the great truths of the everlasting Gospel, could not but have a powerful influence upon him and others, to press the important message, and watch over the souls of those committed to their charge.

In discoursing further at this time, I intend to confine myself to this single truth, which may be easily

deduced from the text: That one of the most essentially necessary, and the most extensively useful qualifications of a good Minister, is, that he be a good man, that he have a firm belief of that Gospel he is called to preach, and a lively sense of religion upon his own heart. After I shall have explained and confirmed this observation, I will conclude with some practical reflections.

Though I have mentioned real religion as one of the most essentially necessary qualifications, I am not ignorant, that taking the words in a strict sense, gifts are more necessary to the being of the ministry than even grace itself. To make the efficacy of the ordinances to depend upon the inward state of the administrator, is a Popish error, and is expressly guarded against by the Assembly of Divines, in our shorter Catechisms, in the following words: *The Sacraments, and it is equally true of every other ordinance, become effectual to Salvation, not from any virtue in them, or in him that doth administer them, but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of his spirit in them, that by faith receive them.*

But some degree of capacity is evidently necessary in the most absolute sense. A man who is altogether void of knowledge and utterance, or who is deaf and dumb, may be a saint, but cannot be a Minister. This concession, however, takes nothing from the force of the observation, that real Religion is of the greatest importance, and most absolutely necessary to the *faithful* discharge of a Minister's sacred trust. That I may set this in as clear and strong a light as I

am able, let me intreat your attention to the following observations :

I. Real Religion in a Minister will make him knowing, and able for his work. It is necessary for any one who intends himself for the office of the ministry, by diligent study, and the use of those means, with which God in his Providence hath furnished him, to improve his understanding and acquire a stock of knowledge, that he may be a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. In this he can have no such incitement as concern for his Master's Glory. Nay, he that is truly religious, is taught of God the best of Master's, and will have some of his most profitable lessons from his own experience.

Let me the rather intreat your attention to this, that those who are most apt to disparage piety are also apt to speak in terms of high approbation on the subject of literature and science—Observe, therefore, that true religion serves both to give a man that knowledge which is necessary to a Minister, and to direct and turn into its proper channel the knowledge which he may otherwise acquire. It is an approved maxim in every science, that practical and experimental knowledge far exceeds that which is merely speculative; at least, tho' the last may make the prettiest show, the first, is by much to be preferred for use. Any wise man, if he was to go a dangerous voyage, would readily prefer as his pilot, one, who had much experience, and had sailed often that way himself, to one, who had studied navigation in the most perfect

manner ashore. So, my brethren, every man who regards his soul would choose for his *spiritual* guide, one, who appears to have the wisdom to save his own, and would expect by him to be best directed, how to avoid the rocks and shelves in his passage, thro' this dangerous and tempestuous ocean of life.

But if this maxim holds true in other science, it holds yet more strongly in Religion, which cannot be truly known unless it be felt. There is an inseparable connexion between faith and practice, truth and duty; and therefore he that is a stranger to the one, is ignorant of the other. I am not insensible that a bad man may espouse, and plead for a great part of the system of divine truth; but as he cannot cordially embrace it, so I am inclined to think that he never truly understands it. The Apostle Paul declares, that it is only by the Spirit of God which is given to every real Christian, and more especially to every faithful Minister, that a man is enabled to treat rightly of Divine Things, *Now we have received, not the Spirit of the World, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God; which things we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them for they are spiritually discerned.* As the real Christian from that character is best disposed to seek after, so he is by the same means best fitted to improve and apply his knowledge of spiritual things. This will appear, if we consider what ought to be the

great work of a Minister. He hath to do chiefly with the hearts and consciences of his people. His business is to convince the ungodly; to awaken the secure; to enlighten the ignorant; to direct and strengthen the weak in the faith, and in general as a wise physician, to administer the medicine proper to the various conditions and disorders of his hearers. Now it must, at first sight, appear, that he who is a stranger to the power of godliness, and knows nothing of the spiritual life himself, must be utterly unfit for discerning how it thrives, or assisting and promoting it in others. That man must surely be most powerful in searching, and most skilful in guiding the consciences of others, who has been accustomed to examine and direct his own.

I only farther observe upon this particular, that true Religion will purify, and direct into its proper channel, the knowledge he may otherwise acquire. It is a great mistake to think, sound learning is an enemy to Religion, and to suppose that an ignorant ministry is the best or safest. There is no branch of human knowledge of which a Divine may not be the better, or which a good man will not improve to the glory of God and the good of others; tho' some of them are more important than others; and it is necessary to give to any of them, only such proportion of our time, as is consistent with our great and principal aim. Now true Religion is the great preservative against mistake or abuse of any kind on this subject. A bad man is apt to study, merely to gratify his own fancy; and there is a false luxury and delicacy in feeding the mind as well as the body. A bad

man is also exceedingly prone to intellectual pride and self-sufficiency; than which, there is not a vice more dangerous in itself, or more contrary to the character of a Minister of the New Testament. But he who is sanctified by Divine Grace, as he has every motive to diligence in acquiring knowledge, so the single purpose to which he will wish to apply it, is to serve God in the Gospel of his Son.

II. Real Religion in a Minister will make him happy and chearful, ready and willing to do his duty. There is a great difference between the prompt, and speedy obedience of a servant who loves his master and his work, and the reluctant labor of him who only deceives him, that he may eat of his bread. A truly pious man undertakes the office of the ministry from love to God, with a view to promote his glory, and what he hath counted his interest in the world: viz. the welfare of the souls of men. An unholy Minister undertakes this employment only as a trade to earn by, and has it at least as his highest aim to promote his own worldly advantage. It is easy to see in what a different manner these different persons will act, and in what different light they will view the sacred duties of their function. He who truly believes the Gospel and loves its Author, will reckon it his highest honor when he is called to recommend it to the belief of others. He will be apt to teach, and will find a pleasure in carrying his message; besides the reward he expects from him who employs him, and will undergo with chearfulness every fatigue he is subjected to, in the execution of his office. On the other hand, he who is actuated by a contrary

principle, tho' he is obliged, that he may raise his wages, in some sort to do his duty; yet how heavily must it go on, how tedious and burthensome must it be, both in preparation and performance? He will count his service at the Altar, and his work among his people, as a toil and drudgery, and reckon all that redeemed time that he can save for himself, from the duties of his office.

Perhaps it may be thought that there lies a strong objection against this observation from experience; as it appears that such Ministers as have least of Religion, commonly go most lightly under the charge, and are far from feeling any burthen in what is committed to them; whereas the most pious and faithful Ministers seem to have a weight upon their spirits, and such a concern for the salvation of their people, as cannot but take much from their chearfulness in the work to which they are called. In answer to this, observe, that an unfaithful Minister is not easy and chearful because his work is agreeable to him, but because he takes as little of it as may be, and seeks his pleasure more than his duty. Certain it is, that the work of the ministry must be irksome and uneasy to him that believes not, except so far as he makes it subservient to ambition, and displays his own talents when he should be feeding his people's souls. This I confess, which the Apostle justly calls preaching ourselves, may be abundantly gratifying to the most corrupt heart. On the other hand, that concern for his people which is upon the heart of every faithful pastor, is far from being inconsistent with the most solid peace and desirable pleasure arif-

ing from the discharge of his duty. It is like the exercise of pity and compassion to the distressed, in him, who is acting for their relief, which, though in some sense painful, is yet accompanied with the approbation of God, and conscience, as flowing from a rightly disposed mind, and therefore to be cherished and cultivated rather than suppressed. There is a time for every good man to mourn, and a time to rejoice, and perhaps the one is even more salutary than the other; for we are told, that God will appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, *to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oyl of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.*

III. Real Religion in a Minister will make him faithful, and impartial, in the discharge of his trust. The God in whose presence we stand, and in whose name we speak, is no respecter of persons, and neither should we be in doing his work. There is commonly a great variety of persons, of different stations and of different characters, committed to the inspection of a Minister; the pleasing or displeasing of whom, has a considerable influence in his worldly ease and interest. This is a great temptation to be unfaithful, and often leads to speak unto them *smooth things*, and *prophecy deceit*; or at least, not to deal with all that freedom and impartiality, that his duty to God requires. In every unregenerate man, worldly interest in one shape or another, either vanity or gain, is the supreme motive of action: And therefore, as most men are impatient of reproof, it cannot be supposed, that an un sanctified Minister

will venture to provoke their displeasure, or to gall them with unacceptable truths. The favor of the great, or the applause of the multitude, he certainly will seek, more than the edification of any. On the other hand, he who truly fears God and believes what he teaches, will act with faithfulness and boldness. He will remember that if he seeks to please men, he cannot be the servant of Christ. He will therefore no farther obtain, and indeed no farther wish to obtain their favor, than as a diligent discharge of his duty approves him to their consciences in the sight of God; or forces the approbation of the impartial, notwithstanding the resentment of particular offenders. It is only the fear of God, can deliver us from the fear of man. I do not pretend that all who fear God, are wholly delivered from it: but surely, bad men, must be far more under the government of this sinful principle. The one may fail occasionally, the other is corrupted wholly. There are two reasons which incline me particularly to insist on that faithfulness, which can only flow from true piety.

1. That preaching, in order to be useful; must be very particular, and close, in the application. General truths and abstract reasoning have little or no influence upon the hearers, as the ignorant cannot, and the wise will not, apply them to themselves.

2. The other reason is, that private admonition, and personal reproof, are a great part of a Minister's duty, and a duty that cannot be performed by any man, who hath not a steady regard to the presence and command of that God, who hath set him to watch for the souls of his people, as one that must give an account:

IV. Real Religion in a Minister, will make him active, and laborious in his work. Diligence is absolutely necessary, to the right discharge of the pastoral duties, whether public or private. It requires no small attention and labor, to seek out fit and acceptable words, as the preacher expresses it, to stir up the attention of the inconsiderate, to awaken secure, and convince obstinate sinners, to unmask the covered hearts of hypocrites, to set right the erring, and encourage the fearful. An unbelieving Minister, must be careless and slothful. As he is unconcerned about the success of his work; he cannot have any great concern about the manner of performance. But he, who believes the unspeakable importance of what he is employed about, both to himself, and to his people, cannot fail to be diligent. He knows that he himself must answer to God, for the care he has taken of the souls committed to his charge; and that if he does not faithfully warn the wicked to turn from their ways, their blood will be required at his hand.

Oh! my brethren, what a striking consideration is this, to suppose ourselves interrogated by the Supreme Judge, concerning every sinner under our charge? Did you earnestly warn this unhappy soul, by earnest exhortations in public, and by serious affectionate expostulations in private, to consider his ways? It is an easy thing, by a partial, or cursory performance of our duty, to screen ourselves from the censure of our fellow-men; but to stand at the judgment seat of Christ, and answer there for our diligence, is a more awful trial.

Will not also a concern for his people's interest, animate a pious Minister to diligence? If he is truly pious, as he loves God, he loves his brother also. The Apostle Paul says, *Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.* If a man in good earnest, believes, that everlasting misery must be the portion of all who die in an unrenewed state; what pains will he not take, to prevent sinners from going to that place of torment?

One who could see a fellow-creature, in the rage of a fever, rushing to the brink of a precipice, and not restrain him, would fall under lasting infamy. Must not the same compassion move the heart of a serious person, who sees his fellow-sinners, going blindfold to the pit of perdition?

It is their not believing these things, that makes them so fearless in sinning; if you truly believe them, will you not make an effort to alarm them? There are no motives like these to diligence—he that believes, will certainly speak.

V. In the last place, real Religion, will make a Minister successful in his work. This it does, both as it fits him for doing his duty to his people, which has been illustrated above, and as it adds to his precepts, *the force of his example.* First, it makes him successful as it fits him for his duty. It is true indeed, that God only can give the blessing upon a Minister's labors, and that he can save by many, or by few, by the weakest, as well as by the ablest instrument: yet we see from experience, that in all ordinary cases, he proportions the success, to the propriety, or sufficien-

cy of the means. Neither is there any surer mark, that God intends effectual benefit to any part of the world, or the church, than when he raises, and commissions men, eminently qualified, to plead his cause. Therefore, real piety, even in this respect, contributes to a Minister's success. If diligence in all other things produces success, it must be so also in the ministry. If he that lays out his ground with the greatest judgment, prepares and dresses it with the greatest care, has the most plentiful crop: if the shepherd that waits most diligently upon his flock, feeds them in the best pasture, and leads them to the safest shelter, has the most increase; then that Minister, who does his duty most wisely, and most powerfully, will also see most of the fruit of his labors.

But real, and unaffected, yet visible seriousness, has also its own proper additional influence on a Minister's success. An apparent and visible impression upon the speaker's mind, of what he says, gives it an inexpressible weight with the hearers. There is a piercing heat, a penetrating force, in that which flows from the heart, which distinguishes it not only from the coldness of indifference, but also, from the false fire of enthusiasm or vain glory. Besides all this, the example of a pious Minister, is a constant instruction to his people. It ratifies his doctrine, while he not only charges them to do what he says, but to be what he is. This will receive much illustration from its contrary.

A Minister who has a careless, untender walk, defeats, by his life, the intent of his preaching. Though in reason, it cannot justify any one in disobeying.

wholesome instructions ; that the instructor despises them himself ; yet it is one of the most common excuses men make for themselves, and few excuses seem to set their consciences more at ease. Loose and careless persons, think themselves quite at liberty to despise the reproofs of their pastor, if, while he teaches others, he teaches not himself.

Nay, not only is it thus with the profane, but even those who have the greatest regard for Religion, are not so much affected with the same truths, when spoken by one they think indifferent about them, as when spoken by one, who seems to feel what he speaks, and who lives as he teaches.

Experience greatly confirms the whole of this reasoning—for wherever an eminently pious Minister has lived, and labored long, there is commonly to be found the most knowing, serious, sober-minded, and judicious people ; nay, the very memory of such a Minister, is often long continued, after he is gone, and his example is proposed by his hearers, to their children's children.

From all these considerations, I conclude, that the most important qualification of a good Minister, is, to be *a believing preacher*, and that, if he saves his own soul, he will be the probable mean of saving them that hear him.

I proceed now, to make some improvement of the subject.

Reverend fathers and brethren,

As we would wish our people to do, let us take heed how we hear, and make a faithful application

to ourselves, of what hath been said upon the subject. Let it engage us to a serious examination of ourselves, lest while we preach the gospel to others, we ourselves should be reprobates. This ought to be the subject of our frequent and serious thoughts, for several reasons. We are in danger of thinking ourselves too easily safe, by comparing that outward regularity, to which our office itself, even from secular motives, obliges us, with the licentious extravagance of profane sinners. We are in danger of mistaking our frequent thinking and speaking of the things of God, in the way of our calling, for an evidence of true Religion, in ourselves. We may also, perhaps, mistake those gifts with which God hath furnished us, for the benefit of his own people, as the fruits of the spirit, and of gracious dispositions in our hearts. A Minister, is as much liable to self-deceit as others, and in some respects, more so. We have therefore much need, often to make trial of our state, as well as to give all diligence, to make our calling and election sure.

But let us beware of imagining, that this discourse is only applicable to such, as have no real faith in Christ. God forbid! that there were any Minister among us, a complete unbeliever, counting the Gospel a fable. But faith, and every other gracious disposition grafted upon it, are capable of many degrees of improvement and strength; and in proportion to the strength of our faith, and the impression we have of divine things, will be our diligence, and consequently our success, in the work of the ministry. Let us therefore impress our minds, with a more and

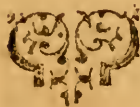
more lively sense, of the important truths which we teach and hear. Let us not starve ourselves, while we are feeding others: but study to arrive at a greater degree of love to God, and delight in him; a greater conformity to his blessed image, in purity of heart, and integrity of life. Let us in a special manner, study to attain to more and more intimate communion with God in secret, which is the sign of our dependance upon him, and the very exercise of love to him, which is the mean of constancy, and the source of joy in Religion.

Above all, let us set our affections upon the things that are above, where our Redeemer sits, at his father's right hand. As our profession is to be pilgrims, and strangers in the earth, to live by faith, and not by sight; let us study, to raise our hopes of, and desire after, the heavenly inheritance. By this, we shall not only believe, but know, and feel the value of true Religion, which cannot fail to make us diligent in seeking the good of others.

Oh! my brethren, what reason have we to be inwardly ashamed at the weakness of our faith, and the coldness of our love, as they shew themselves, by our indifference in the duties of our office? We are often ready, both to complain, and wonder that our hearers are so little affected with the most awful considerations: that they can hear with indifference of everlasting happiness, and set without fear under the denunciations of eternal wrath: that we cannot persuade them, it is of importance to think what shall become of them forever. But is it not also to be wondered at, that we ourselves can often speak of

these things, with so little emotion? Can we ever be sufficiently affected, with the danger of our hearers, when we consider, that we must either save them by convincing and converting them now, or deliver our own souls, by witnessing, justifying, and perhaps pleading for their condemnation at the last day? However plain and simple these truths are, of the final judgment of ministers and people, they are quite unfathomable in their meaning and importance to both. It is strange that we can think of them without the deepest concern, or even speak of them without tears.

Let us pray that the Lord would increase our faith, that believing we may speak, and that our speech may be with such efficacy, by the blessing of God, as many sinners may be thereby brought to everlasting life; that we may approve ourselves to him that sent us; and that when Christ, the chief shepherd shall appear, we may receive a Crown of Glory that fadeth not away.





S E R M O N I I.

MAN IN HIS NATURAL STATE.

B Y

JOHN WITHERSPOON, D. D. L. L. D.

Col. N. C. P.

R E V. iiii. 17.

*Because thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods,
and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou
art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind,
and naked.*

IN order to preach the Gospel with success, it is necessary that we should begin, by establishing the great and fundamental truths, on which all the rest are built, and to which they constantly refer. Nay, it is necessary, that we should often look back to these, and see that we be not off the foundation, or that it be not weakly, or imperfectly laid. Of this sort, I take the guilt, misery, and weakness of our nature to be; and therefore have chosen the words now read, as the subject of discourse, in which the spirit of God reproves the sufficiency, and self-righteousness of the church of Laodicea.

Because thou sayest I am rich, and increased in goods, &c. I suppose you will all easily understand, that the words are figurative, and are spoken entirely, with a view to the spiritual state of that Church. In this light, let us consider what is precisely their meaning.

We may either suppose, that this charge is brought against the church of Laodicea, because there were many there, under the profession of the Gospel, who were notwithstanding, still in a natural unrenewed state—strangers to the power of Religion; of which, their being thus unhumbled, and insensible of their guilt, and misery, was the evidence; and for which, the remedy is prescribed, in the following words: *I counsel thee to buy of me gold, tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see.*

Or we may suppose, that this reproof, was in a great measure applicable to them all, in general; believers and unbelievers; the best of them, being exceedingly prone to trust in themselves, that they were righteous; instead of that humble dependance on the merit, and grace of their Redeemer, which ought not only to be the refuge of the sinner, but the confidence of the saint. And there is no question, that this is a proper caution to professing Christians in every age, to beware of splitting on the rock of self-sufficiency.

But as this disposition reigns in the heart of every one, that is yet at a distance from God—is the foundation of their security and impenitence, and is what they must be brought off from, before they can be reconciled to God; it is for their benefit, that I chiefly design this discourse, though it may also be useful, and shall be in part applied to the children of God. It is an affecting thought; when pursued to its consequences; yet alas! it is unquestionably true, that in every assembly, *such as this*, of professing Christians, there are not a few; who are in *the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity*, under the wrath of God, and liable to the condemning sentence of his law; and at the same time; that the far greatest part of them are ignorant of it, and know not, that they are *wretched, and poor, and blind, and naked*.

In discoursing farther upon this subject therefore, I shall

I. Endeavor to prove and illustrate this truth: that all mankind are by nature in a state of sin and misery, under the bondage of corruption, and liable to the wrath of God.

II. I shall briefly shew you, that being brought to a lively sense, and genuine conviction of this, is the first, and a necessary step, to the saving knowledge of God, in Christ---And in the *last place*, shall make some practical improvement of the subject.

I. In the first place then, I am to prove and illustrate this truth ; that all mankind are by nature in a state of sin and misery, under the bondage of corruption, and liable to the wrath of God. What is said in this passage of the Laodiceans, is universally true, of the posterity of Adam. Unless an inward and essential change has been wrought upon them by the grace of God ; they are *wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*. It is also true of them, as well as the Laodiceans, that they know it not ; but vainly presume themselves to be rich, and increased with goods, and to have need of nothing. If these two things are jointly true of many of you my hearers, there is nothing in which you can have so great a concern : therefore, let me earnestly beseech your most serious attention, to what shall be said : as the success of this conviction is necessary, to your understanding, or profiting by any other part of divine truth, as I shall afterwards shew you.

The proof of the truth here asserted, can be only of two kinds. 1. From scripture, which is the testimony of God declaring it. 2. From the visible state of the world, and our own experience, finding it to be so.

I. That all mankind are by nature in a state of sin and misery, appears from the express, and repeated testimony of the word of God. And this testimony we have, not only in particular passages, carrying the truth, but in the strain and spirit of

the whole, and the several dispensations of Divine Providence there recorded; which are all of them, built upon this supposition, and intended to remedy this universal evil.

See what God declares: Gen. vi. 5. *And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart, was only evil continually. And again, the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.* We may take the psalmist David's testimony of himself, as a sample, of the rest of mankind; and indeed he plainly intimates, that it is a common calamity. *Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Behold! I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.*

We may take also the testimony of the Apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, which is the more full to our present purpose: that as he had never been at Rome, he is there laying the foundation of religion in general, and the Christian dispensation in particular, by a clear, and explicit proof, of the need the world had of a Saviour, from its universal corruption and depravity. See then what he says---*What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wise, for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin. As it is written, there is none righteous, no not one.* And again---*Now we know that what things soever the law saith: it saith to them who under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may be-*

come guilty, before God.---For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

You may also see, that the Apostle traces this disorder, to its very source---*Wherefore as by one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*

I shall add but one express scripture testimony more.---*And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.*

But besides the particular passages of scripture, positively declaring this truth, the whole frame and contexture of the scriptures, and all the dispensations of Divine Providence recorded in them, are a proof of the same thing. Man is every where considered as in a fallen and sinful state. Every thing that is prescribed to him, and every thing that is done for him, goes upon that supposition. It is not one man, or a few men, that are in scripture called to repentance, but all without exception. Now repentance is only the duty of a sinner. An innocent person cannot repent; he has nothing to grieve for in his heart, or to forsake in his life. It is also proper to observe, that one of the scripture characters of God is, *Merciful and gracious, slow to anger, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin.* Now, he could not be to us a forgiving God, and there would be no need that he should be revealed under that character, unless we were sinners, that stood in need of pardon. Mercy, indeed, is the distinguishing attribute of God, and this can only

have respect to offenders. All the other perfections of God, might be exercised towards pure and holy creatures; but mercy, only towards sinners. He might be a good, holy, just, wise, powerful God, to persons in a state of innocence, but he can shew mercy, only to the guilty.

Do not the dispensations of God's Providence, shew the same thing? He sent the flood, as a testimony of the wickedness of the world, and for the punishment of a guilty race. Remember also the sacrifices, which were appointed, and accepted by God from the beginning of the world. Sacrifices are for atonement, and expiation. They are plainly a substitution in the room of a forfeited life. It is doing violence to common sense, to make them any thing else. The whole Jewish œconomy, which had in it so many sacrifices, so many offerings, so many washings and purifications, does plainly suppose, the person using them, to be infected with sin, or moral pollution. Had not this been the case, they had been extremely absurd, and improper.

But the strongest testimony of all, that God hath given to the guilt, and corruption of mankind, is his sending his own Son into the world, to redeem them by the sacrifice of himself---To what purpose redeem them, if they were not in bondage? Why so costly an expiation, if our lives had not been forfeited to Divine Justice? But that it was for this purpose, that Christ came into the world,

is so plain, from the whole of the scriptures, that I shall select but one passage out of many, to prove it---*Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.*

What is said already on this head, is a full proof from scripture, that man is now, by nature, in a state of sin; that he is also, in consequence of that, in a state of misery, and liable to the wrath of God, is proved by many of the same passages, and by many others---*For the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness---For the wages of sin is death, &c.* But I need not multiply passages to this purpose; for in all God's dispensations, the deserved punishment of sinners, is as evident, as their sinfulness itself. It is indeed fully proved, from the essential perfections of God, particularly his holiness and justice. He is of purer eyes, than that he can behold iniquity. *Evil cannot dwell with him, nor fools, that is, sinners, stand in his sight.*

Is not all this then my brethren, a sufficient proof, from the testimony of God, that man in a natural state, is sinful and miserable? Shall we affirm ourselves to be whole, if he saith we are un-sound? Do we know more than God? Will we not give credit to the fountain of truth? Nor is it any objection to this, that we ourselves know it

not, or are but little sensible of it. One considerable part of the disease, is blindness of understanding: so that we may, and must, till our eyes are opened, be ignorant of our danger---We may think and say, that we are rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing, while we are, *wretched and miserable, and blind and naked.*

2. The same thing appears from the visible state of the world, and our own experience. Unbelievers are apt to hear with indifference and neglect, what they are told from scripture testimony, unless otherwise confirmed to them; and it is with the unbeliever we have now to do. Besides, the establishment of this truth, upon other evidence than that of scripture, ought to have a powerful influence, in inducing men to believe the other truths in scripture, that are connected with and founded upon it. I think it therefore, highly proper, to lay before you what evidence we have of our lost state, from the observation of the world, though the scriptures had been silent. I would likewise recommend to all, what shall be said on this subject, to preserve your faith unshaken, and keep you from blasphemous, unbelieving thoughts, if at any time, you should be tempted to them: since, even unenlightened reason, confirms the foundation of divine truth, and nature, and providence conspire, in preaching the Doctrine of Divine Grace.

Now, doth not our experience, as well as the observation of others, shew us, that we are born in

fin, and conceived in iniquity? May we not say from our own knowledge, that the imaginations of the heart of man, are only evil from his youth, and that continually? Is there not a proneness, and tendency to evil, universally to be observed, in mankind? and a backwardness and aversion to that which is good? Is not this apparent even in children, upon the first dawn of reason in their minds, and the first sight of choice or inclination in their hearts? Surely it must be owned, that in that early period, they are at least *comparatively* innocent—If any among us, is without sin, it must be the youngest; *yet folly is bound in the heart of a child.*—How hard is it to guard them from evil, and to inspire them with good dispositions, even by the wisest, and earliest care, in their instruction? And even after the most successful pains, are there not still many remaining blemishes, through the prevalence of corrupt nature, which shew, that the ground-work itself, was faulty? But on the contrary, how easily do men learn, that which is evil? Do they need to be taught? Is it not enough to give them licence? How just is that description in Jeremiah? *They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.* I am far from denying, that men are improved and forwarded in sin, by instruction and example, as well as in that, which is good: but it is plain, they are far apter scholars, in the first, than in the last; which plainly shews, they are more powerfully disposed to it, by nature. Nay, is it not evident, from the universal experi-

ence, and testimony of those, who act from a principle of Religion; that it is extremely difficult, with all the care they can take, to resist the propensity of nature, to the contrary? And that in the best, it often gets the superiority, when they are off their guard? Is not this an evidence of the depravity and corruption of human nature, and its tendency to evil? Are those who hate sin, often overcome by it, and shall those who love it, presume to say, they are free from it?

If any should ask, how I prove that that course of action, to which human nature is inclined is evil, without the assistance of scripture? I answer, from reason; and that many ways—from its pernicious effects on societies, and private persons; from the testimony of the world in general, when others, than themselves, are concerned, and from the testimony of every man's conscience, in his own case. Who is there, that does not often feel in himself, a powerful tendency to what he cannot but in his heart condemn? Is not his conscience God's vicegerent? and doth not natural religion, as well as the religion of Christ, declare him corrupt? So that I may say with the Apostle Paul, not citing the passage as a proof, but as an illustration and description of the character, and state of natural men---*For when the Gentiles which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law: these having not the law, are a law unto themselves, which shew the work of the law written*

in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts, the mean while, accusing or else excusing one another.

Thus there is as much light remaining with us since the fall, as to shew, that we are out of the way, but not to bring us back to it again.

As a serious consideration of the state of the wicked, may shew us our natural impurity: so it hath been long ago discovered, and confessed by many of the ancient heathens, who never heard of the name of Christ, nor knew of the remedy. These, discerning by nature, the perfectly pure, and holy nature of God, and comparing it with the dispositions prevalent in man, could not reconcile them together; but concluded, that a creature, so corrupt, could not come in that condition, out of the hands of its Creator. This difficulty some of them endeavored to solve, by a state of pre-existence; which bears some resemblance to the true solution, given of it in the holy scripture: viz. the apostacy of our first parents; which entailed a corrupted nature upon their posterity, in which, the light of nature, and revealed truth, seem almost wholly, to coincide.

It is to the same thing that I cannot help attributing the practice, that so universally prevailed over the heathen world, before the coming of Christ, *of offering sacrifices*, to appease the wrath of the Deity, supposed to be offended. That the

custom of sacrificing, prevailed very generally, perhaps universally among the heathen nations, at the greatest distance from, and having no correspondence with each other, is a certain and unquestionable fact. Neither do I see to what cause we can ascribe it, unless to one of these two; either an ancient tradition, from the beginning of the world, and spread with the inhabitants, through the several parts of it, as they separated and peopled it; or to the common condition of human nature, which dictated the same thing, to persons, in such distant places.

If the first of these suppositions is embraced, which indeed I suppose to be the truth, it appears that sacrifices were appointed by God to man, in his fallen state, for the pardon of sin, and that they had reference, to the great propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, upon the cross.

If we prefer the last supposition, it would seem as if the consciousness of guilt, had uniformly prompted men in all ages, and nations, to offer up some atonement for their offences. In both cases, it equally serves, to prove the corruption, and sinfulness of human nature.

Now as what hath been said, plainly proves the impurity of man, in his natural state: so his misery and liableness to punishment, may also be proved; both as a natural consequence of his sinfulness, and even, more plainly, by itself. There is not only a considerable degree of actual misery in

the world, but plain prefages of more to follow it in the world to come. Need I take up much time, in enumerating the feveral miseries, and calamities, incident to human life? Are not oppression and injury from one another, poverty, sickness, pain, and death, the plain fruits of sin, and visible tokens of God's displeasure? Man with some marks of superiority and excellence of nature, is even, by means of his superiority, his knowledge, and foresight of his own sufferings, more miserable, than any other of the creatures, that is equally subject to the stroke of death.

To the whole, I shall only subjoin one consideration more, which is applicable to both parts of the argument---I have often thought, that the *natural terror and fear with which men are possess'd, of the presence of God, or any remarkable token of his power, is nothing else, but an indication of guilt, or an apprehension of wrath.*

You may see some incidents in scripture, from which it is natural to conclude; that when God makes any visible manifestation of his glory, or sends any of his Angels or Ministers from Heaven to Earth; those who are present, are filled with the utmost dread and terror.

Thus in the relation given of God's appearance upon Mount Sinai, it is said: *And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake,* See another example, in Isaiah---*Then said I, woe*

is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips ; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts. And in the New Testament, in the Apostle John---And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.

And is not this always the case, in all ages, that upon any remarkable appearance of an inhabitant of the other world, or even when any such thing is falsely apprehended the inhabitants of this world are filled with extraordinary terror? What is this do you imagine, but consciousness of guilt, and apprehension of vengeance?

Innocence has no enemy, and it has nothing to fear. We are all in much the same case with Adam, immediately after his first transgression; when he heard God's voice in the garden, *he was afraid, and fled, and hid himself---* We read of no such fear possessing him, while he retained his innocence, but as soon as he had sinned, he began to dread an avenging God.

From all this then, I would conclude, that reason accords with scripture, in saying, that *all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*: that man in a natural state, is *wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked.*



S E R M O N I I I .

AN INDUCEMENT TO COME TO CHRIST.

B Y

JOHN WITHERSPOON, D. D. L. L. D.

Col. N. C. P.

R E V. i i i . 17 .

*Because thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods,
and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou
art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind,
and naked.*

HAVING in a former discourse, proved, and illustrated this truth; that all mankind are by nature, in a state of sin and misery, under the bondage of corruption, and liable to the wrath of God:—I proceed now to the *second thing* proposed, which was to shew you, that being brought to a lively sense, and genuine conviction of this, is the first, and a necessary step, to the saving knowledge of God, in Christ.

On this, I shall not need to spend much time, as it is so exceedingly plain, both in itself, and from what hath been already said---It is however neces-

sary to set it clearly before you, in order to lay a foundation, for the improvement of the subject.

If the doctrine of Christ, and of him crucified, proceeds upon the supposition of our sinful, and miserable condition by nature; then surely, it can neither be valued, embraced, nor improved; and indeed, I think hardly understood, by those, who know not this their natural state. What Christ hath done, and promises to do in our behalf, is designed as a remedy, for our distressed condition; and therefore, till the distress is known, the remedy will be set at nought. If a physician should offer his care and skill, for the recovery of a man, who esteemed himself in perfect health, would he not deride the proposal, so long as he continued in that opinion? If any man should offer a charitable supply of clothes and food, to one, who imagined himself immensely rich, and gloried in his riches; would he not look upon it, as the grossest insult?

Just so is the Gospel treated, by all such as see not their misery. What is the substance of the Gospel? 'To you O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men. Behold! I preach to you Christ crucified, a Saviour, suited to your necessities, able to save, to the uttermost, all that come to God through him. He is well fitted to be a mediator, between you, and your offended maker. He hath offered himself up, a sacrifice to the justice of God, for your sins, by the merit of which, you may be saved from deserved and impending

ruin. He offers himself as a guide, to direct your feet in the way of peace---to stand by you in the difficulties and dangers to which you are exposed, and to give you by his communicated strength, a complete victory over all your enemies.'

What reply doth the unconvinced sinner make, to all this? Why he saith, 'I know nothing of this misery you suppose, wherefore then a Saviour? I see no sin, what necessity then, for an atonement? I fear no wrath, therefore will seek for no Intercessor. My eyes are open, therefore I will have no guide. I know of no enemies, and therefore, will not enter into contention with a shadow, or flee, when no man pursueth.'

These my brethren, are either directly, or implicitly, the thoughts of men, in a secure, and unconvinced state; and while they are so, they can see no form, nor comeliness in the Saviour, nor any beauty, that they should desire him.

It is otherwise with the broken in spirit. He sees his own vileness, and unworthiness, and therefore cannot lift his eyes to God, but through the atoning blood of Christ. He fears the *avenger of blood*, and therefore flees to the *city of refuge*---The message of the Gospel, is to him, indeed glad tidings of great joy, and he counts it a faithful saying, and *worthy of all acceptation*.

The justice of this representation, you may see, from what our Saviour himself says, of the end of

his coming. *They that be whole, need not a physician but they that are sick: But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice; for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*

See also the terms of his invitation. *Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

Appetite, and knowlege of necessity, is first required, or supposed, to the bestowing of Gospel blessings---*Ho! everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.*

I shall only add, that we find by the instances recorded in scripture, of such as were converted by the preaching of the Gospel; that their conversion, took its rise, from conviction of sin---*Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the Apostles, men and brethren, what shall we do? See also the instance of the jailor---Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas: And brought them out, and said sirs, what must I do to be saved?*

Repentance unto life, and the return of the sinner to God, proceeds from the same cause, in every age. Who are the persons who believingly apply to Christ for the pardon of their sins, but those who see they are undone without him? Who are the persons in whose eyes he is most precious, and

who maintain the most habitual dependance upon him? Are they not those who have been most effectually humbled, and see their own insufficiency for any thing that is good?

From all this I conclude, that none can come to Christ by faith, but those who see themselves to be *wretched, and miserable, and blind and naked.*

Let us now make some improvement, of what hath been said upon this subject, for your instruction and direction.

1. I would improve what has been said on this subject, for discovering the danger of many among us, who have never yet been brought to a just sense of their character, and state. Even the general belief, that such, often have in the scriptures, may shew them what they have to fear. I might no doubt first of all observe, how very guilty and miserable those are, who are most notorious for sins, of the grossest and most shameful kind. But my subject leads me more directly to consider, who are in general, *unrenewed*, than to mark the several degrees of guilt in particular sinners. From the text therefore, and the illustration of it, I am authorized to declare to you, and *I beseech you to bear it with application*; that all such as were never brought to a real discovery, and inward sense, of their miserable condition by nature, are still in a state of wrath, and strangers to the power of Religion, whatever may be their profession, and whatever may be their present peace. Oh! how easy

is it, to lay asleep a natural conscience, and to keep a deceitful corrupt heart, in a state of ease and security? Some formality in outward duty, some moderation in sin, so to speak, the natural decay, and weakness of human passions, or youthful lusts, in a character, formed by human prudence, and regulated by health, credit or gain, is often made to supply the place, of a heart renewed by the spirit and grace of God. But consider, I beseech you, that though some may be ten fold more the children of the Devil than others, yet all by nature, are the servants of sin; and *except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*---It is not only such as are profane, or unclean; such as riot in brutish sensibility; such as are the plagues of human society; who live in brawls and contention; but all, in whom an essential change, has never been wrought, that are thus *concluded* under condemnation.

It is usual for men to take encouragement, from seeing others worse than themselves; and to consider all the threatenings in scripture, as levelled against the chief and capital offenders; but my text is chiefly directed to such, as say they are *rich, and increased with goods.* Can you say then my brethren, that you have been brought under genuine convictions of sin? Have you been obliged to fall down prostrate before God, when sitting upon the throne of his holiness. Have you found the sentence of death in yourselves, and discovered no remedy, but in Christ? If this has never

been our case, you have reason to fear, that you are yet *in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.*

But I must tell you also that this is matter of feeling, more than of profession. It is not enough to speak honorably of Christ, or of his works. Many do so, who never felt their necessity, or seriously and in good earnest, applied to him. It were a happy thing, if all among our hearers, who call for evangelical preaching, who quarrel with us when they think we do not preach the Saviour's cross---the lost state of man, and the doctrine of free grace, were experimentally acquainted with these truths. Many such, have only been accustomed to hear the Redeemer spoken of with reverence. They may be able to imitate the language of some of his servants, though they know very little of that brokenness of spirit, which accompanies true repentance.

But lest this should be in any measure mistaken, I must make these two observations---The *first* is, that a lively sense, and deep conviction of sin, is, properly speaking, but a negative mark of true Religion; giving us to know, that the unhumiliated are yet impenitent---For it is certain, that many have been under very strong convictions, nay, have been driven to the very borders of despair with terror, who yet never were effectually changed, but stifled their convictions, and returned to their former security of heart, and carelessness of life.

Secondly, there may be some on the other hand, who are truly *born of God*, in whom, the terrors of conviction have not been very remarkable. This happens most frequently in the case of those, who are called in their infancy, or earlier years, and who have had the advantage of a careful, and pious education. It would be destructive of the comforts of God's children to lay down *one method*, in which he always proceeds. He is free and sovereign, in the manner of his dealing with sinners; and softens some hearts by kindness, as well as others by correction. So that if the end be brought about, we need be less solicitous about the steps of his procedure. Yet I think humility of spirit, is inseparable from real Religion; and if it be less visible, in the anguish of repentance, it will be still manifest in the temper of the penitent.

II. Let me now for the improvement of this subject, lay down a few of the best and most solid evidences of genuine conviction of sin. And,

1. It is a good sign that conviction is genuine, when there is a clear and deep apprehension of the *evil* of sin, as well as the *danger* of it. When the mind dwells not only on the atrocity of particular crimes, but on the aggravation of all sin, as such: When the sinner is truly offended with himself, for departing from his maker's service; breaking his holy laws; forgetting or despising his innumerable mercies: There may be, and there is often an apprehension of suffering when there is little sense

of the evil of sin : but the conviction is then genuine, when it makes the sinner not only remember what he has done, *but confess, what he has deserved.*

2. It is a good evidence, when the sense of the evil of sin abides and grows, even though the fear of wrath, may in a great measure have abated.

It is observable, that conviction of sin, usually takes its rise, from some gross, or heinous acts, which first alarm the conscience, and in such a situation, the attention of the penitent is fixed on nothing else, but the enormities of his life. If this view continues, and produces its effects, he is soon brought to see, and confess, the inherent vanity of his heart; the worldliness of his affections; and the unprofitableness of his conversation. It is a very common thing, for persons who seem to have some sense of the commission of crimes, to have little or no sense at all, of the neglect of duty, and of living daily to themselves. It was a heavy charge, however, brought by the Prophet against Belsazzar:---*And the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified.* Wherever there is true repentance, though there may be the greatest peace of mind, there will be also a deep, and growing sense, of the evil of sin, and the obligation of being habitually devoted to God.

3. It is a good evidence, when there is a continued, and growing esteem of the necessity, and value of the mediation of Christ---It was to save

sinners that he came. A sense of sin is necessary to our receiving him; and in proportion to its strength, will certainly be our attachment to him: This indeed is the great, and vital principle, of the spiritual life---*I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God; who loved me, and gave himself to die for me.*

4. The best and surest mark of real conviction of sin, is, if it leaves you possessed of a deep hatred, and abhorrence of it, and a daily solicitude to fly from it. Some may counterfeit a sense of the evil of sin, to their own hearts; may have a real fear of its bitter consequences; and even a presumptuous reliance on Christ for pardon; and yet may in some instances, adhere to the practice of it.

Floods of tears from such a person, avail nothing: but he, hath certainly, truly sorrowed for sin, who in his practice forsakes it:---that is to say, he is not willingly subject to any known sin,---but says with Elihu, *That which I see not teach thou me: If I have done iniquity, I will do no more.*

III. Let me beseech all serious persons, to improve this subject for the trial of their state. Examine, by the principles above laid down, the reality, and the progress of Religion in your souls. Have you a growing sense of the evil of sin, and of

your own unworthiness?—This is at once an evidence, and a mean, of growth in grace. He that thinks least of himself, is highest in God's account; and the more a believer increases in holiness and real worth, the more he increases in humility. As it is an evidence, it is also a mean, of further improvement; for he that hath the deepest sense of his unworthiness and weakness, will certainly live most by faith, in the merit and grace of his Redeemer.

Therefore, Christians, try yourselves by this important sign. Whether do you, by religious duties, build yourselves up on self-righteousness, or do you only learn by them, how far you fall short of what is incumbent on you? What innumerable evils compass you about? and therefore, how much you have need of mercy instead of reward? Do you look upon the works of righteousness which you have done, as something, by which you *merit* at the hand of God; or do you look upon them, as the *evidence* of his own work in you, and for you, and give him the glory, to whom it is due?

IV. I shall now conclude the whole, with a few directions for producing and preserving this profitable sense, and conviction of sin. And,

1. Let me beg of every hearer, the serious consideration of himself, and his ways. Many have no sense of their sinfulness, because they have no

knowledge of themselves at all; but go through the world, in uninterrupted thoughtlessness, and unconcern. Is there any thing of greater moment than the state of your minds, and your hope towards God? Inattention, is perhaps a more universal cause of impiety, than high handed, and obstinate profanity. Would you but seriously consider your ways, and lay to heart the things that belong to your peace, I would count it a hopeful circumstance; and expect, you would speedily see your danger, and God in his mercy would lead you to the cure.

2. Give yourselves much to reading, and hearing the word of God. The entrance of his word, giveth light.---It is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, and correction: but it is particularly necessary for *conviction*; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. What wonder, if those who never open a bible, and seldom enter into the house of God, should be ignorant of their guilt and misery? The word of God shews his right in you, pleads his cause, and challenges your apostacy. It is exceedingly rare that those who have fairly turned their backs upon God's instituted worship, are disturbed in their security; but are suffered to sleep on, till they sleep the sleep of death. But it frequently happens, that those who attend ordinances, even from no higher principle than curiosity, custom, or form, find that the word of God is *a fire and hammer*, that breaketh the rock in pieces;

that it is quick and powerful, sharper than any two edged sword, piercing, even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts, and intents of the heart.

3. In the last place. Let me beseech you, often to seat yourselves, in the immediate presence of God, or rather, frequently to recollect, that you can no where go from his spirit, or fly from his presence. There is, if I may speak so, a light and glory in the presence of God, that discerns, and discloses the works of darkness. We may often excuse, or palliate our conduct to men, and even hide its deformity from our own view, when we could not justify it to ourselves, if we reflected, that *it is open and manifest, in the sight of God.*---If therefore there is any thing in your practice, which you are inclined to palliate, and apt to excuse---suppose, you were standing at the judgment seat of Christ, where all of us shall shortly be; and think, whether your excuses will then stand the test of his impartial search.

If our hearts condemn us not, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things. It is therefore the duty, and interest of every sinner, to take shame and confusion of face to himself, and apply to the *blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things, than the blood of Abel.*

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S E R M O N IV.

THE SALVATION OF SINNERS, *only* BY THE
BLOOD OF JESUS.

B Y

ALEXANDER MACWHORTER, D. D.

Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, at Newark, New-Jersey.

I C O R. V. 7.

For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.

THERE is in this passage a direct allusion to the Jewish feast, or sacrament, called the passover; and to the method of observing it, enjoined by God at its original institution. The institution itself, with the occasion and manner of observing it, are particularly recorded in Exodus. The whole œconomy of providence towards the Jewish nation, especially, from the time they first came into Egypt, until their settlement in the land of Canaan, is typical. Their Egyptian bondage was perhaps intended by God, to shadow forth the natural state of man, with respect to spiritual things; and their miraculous deliverance by the hand of Moses, clearly pointed, to the re-

covery of fallen sinners by Jesus Christ. There is no conduct of Providence, wherein the wisdom of God shines with more glory and evidence, than in the exactness, in which the spirit of the New Testament, answers to the letter of the Old; the shadows to the substance; the figures to the things prefigured; and the types to the antitypes. He, who will humbly, and carefully compare them, will not fail of obtaining great conviction, and information, with regard to the divinity of the scriptures; and entire satisfaction, with respect to most of those points, about which, the Christian world are so much divided. The Old and New Testaments do mutually illustrate each other. The Old would not be equally clear, without the New: the New, in many parts, would be dark and unintelligible, without the Old. Our text is an instance of the truth of this remark.

What should we be able to make of this New Testament doctrine, *that Christ is our passover*, were it not for the light and assistance we have from the Old Testament?---But from both, we easily learn, that the passover was a type of Jesus Christ: it was intended by God to be of this nature and use. The paschal lamb had a direct reference to Jesus, as the Lamb of God. It was observed by true believers under the Old Testament in this view: their faith beheld Christ in the institution. The Epistle to the Hebrews tells us, that *by faith Moses kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood.*

The most easy method, therefore, of explaining the truth contained in the text, will be, by contrasting the type, and the antitype. We shall best understand what we are taught, when Christ is called *our passover*, by attending to the original institution of this ordinance among the Jews; and pointing out the resemblance it bears, to *Jesus Christ the Mediator*. This I shall endeavor to do, in the following particulars.

I. The passover was appointed, when God was about to destroy all the first-born in the land of Egypt. They were all doomed to destruction by the divine decree, without exception. Moses declares to Pharaoh: *Thus saith the Lord, about midnight, I will go out into the midst of Egypt, and all the first-born in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sitteth on the throne, even to the first-born of the maid servant, that is behind the mill, and all first-born of beasts.*

On this awful occasion was the passover instituted by God, and appointed to the Israelites.

In like manner, Jesus Christ was appointed, when all the human race were by the sentence of the divine law, doomed to everlasting destruction, *from the presence of the Lord, and glory of his power*. Eternal death was fixed, as the demerit, and punishment of man's violating that law, under which God had placed him. *In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.*

The head of the human race, with whom God transacted for himself and all his posterity, violated the constitution established with him, and ruined himself; and the whole race, was ruined in, and with him. They all sinned, and became guilty in their head and representative. *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*

On this occasion, the whole race of mankind, through all their generations, were doomed by the sentence of God's righteous law, to *everlasting perdition*. The sentence was righteous: the doom was just; and it would have been infinitely fit in God, to have executed the same. If this had been done, each of us who are here present, would have been now in chains of eternal darkness and despair. That this would be the event of man's apostasy, was no doubt expected by all the elect Angels. They had seen the issue of rebellion in the case of their fallen companions; and if they could argue only from fact, no other conclusion could be made by them, than *the damnation of mankind*.

In this lost and ruined condition of mankind, when they were all under the curse, and exposed to everlasting destruction, Jesus Christ, became in the appointment of God, *our passover*. God constituted Adam our first covenant head; and he constituted Christ, our second covenant head. Adam's headship was an image or type of Christ's. In re-

gard to this appointment, Christ is called *the Lamb slain, from the foundation of the world.*

II. The passover was originally appointed, as the *only* method, for the Israelites' escaping the destruction, God intended to execute on the Egyptians. The account of the institution renders the observation evident: for when God had ordained the solemnity, and the manner of observing it, he gives the following reason of the ordinance.---*For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast: and against all the Gods of Egypt, I will execute judgment: I am the Lord. And the blood shall be to you a token on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.*

This destruction of the Egyptians was figurative: the method appointed to the Israelites for escaping this destruction, was also figurative. The former, respected the effect of God's wrath for sin, in the eternal damnation of finners; the latter, the only way of deliverance from this misery. Accordingly Jesus Christ is our passover, as by him *only*, can we escape the wrath and curse of God, due to us for sin---He is ordained of God for this purpose. He is the wisdom and power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth. There is no name but Christ's, by which finners can be sav-

ed. There is no possibility of escaping the wrath of God, but by him. In vain, is salvation hoped, or sought for in other ways; from the hills and from the mountains, from this, or from that course; for Jesus Christ is the *true and only passover*. Vain are the attempts of guilty, affrighted mortals, to avert the impending vengeance. All the various inventions and practices of a mind, distracted with the guilt of sin and dread of hell, are but as stubble before the devouring flame. And he who has never felt this truth, has never yet *fled to the only ark of safety*, from divine vengeance. *The wrath of God abideth on him; and his jealousy will smoke against that man.* And unless the eyes of such a sinner be soon opened, to see himself, and God, and Christ, in a manner that he never has; in a manner, that shall *shake down all his present hopes and confidences to the foundation*, the storms of God's unquenchable fury will quickly do it. *The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters overflow the hiding place.* Hear this, ye that forget God: hear this, ye that compass yourselves about with *sparks of your own kindling*: ye shall have this at God's hands; *ye shall lie down in sorrow!* Let no sinner *bless himself in his heart* when he heareth the words of this curse: *saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart.* Let no sinner behave himself proudly. God hath said it, and he will perform. Were it the threatening of a Man, or Angel, you might defy his minaces: but the Lion of the tribe of Judah *hath roar-*

ed, who will not fear?---The Lord God hath spoken: who can but prophecy?

III. The Israeltics were as liable to the threatened destruction, as the Egyptians, as to any thing in themselves, or belonging to them, which distinguished them, as a ground of pre-eminence, or reason of exemption from the common ruin. This remark is obvious, from the account of the paschal institution. The nature of the passover supposeth the truth of this observation; that there was nothing in the Jew, *considered in himself*, to distinguish him from the Egyptian. The one was no more worthy of favor than the other. The Israelites considered in themselves, as much merited destruction, as the Egyptians. There was nothing marked out the one for favor, more than the other: but the sovereign God made the difference, and appointed the sign of distinction. Thus it is in the case of every sinner saved by Jesus Christ. He sees nothing in himself, from first to last, to distinguish, or recommend him to the favor of God, above the vilest monster that walks the earth. This is the sincere and undissembled language of his heart through the whole course of his life, after he has become acquainted with the truth. *Why me Lord?---Why was I taken and another left? Why was I distinguished from the most tormented wretch that is now in hell? Why was God's grace bestowed on me? Why have I a part in Christ granted me, while so many others, who I am sure,*

are not worse in themselves than I am, if so bad, are suffered to perish in rejecting him?' He can find no manner of reason for this distinction, but, *Even so Father for so it seemed good in thy sight.--- Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay, but by the law of faith.*

Did not the sovereign God make the difference between the first-born of Israel, and the first-born of Pharaoh? Was not sovereign mercy, greatly displayed, in saving the one, while the other was slain; when both in themselves were equally liable to destruction? So, sovereign grace through Jesus Christ, shines with infinite lustre, in saving some sinners from eternal misery; while others are left to perish in their iniquities; who by nature were not worse than they. And thus the saint, from his conversion, to the day of his death, has continual conviction, that the whole of his salvation, is owing to the *most free favor, and unmerited grace.*

IV. The killing of the paschal lamb, was not sufficient to save them from the stroke of the destroying Angel, unless the posts and lintels of the doors were sprinkled with its blood. This was of essential consequence. This was the great thing to be done, after killing the lamb, in order to have any benefit from the institution. The whole transaction was useless, in neglect of this circumstance. If the blood was not thus sprinkled, they were equally exposed to ruin, as if no part of the

institution had been complied with. Though they had killed the passover, had eaten of it, and observed the instituted feast, yet all would be of no avail to save them from the destroyer, *if the blood was not sprinkled on the doors.* Thus it is with respect to Jesus Christ, the true passover. He has been slain, as the Lamb of God, *who taketh away the sins of the world*---His blood has been shed. He poured out his soul unto death. He offered himself a sacrifice, an offering of sweet smelling favor unto God, and, by his own blood, hath entered into the holiest of all. But this will be of no avail to us *if we are not sprinkled with it.* Without this, the death of Christ will have no salutary effect with regard to us. The case will be eventually the same to us as if Christ had never died. Christ will profit us nothing. His death will not save *us* from death.

Let it therefore be solemnly attended to, that the shedding of Christ's blood will be of no avail to your salvation, unless you be sprinkled with it. This is the true blood of sprinkling, that can divert the stroke of justice; that can purge the conscience from dead works, and from the guilt of sin, *when the overflowing scourge shall pass through.* The sprinkling of the blood of Jesus is the only defence against the wrath of God. Happy the soul who, when God shall rise to judgment, will be found sprinkled with this blood, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. But *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish* to every one,

that is then found unsprinkled with the blood of Jesus.

How it stands with you, my hearers, in regard to this matter, becomes you earnestly to enquire. It is of more importance to you, than all the other affairs of life besides. And yet, perhaps, there is not a few in this assembly, who never made it any part of your care, in all your lives, and to this moment are entirely careless about it. Alas! what hath bewitched you, that you should not flee from the wrath to come? What will you do, when God shall whet his glittering sword, and his hand shall take hold on vengeance? If you are never sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, the justice of God will avenge itself in *your* blood.

V. It was not the act of the Israelites, in sprinkling the blood of the lamb on the posts, and lintels of their doors, that God had respect to, when he passed them over, while he destroyed the Egyptians. It was not, I say, their act or obedience that God looked at, and on account of which he spared them: but it was the *blood itself*, to which he had respect, and on account of which he passed them by.—The blood seen on the posts of their doors, was the thing which secured them from destruction, and to which God had an *exclusive respect*, when he went through the land, destroying all the first-born of the Egyptians, and passing over the Israelites.

Thus is the matter represented in the above cited chapter. *And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. And again---When the Lord seeth the blood on the lintel and on the two side posts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in to smite you.*—Hence you see, the blood is the only thing, to which God had respect in sparing them from destruction.

Thus exactly stands the case, with respect to Jesus Christ the true passover. This blood of the paschal lamb represented the blood of Christ, and the sprinkling thereof prefigured the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus. What God had respect to in the figure, when he passed by the Israelites, to that he has respect in the substance, when he passeth by guilty sinners, and saves them from deserved destruction forever. These things teach us directly, what God has respect to when he pardons penitent sinners, and bestows salvation upon them. It is not to any thing in them he has regard, as the reason of his acquitting them from condemnation. It is not for their obedience, their faith, or any thing in them whatever, but *entirely*, and *exclusively*, for the sake of the blood of Christ. It is this alone God has respect to, in justifying those that believe. The case is here as it was with the Israelites: it was the blood of the lamb sprinkled on the doors

of the latter, to which God solely had respect and spared them: it is to the blood of Christ, God entirely has respect, in the justification of the former.

This likewise teaches us to what *we* are to have respect, as the only ground of our acceptance with God: for we must have regard to the same thing in *expecting justification*, which God has in granting it. We must have respect to Christ's merit and righteousness *exclusively*; not to *our* obedience, *our* faith, repentance, or any thing else as the pleadable matter of our acceptance, or the reason and ground of our pardon.

I am particular here, my brethren, because I know *your life is in it*. If you mistake the ground of acceptance with God, you are ruined. If you place your obedience, or any acts or works of your own, in the room of Christ's righteousness, you must perish. *Those, who go about to establish their own righteousness, submit not to the righteousness of God; and those, who submit not to the righteousness of God in the Gospel, must perish forever*. It is to the righteousness of the Gospel God has respect, in justifying believing sinners; and it is to this, *you* have respect entirely, if you are true believers: for it is the nature of evangelical faith, to look to Christ's righteousness *only*.

A persuasion that this is the only thing that can recommend a sinner to God, accounting all things else but dross and dung with regard to this mat-

ter, are inseparable concomitants of true faith; or, I may say, belong to the very nature of it.

VI. All were saved from destruction, on whose doors the blood of the lamb was sprinkled, while the plague swept off the Egyptians all around them.

While the first-born of the Egyptians were slain by thousands, the Israelites were safe, and no harm happened to them—the wrath of God, *the pestilence that walketh in darkness* came not nigh them.

Thus, shall all those be saved from destruction, who are sprinkled with the blood of Jesus the true passover. There is now no wrath abiding on them, nor any vengeance in reserve. When God seeth this blood on them, he will pass over them. He will spare them as a man spareth his own son. This blood will never loose its efficacy, nor power with God. It is of a *sweet smelling savor* to him. This is the apostolic language to express its acceptableness to God. Great is the delight which the Lord God Almighty takes in receiving those to favor, who are sprinkled with this blood.

I must not enter further into this subject at present. Many striking instances of resemblance between the typical and true passover yet remain: but lest I should be tedious, I must omit them at this time, and conclude with some improvement.

I. How illustrious the wisdom, and how distinguishing the grace and love of God in our salvati-

on! Behold what infinite love, *that God should so love the world, as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life*: that God should send his own Son into the world, that we might not perish who believe on him: that God's eternal Son should be made a servant, that we might be made the sons of God: that he should be made sin that we might be made righteous: that he should die, that we might live; that he should suffer the curse of the law and the punishment of sin, that we might be delivered from the curse, and redeemed from punishment: that his blood should be shed, that by the sprinkling of it, we might be delivered from eternal destruction: that he should be our passover, and that the vengeance should light on him, that was due to us, are indeed mysteries of grace, and arguments of love, which pass all understanding. They ought never to be thought of by us, but with rapture and astonishment. When we consider, who it was that condescended thus; not an Angel, but the Lord of Angels; not some exalted creature lifted up in excellency and dignity far above us; but the Creator, *God over all blessed forever*. Who but is lost in sweet surprise, and humble adoration!

This grace of God is so inconceivably great, that the saints, during their abodes in these tabernacles, cannot bear any great view of it. It would dissolve their frame: it exceeds our utmost thoughts.

When we consider for whom Christ suffered and died; for creatures, mean, and insignificant creatures; for rebellious creatures, incapable of ever being profitable to him: in the eternal rejection of whom, his justice would have shone with a conspicuous ray, and been admired by all the choirs above.

Well may we break out in the language of astonishment, overborn with the grace of God, *What manner of love is this!*—well hath God said—*My ways are not like your ways, nor my thoughts as your thoughts.*

Who is not by such a display convinced, that the Gospel is not *a cunningly devised fable*; but an amazing, and glorious display of the nature and perfections of God? How wonderful, how godlike is the work of redemption! It seems to exceed the works of Creation, although these shew forth the divine power and godhead; even as the light of the sun, exceeds that of a faint and languid star.

II. As we are here taught, that unless we are sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, his death and atonement will finally be of no avail to us: we ought to enquire, my brethren, with all diligence, whether we are sprinkled with this blood, yea or nay? This is the *only blood* that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. If you are not sprinkled with it, and die thus, better you had never been born. Oh! therefore, look into this matter. As you value your own salvation enquire

into it. As you would not be forever rejected of God, see to it, that the blood of Christ *be upon you*— You have an example before you of the certain consequence of being without this blood sprinkled on you, in the destruction of the Egyptians. *They are ensamples unto us.* Wherefore, my dear hearers, look into your own hearts and lives to day; and let the single enquiry which you make at your own consciences, be thus, with each one: ‘Am I sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, or not? Have I ever been effectually convinced of my lost, and undone estate by nature, and practice? Have I ever seen the exceeding great evil, and desert of sin? Has sin ever been imbittered to my soul, so that I have been pricked at my heart, and made to cry out, *What shall I do to be saved?*’

Have you, my audience, ever seen that it would be just in God to cast you off forever, and have your hearts sunk, and fainted under the view? Have you felt yourselves without strength to make atonement for your crimes? and have you been filled with unfeigned sorrow and grief that you have sinned against God, and broken his law?— And have you with your whole hearts, under these views, renounced all your *own righteousness*, as *filthy rags*; and rested your guilty souls, naked, and wretched as they are, upon a *crucified Jesus*? Do you see the value, the infinite value of his blood to make atonement for your sins? Is Christ, his righteousness, and the way of salvation through

him, what ravishes, charms and rejoices your souls? And are you depending on him continually, for all needed grace and strength, to enable you to discharge the duties which you owe to God, and your neighbor?—Oh! my brethren, *examine yourselves, try your own selves.*

Those of you who have scriptural evidences to hope that you are sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, how blessed are you! How happy is the condition of true believers! God will certainly pass over you, when he arises to judgment. He has given you full assurance of this already in the *figure*, and he will soon do it *in reality*. Let not your hearts be troubled, O Christians, the destroying Angel shall not come nigh you! Believe in God, he abideth faithful, and that you might have the strongest consolation, he hath added his oath to his promise. *God willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise, the immutability of his council, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before us.*

Perhaps your own vileness and wretchedness affright you: you see so little to distinguish you as objects of favor; so much, to render you objects of wrath; that you cannot think you have any part in the blessedness here spoken of. But remember that what makes you acceptable, is the blood of sprinkling—Christ is made of God unto you

wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. This is the grace wherein you stand, and wherein you are accepted.

But those, who never felt the powerful influence of this method of salvation, may object; that this doctrine leads to licentiousness. Nay, my brethren, no doctrine has a stronger operation the contrary way. No doctrine has a more powerful effect to purify the heart, to animate to diligence in good works, than salvation by free grace; than acceptance before God, *solely* by the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus. The real belief of this doctrine, is the only abiding spring of holy obedience--- Saith not the Apostle? *The love of Christ constraineth us.*

O Christians! be persuaded to maintain a powerful sense of gospel grace; and that it is only by the blood of sprinkling, you are distinguished as objects of divine acceptance. This is the surest road to peace and comfort. And by this blood you shall enter into the holiest of all: the everlasting doors of glory will be opened to you, and you shall be introduced into eternal felicity, by this Jesus, with whose blood you are sprinkled; saying, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*---But are there not some in this assembly, who have full convictions of judgment, that you have never been sprinkled with this *peace-speaking, and life-giving blood?*---Who have never fled to Jesus for refuge,

from the storms of divine vengeance? Who have not the door-posts of your hearts sprinkled? Be assured, O Sinners! that the destroying Angel will enter into your souls and smite you, and leave you neither root nor branch. You shall be swept away by the torrent of divine wrath, if you thus continue, when God shall descend to judgment. Nothing can secure you from the utmost destruction, if you continue to undervalue so great a sacrifice as the Lamb of God. *Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and done despite to the spirit of grace?* It is dreadful, O Sinners! to have this sacrifice smoking against you, and the blood of Christ calling for vengeance, instead of mercy, upon your devoted heads. O, be warned to flee from the wrath to come! for when the midnight cry of Egypt arises, it will then be too late! Wherefore, *now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.* Oh Sinners! lay hold on the blood of sprinkling. Harken to the invitations of Christ Jesus. *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and whosoever will, let him come, and partake of the waters of life freely---The spirit and the bride say, come; and that we may all come, and be sprinkled with this soul-saving blood, may God of his infinite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen, and Amen.*

S E R M O N V.

*The INFLUNCES of GOD, as a SUN, the GREAT CONSO-
LATION of his PEOPLE.*

B Y

ALEXANDER MACWHORTER, D. D.

Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, at Newark, New-Jersey.

PSALMS lxxxiv. ii.

For the Lord God is a Sun.

THESSE words stand here, as a reason of the Psalmist's declaration in the preceding verse, *that one day spent in the house of God, that is, in an attendance on his ordinances, was better than a thousand: that he would rather hold the lowest place in God's house, and thus enjoy the privileges of his public worship, than dwell in tents of wickedness, or enjoy the utmost pleasures of sin. The reason of this preference, is resolved into this consideration, that the Lord God is a Sun.*

This view of the words in their connection, serves to shew us, wherein consists the true excellency and advantage of the instituted ordinances of divine worship; and the true reason, of the high

esteem, all good men, without exception, have of them; their great respect, and love to them; their care and diligence in attending them: *God is in them, as a Sun.*

As the natural sun, by his influences, enlightens, and revives every living thing; so God, in his ordinances, enlightens, and revives the hearts of his people: shining into their minds, and giving them the light of the knowledge of his Glory, in the person of Jesus Christ—shedding abroad his love in their hearts, and granting them *that peace, which passeth all understanding.*

But if we consider the words in a more independent view, they teach us, that God is to good men, what the sun, by its influences, is to the natural world. Who is ignorant of the high importance of the natural sun? This heavenly luminary forms our day; disperses the gloomy horrors of the night, and sheds fertility, light and joy, through every part of our system. Without it, all nature would be one frozen mass; neither life, nor vegetation, nor fruitfulness would appear.

Now, when God is represented by the beautiful and striking image of a Sun, with regard to his influences and agency, towards those who walk uprightly, who can help perceiving, how supreme, and sensible a blessing, his existence and communications are, in *their* experience, and estimate?

As the natural sun is the fountain of light; sheds joy and gladness through the animal and vegetable

kingdoms; and causes our earth to teem, with all its rich variety of fruits, so, the Sun of Righteousness, the true, and eternal God is all this, and more than this, in his communications to his people. He communicates spiritual light to their minds—infuses joy and gladness into their hearts, and renders them fruitful, in every branch of goodness.

I. God is a Sun, as he communicates *spiritual light* to his people.

There may be said to be three kinds of light—*physical—intellectual—and spiritual*—or, the light of this *world*,—the light of *reason*, and the light of the *Spirit of God*. Each of these differs from the other in its nature. There is as real a difference between intellectual, and spiritual light, as there is between intellectual, and physical, or the light of the sun. The former agree, in many more respects, than the latter; but there is no such agreement, as renders them, of the same nature and kind. This difference will farther appear in the sequel.

The natural condition of the human mind, since the fall of Adam, is a state of darkness, and blindness. When man apostatized, he lost that spiritual sense, whereby he was capable of discerning spiritual objects: the image of God forsook his heart, and so, no longer was he captivated with the beauties of holiness. The soul now remains in spiritual darkness, until the divine image, or spiritual sense be restored; which is done by the ope-

ration of the Spirit of God in the work of regeneration. This teaches us the great propriety of those scripture phrases, where natural men are represented, as *not discerning spiritual things*; as having their minds *darkened*; being *ignorant, blind and dead*.— These expressions can, by no means, be understood to mean the want of intellectual light, or the light of reason; for were we to understand them in this respect, they really carry the matter so far as to signify, that the light of reason was not only impaired, but utterly lost and extinguished: wherefore this cannot be the scripture sense. But if we understand them as expressions of the want of *spiritual light* then they are perfectly true and proper: The whole world lieth in darkness: *Having the understanding darkened; being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts.*

Spiritual light is wholly extinguished by the fall; and hence is there so much darkness, ignorance and confusion, even in speculation, with regard to divine things. That the world is full of darkness, respecting God, his perfections and kingdom, is a matter which cannot be denied: and this darkness must be occasioned, either by something in God, or by his concealment of himself, or by the loss of a spiritual understanding amongst men.— But this blindness doth not arise from any thing in God, as if he were darkness; *for God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all*: nor does it proceed from any concealment of himself, so that we

cannot behold him by reason of it. This was never true in itself at any time, however great and palpable the darkness of mens minds have been with regard to God; but it is less true under the Gospel dispensation than ever; for the true light now shineth, and God hath eminently manifested himself in the character and instructions of his Son, whom he hath revealed for this purpose; who was *the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person*; and whose glory so conspicuously shone forth to the view of those who were enlightened from above, that they knew him to be *the only begotten of the Father*.

Therefore it remains, that this darkness must be occasioned by the loss of a spiritual understanding, through the wickedness of mens hearts: *For light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil*.

Now, of *all* sorts of light God is the author.—He formed the sun to rule the day—he maketh us *wiser* than the fowls of heaven, and he alone giveth *supernatural light*, or a *spiritual understanding*.—Hence is he stiled the *Father of Light*, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift.

If any admit no other kind of light, with regard to divine things, but that of reason, *improved and heightened* by external advantages and diligent application, I shall not, at present, dispute the subject with them. It is not this sort of light that I

mean, but something of a nature entirely different—a light that is properly supernatural, and from God; in a manner, the light which reason furnishes, is not, nor can, with any propriety, be said to be. God manifests himself to his people in a peculiar manner, by a lustre, as superior to that of mere natural reason, as it is different from it in kind. They have the same common knowledge of God as others—the same powers of reason—the same external advantages from his word and works, for acquiring a speculative acquaintance with him, his nature and perfections; but they have a knowledge of him which is not acquired in this way, which is far above the efforts of reason, though blessed with the best aids, and applied with the greatest diligence. This knowledge is the effect of a spiritual illumination of their minds, by God's shining into them with the light of his glory. The heart is the subject of the divine irradiation; the eyes of the understanding are enlightened by the spirit of wisdom and revelation. When God thus shines into their hearts, the effect is a clear, distinct, lively perception of his supreme and transcendent excellency—of the beauty and amiableness of his nature and perfections. God appears exceedingly lovely, and exceedingly glorious; worthy to be feared, and to be had in reverence of all intelligent creatures. The genuine language of their heart now is—*Bless the Lord, O my soul!—who would not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name!—love the Lord, all ye his saints!—laud him all*

ye people!---praise ye him, all his Angels!---praise ye him, all his hosts!

Not only does this or that perfection appear agreeable; or this or that branch of his conduct; but every thing in God is lovely; every perfection of his nature, and every branch of his providence---every thing that belongs to him has a peculiar sweetness, and acceptableness in it to the soul. Especially the Gospel appears with peculiar lustre, as the brightest and most distinguishing display of the uncreated loveliness of the Father, the Son, and Holy Ghost.

Some persons talk of great regard to God, great esteem of his perfections, and high expectations of future happiness; while they have but a mean opinion of the Gospel, and are destitute of all sensible love and deference to the character of Jesus Christ. But all their religion is a deceit, and their hopes a delusion: for these things cannot be separated:---*He that bath not the Son, bath not the Father---He that rejecteth the Son, rejecteth the Father---He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father which hath sent him---He who receives not the record of God, maketh him a liar.*

In proportion to our sense of the excellency of God, and his perfections, will be our sense of the excellency of the Gospel, and its author, and so on the contrary.

When God at first regenerates a soul, and shines into the heart, and gives it to behold the light of

the knowledge of his glory, the creature is introduced into a new world---All things appear new. It has new views and perceptions of God and Jesus Christ; such as it never had before; yea, those things, which were known before, appear with a new lustre and beauty---The scripture and its truths appear new: new light and glory appear to shine in them---Now the heart has an evidence of their divinity, and a sense that they are not cunningly devised fables, far beyond any thing it could obtain from mere speculation---In these discoveries, the mind is brought to the full assurance of understanding.

There is no knowledge which we can acquire, that can anticipate this divine illumination, or render it useless---Some say, men may, by their own application, obtain all that knowledge in religion that is necessary; and then, all that remains to make them good men, is to practise what they know. This is one of the modern refinements, and is as far from being true, as some others: for that religious knowledge, which is necessary to form the heart and practise to real goodness, lies not at all in mere speculation; neither will the result of our own application, in itself considered, ever sanctify the soul, or produce a truly virtuous life. That knowledge, which sanctifies, is of a different original: It comes down from above; it flows from the mercy-seat of God.

And as no acquired knowledge can supercede the necessity of this divine teaching, so, when it is

granted, in any considerable degree, it is very perceptible. The most learned divine becomes immediately sensible of the vast difference between his *own knowledge* and this *divine instruction*. His own notions, however diligently collected and matured, are as nothing, with respect to clearness and efficacy, compared to one view of the divine glory communicated to the heart, by the spirit of God shining into it. Now, he sees divine things in a different view; he beholds them in a very different light: Hence, this knowledge is altogether a different thing, from the teachings of any outward means whatsoever.

In this sense, God is a sun, and, in this manner, does he communicate spiritual light to his people.

II. God infuses *joy and gladness* into their hearts.

As God is the author of spiritual light, so also of spiritual joy. Holy light always precedes holy joy, as it is the reason and ground of it. That joy and affection which does not rise from a spiritual discovery of the excellency of divine things, is false and enthusiastic---There is no such thing in true religion, as heat without light; or zeal without knowledge. There is, indeed, much of this sort of religion in the world, but as it has not the nature of true Religion, it ought not to bear the name.

So, on the other hand, there is no such thing in real religion, as spiritual light without heat; or

spiritual knowledge without zeal. These can be no more separated than light from the sun; or heat from fire; or reason from an intelligent nature.

God does not give to all his creatures equal degrees of joy and consolation: but he usually grants them, in some degree; and in those communications, he shews a wise and holy sovereignty. And where the least measure of this spiritual joy is given, it is of so exquisite and heavenly a nature, that the soul can never again thirst *supremely* for earthly joys, nor habitually prefer the delights and pleasures of earth to those of true Religion. This is the distinguishing nature of spiritual joy, of which God is the author, that it forever palls the taste to all sensual and sinful pleasures.---This is the water which Christ gives, that he, who drinks of it, will never thirst again.

It is only the true and upright Christian, who knows the refined pleasures and joys which God pours into their hearts: such as the men of this world understand not, neither do strangers intermeddle with them. These are the secrets of the Lord, which are imparted only to those who fear him. They are sacred pledges of mutual friendship---foretastes or prelibations of those rivers of pleasure at the right hand of God, which are in reserve for his people, when they shall have finished their present pilgrimage. These joys, wherewith true Christians are entertained, are produced by the

holy spirit, through means of the word and ordinances.

God's own existence and glorious perfections, *realized to their hearts*, form one *comprehensive reason* of sweetness and satisfaction. None but good men know what infinite pleasure it affords, *that God exists*. Oftentimes it fills their souls with unspeakable transports, and they inwardly exult in the *blesse'd assurance*.

The universal dominion and government of God, is another source of sensible pleasure to the truly pious. O! how comfortable is the thought, that *the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!*---that in the darkest state of things, *he sits at the helm*, and directs the affairs of the church, and of the world!---that his own glory will be advanced!

Sometimes these joys arise from having their hearts drawn out in strong and sensible love to God above all things: in a love, stronger than death---O! how transporting the pleasure, to feel an heart full of love to the most amiable of Beings!

Sometimes he gives them the kindest assurance of his favor and regard through Jesus Christ---While they fear their unworthiness and sinfulness will forever separate him from them, he secretly communicates some tender testimony of his love, and, at once, dissipates every distressing suspicion of heart. O! how sweet is it, to be prevented by the goodness of God; and to have a garment of praise for a spirit of heaviness!

Oftentimes he causes the humble and upright Christian to rejoice in the hopes of glory, and the shortness of that interval, that bars him from his immediate and everlasting presence. God enables the contrite one to anticipate the joys of that blessed season, when he shall be admitted to see him, as he is:—when sin shall be no more, and sorrow have an end—when the imperfection and vanity of his present state, shall no more obstruct the vigor of the soul, but his songs and praises to God and the Lamb, be as ardent and sincere as those of saints and seraphim around the throne.

Thus, God is a sun, in communicating *joy and gladness* to the hearts of his people.

III. God, by his influences, renders true Christians fruitful in every branch of goodness.

It is the influence of the natural sun, that makes the earth productive of fruits, necessary for the life of man and beast: In like manner, it is the influence of the sun of righteousness, that makes Christians fruitful in all good works. Their improvements in piety and virtue, will always be in proportion to the degree and frequency of these influences---Without them, there is no progress to be made—*Without me*, says our Lord, *ye can do nothing*. How much is the truth of this assertion, the experience of every true Christian? If Christ does not animate him by the secret power of his grace, how dead the heart to every spiritual exercise!---How does grace languish, and things di-

vine loose their sensible relish, from day to day!— Just as you have seen things in early spring, in the natural world, when the beams and influences of the sun are intercepted by thick clouds and frosty winds, the vernal, beautiful appearances fade—grass, and herbs and flowers decline and languish; till the clouds and cold are dispersed, and the sun resumes its splendor, and sheds abroad its genial warmth, by its unrebated rays: then all nature flourishes again. Thus it is in the Christian life. When God lifts up the light of his countenance, every grace begins to spring, and the soul becomes gay and blooming, as the garden of God. And now, there is much fruit to the glory of their heavenly Father. Praise and joy and holy walking employ every hour. But alas! when God hides his face, troubles again return. Sin and the world renew their attacks; and, too often, former victories are disgraced by new defeats: but when the sun of righteousness shines upon them, grace grows, and every good work abounds.

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

I. We here learn, of what high consideration, the being, government, and communications of God are to good men—There is no supposition more terrible and distressing to a pious mind, than this; *that there is no God.* No attempts made by Satan to disturb the peace and tranquillity of good

men, are so insupportable, as those which consist in bringing into question God's existence and government: Let the foundation be attempted, and there is no resource nor rest---On the supposition that God did not exist, it were better not to be. Existence is a blessing only on condition of God's Existence, without this, life itself would be a curse.

But O! what pleasure has the true Christian at times, in the single reflection, that God is—The character of God, as represented in his word, is also an essential consideration of happiness, as well as his existence itself. If those perfections are retrenched, which he has ascribed to himself in his own revelation, the happiness of real Christians is subverted in its original foundation. For it is in a realizing sense of heart, of the reality and holy excellency of them; that their souls are much formed to a supreme duty, and respect to him and his ways. And they have not only sweet delight, that God is, but that he is *what* he is. I AM THAT I AM, was the name by which he revealed himself to Moses, for the comfort of Israel.

The universal and particular providence of God is likewise a principle, in which all good men are extremely interested. Were it not for this support, there would be no spirit left in them. As it creates them the greatest pain, not to be able by faith, to see that God, who is invisible; so, a full assurance and feeling sense of his agency and concern in all things, is to them a reviving cordial.

It is a solitary condition with a good man, when his sense of these things is abated; and though God is on his right hand and on his left, yet he cannot behold him---And indeed, my brethren, it is not an easy matter to live in the realizing sense of the being, perfections, and providence of God. *He* knows but little of himself, and what it is to have a true faith of these things, who thinks not so. To assent to these truths, indeed, is an easy matter; and to be free from all hesitation and doubt about them in our judgment: but he grossly mistakes, who imagines this is that faith, in these things, which belongs to true Christians. There is a divine sense of it, that is more or less their aim and consolation; and the whole compass of creature enjoyments, is not able to compensate the want of this faith.

2. We may be here led to enquire, my hearers, whether the Lord God is our sun?

Do we perceive God's nature, perfections, and influences, of such high consequence and importance *to us*? Are these the sources of our truest enjoyment, and sweetest consolation? Is God's existence our life and delight? His perfections, his glory and felicity, our pleasure and entertainment?---His holy and enlightening influences, the blessings for which we pant and languish?---Is God our sun? Does he form our day? Is it his presence makes our Heaven? Is it his beauty, his excellency, and glory shining in the face of Jesus

Christ, that we admire?---Are our thoughts taken up with God?---Is he our light and our joy?

If we can answer understandingly in the affirmative to these queries, then, *blessed are ye of the Most High.* Blessed is that people whose God is the Lord; to whom *the Lord God is a Sun.* He is a Being of universal dominion; he is the creator and preserver of all; he sits at the helm of government, and his eyes run to and fro through all the earth. He beholds the thoughts and councils of men; and nothing can happen to his people, whereby they are affected, but what shall work for their highest good. How blessed are ye, O Christians! who have a friend of this character, of such universal sway and influence!—You know his absolute and incontrollable power. He will do all his pleasure—he can save, when every resource fails and all things look desperate. You know that all happiness is in his gift: *in his presence is fullness of joy*; whom he blesteth, *is blessed indeed.* Out of his favor there is no such thing as true happiness. The pleasures of such are but as crackling thorns under a pot. Happiness, derived from this world, is like the light of a meteor, which instantaneously ends in darkness. The joys of the wicked cease with their breath: and as these cease, *everlasting sorrows commence.* But then the happiness of those who choose God for their portion, will eminently begin---to such, a natural death will be but the commencement of everlasting life

and blifs---To his people, he delights to shew his mercy---he will give grace and glory.

God is more inclined to do good to those who walk uprightly, than the most affectionate parent is, to be kind and tender to a favorite child---A woman may forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb; but God will never forget those, who put their trust in him; he will never leave you nor forsake you. O Christians! live in his light---bask in his rays---and may you enjoy an unclouded sun, until you be introduced into immortal day. It is but a little while till your sun shall never set, or grow dim, but it will shine, with encreasing brightness, for ever and ever---O then! walk worthy of your high calling and dignity.

3. Are there not some in this assembly, who are under the power of an absolute indifference in respect to all these things, who have never had any discovery of divine glory---to whom worldly prosperity is the most important consideration of felicity? Abundance of this world's goods can satisfy you without God: and do you, my hearers, in this situation, look upon yourselves to be real Christians? Can you read your Bible, and not hesitate about your pretensions to so high and refined a character? Can God be your exceeding joy and great reward, and yet never feel your hearts exult in his existence, perfections, and universal dominion? Can he be your sun, and you never felt the

warmth of his beams, quickening your hearts into love and devotion? Can he be your *centre, rest, and home*; and you never experienced the attractive power of his excellency and glory, drawing your hearts into union with him, and disposing you to long and breathe after a state of greater nearness, and more free and delightful intercourse? Can you live happy without the enlightening beams of God's gracious presence? Can this world satisfy you, and its enjoyments content you? You are often asking, who will shew us any good? but never enquiring, where is God our maker?—Surely you have no reason to consider yourselves as true Christians, whatever your pretensions may be.

Wherefore, O Sinners! you, who have hitherto preferred the world, and its flatteries, awake this day to choose the Lord for your God---Is it not better for you to have God for your friend, than all the world without him? Can the world comfort you in a dying hour? *Can it befriend you before the bar of God?* Can it relieve you, when doomed by the divine sentence to eternal misery?

Wherefore, O Sinners? be persuaded this day to renounce the ways of vanity and sin; and take the God of Israel for your portion, the Sun of Righteousness for your Saviour, and the Spirit of Grace for your Consolation.

And may God of his infinite mercy, work this persuasion in your hearts, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

S E R M O N VI.

THE EVIL AND DANGER OF SECURITY IN SIN.

B Y

ALEXANDER MACWHORTER, D. D.

Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, at Newark, New-Jersey.

M A T T. XXIV. 38, 39.

For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the Ark: and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.

THE discourse, of which these words are a part, was addressed by our Lord to his disciples—The express design of it was to animate them to a steady vigilance and attention to their immortal interest—to preserve them from sloth and stupidity, the *too common effects* which divine patience has upon mankind. This design is sufficiently visible in the account St. Luke gives us of this discourse; but what is here related by St. Matthew, puts the matter beyond all doubt:---

Watch therefore, for ye know not the hour when your Lord doth come.

Hence, the propriety and force of the words of our text, with regard to the general argument and exhortation of our Lord to vigilance, stand thus :

“ There can be no season whatsoever in which it
 “ is proper or safe to grow secure, and neglect a
 “ daily preparation for the solemn appearance of
 “ Christ; either to summon us before him by
 “ death, or to pour out trying and terrible judg-
 “ ments upon our land; or to bring on the general
 “ judgment of quick and dead: I say, there can be
 “ no season in which it can be safe to be secure and
 “ unprepared; because, there is no season in which
 “ he may not come, in one, or other of these ways:
 “ and it would be shocking and irretrievable, to be
 “ surpris'd in an unprepared condition.”

And besides, Christ's coming, both to the general judgment, and to punish wicked communities, will certainly be in a time of general security, as it was in the time of the flood, and destruction of Sodom. It is generally in this condition he comes, and surpris'es men by death. Therefore, it is greatly to be apprehended, that the season of our security and negligence about his coming, will be the very juncture in which he will come, to our great surpris'e, and to the everlasting sorrow of many---we ought then, always, *to watch, and to be ready.*

The words of our text, considered independent on their relation to the general argument, present us with the following observations.

I. We may observe the state of the old world, before the flood. They were perfectly secure--- *They were eating and drinking, &c.* They were eagerly pursuing their pleasure, each in his own way, and according to his own taste. Their attention was universally engaged in those affairs, projects and applications, that were calculated only for a present *sensual happiness*, utterly inapprehensive both of the wrath of God, that was already enkindled against them, and of those fatal effects into which it soon burst out, and mingled them in one common destruction. They had no misgivings of heart with respect to their danger; although the justice of God is always awake, and attentive to the growth and prevalence of vice; or if some of them had any apprehensions of evil, they did not suffer them to mature into serious considerations and sincere repentance. They were seduced either by a passion to imitate the general practice and opinion; or carried away, by an innate desire for sensual gratifications; or overwhelmed in the cares and business of life.

Nor was this insensibility owing to want of sufficient warning. In the sixth chapter of Genesis, God tells us with an original regard to mankind in that day, *that his spirit should not always strive with man.* This, in the strongest man-

ner, implies, that God had remonstrated against their wickedness---used proper methods to reform them, and had given them sufficient assurance of the fatal issue of their impenitence. The Apostle Peter informs, that Jesus Christ, by his spirit, preached to them their danger, and the necessity of repentance. He acquaints us also, that Noah was employed to declare to them, in the name of God, the wickedness and danger of their practices. They had, likewise, the strongest confirmation of the truth of Noah's doctrine, for a great while before their eyes, in that long and tedious labor of his building the Ark. So singular a machine must needs have struck their attention and awakened their curiosity. The use of which, when known, we may well suppose from their temper, did not fail to be matter of pleasantry and ridicule among them. How often did they call him an old foolish fanatic, and wild enthusiast! How much was he the subject of the scoffs and sneers of the gayer sort; while the graver ones among them, who were admired as oracles by the meaner rabble, pronounced his conduct, the height of frenzy and madness. Would not some say, 'see the doating fool, how he toils and labors to build himself a machine, by which he may escape a deluge, that his disordered brain suggests to him is to come.' While others reply, 'Curse the old enthusiast, I wish he was drowned ten thousand fathom deep; for he does nothing but interrupt business, and distract the world with his reveries and nonsense.'

II. We observe, that their wickedness, insensibility and unbelief, continued to the last. The representations of the divine displeasure against them, were utterly disregarded—God's threatenings carried no terror to their hearts, and consequently formed no prevailing argument, or reason for reformation. The denunciations of general ruin, without a speedy change of heart and life, were no doubt looked upon *imaginary and romantic*; fitted, only to alarm weak and superstitious minds, incapable of examining such predictions by the laws of reason, and the perfections of God. We may easily conclude, that they objected to Noah's prophecies, that they could not be true, because they were repugnant to the divine attributes. It was natural to blind, and unbelieving sinners to assert, that it was inconsistent with the mercy and goodness of the common parent of the universe, to destroy so many millions of his creatures, and that too, only for indulging those very appetites with which himself had formed them. How plausible would such arguments be? How well adapted to the taste, and depraved reason of licentious and presumptuous sinners? How would they triumph in this reasoning, as a complete confutation of the falshood and absurdity of all the divine declarations by his servant. "What! might they not say—" "Is not God's mercy and goodness infinite? Do not "all his works proclaim it? Are not his goodness "and benevolence as evident as his existence? But "where is his goodness, or his mercy, upon the doc-

“trine of this romantic fellow, this upstart preacher? Is not this strange divinity grossly unreason-
 “able? Such things cannot come from God, that
 “are plainly contradictory to his known and essen-
 “tial perfections.” Noah, of consequence, must have
 been deemed an old fanatic; mad with new notions,
 and zealous to propagate the infection, and make
 others as mad as himself; or an artful knave, who
 endeavored to dupe mankind to his private purposes,
 under the pretence of a divine commission.

With these principles, with this perversion of reason, it was plainly impossible, that divine threatenings could have their proper effect upon them; or that any means which were judged proper by infinite wisdom should prevail. Hence they quickly fell sacrifices to the falshood of their strong and plausible reasonings. Vain were all attempts to undeceive their minds, and discover the uncertainty of their elaborate arguments. But the event convinced them by an awful experiment, of what their reason could never reconcile with the perfections of God, or admit as worthy of their attention and credit. Their arguments drawn from the nature and perfections of God, mightily comforted their hardened hearts, and supported their blind minds, until the day in which *the fountains of the great deep were broken up*, and then their refuge of lies was swept away; and the conviction of the truth of divine revelation was forced in upon their minds, with all the horrors of despair—Thus ma-

ny, even at this day, pretendedly argue from the divine perfections against divine revelation; and like these unhappy antediluvians, will receive conviction when it is too late, from the deluge of Jehovah's wrath, which they would not believe.

III. We observe, that the vengeance of Heaven executed by a general flood, was to them extremely sudden and surprizing.—They had for a long course of years, the loudest calls to repentance, and the most express warnings of universal ruin, in case of disobedience. Noah, it is probable, was a preacher of righteousness an hundred years, and endeavored to stem the current of general wickedness, by the application of divine threatenings, and exhortations to repentance. In this view, therefore, their destruction was not at all sudden, nor unexpected. But they did not believe the truths of God; the divine threatenings were to them as idle dreams.—*They ate, they drank, they married, and were giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered into the Ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.*—They were sure in themselves no such event would happen—they were sure God was merciful, and in this confidence they blessed themselves, and bid defiance to such shocking and barbarous declarations. They could not, in any shape, believe them, until the fatal event administered demonstration, *with confusion* to their senses—until they found themselves overwhelmed, and strangling in the flood, and the same ven-

geance pursuing them down to Hell. How awful was the security and confidence, in which they were surpris'd! While all were chearful, gay, easy, and happy, sacrificing to pleasure, indulging their natural, and as they imagined, innocent desires, looking for no such thing; they lift up their eyes, and behold, the awful torrent from afar, rolling irresistably along! Oh dreadful consternation! shocking change! In a moment, from mirth, music, tranquillity and joy, to horror, amazement, and despair! Hear how they shriek and howl! but God laughs at their calamity! See how they run hither and thither, mingling without distinction; in distraction, looking for places of refuge and security! See some ascending to the tops of houses, and aspiring domes! Vain expedient! for the impetuous surge overturns their strong places, and confounds their hopes! See millions fleeing to the lofty mountains, before the encreasing flood! But Oh! how fruitless is their attempt! Thousands sink in the vale—Thousands are overtaken upon the brows of the steep hills, and dashed to pieces by the lashing waves, among the craggy rocks—The residue are swept from the deceitful summit, down the long precipice, to deeper ruin! Hark, how they cry for mercy! But alas, it is now too late! These cries might have succeeded, had they been made in time; but then they judged them unnecessary, and that it was too soon: as many, even at this day, put off seeking God, and crying for mercy, until they are surpris'd in death.

IV. We observe, that the circumstances and state of mankind at those seasons in which Jesus Christ will come to punish and judge them, will greatly resemble those at the time of the flood.—They will be times of great security, of eminent inconsideration and carelessness, with respect to the matters of religion and eternity: Seasons in which both wise and foolish virgins will be sleeping; in which profaneness and wickedness will prevail; the love of pleasure, and the love of the world, will be remarkably great and general.

1. This is often the case when Jesus Christ comes to remove particular sinners by death.—It frequently happens that careless and impenitent sinners, who have had many warnings of their danger, and made light of them, are taken away when they least expected such an event. Innumerable are the instances of this sort. How often are men checked in the career of their madness, folly and security, with that awful language, *Thou fool! this night shall thy soul be required of thee.* Oh! my brethren, a state of security is a dangerous state! When sinners cry, *peace, peace,* then sudden destruction cometh; when they imagine themselves most distant from death, judgment, and eternity, then those events are nearest. How tremendous is it, to be arrested by the grim messenger in the midst of scenes of pleasure, or worldly projects, and not one day more allowed to prepare for another state!

2. This is the case when Jesus Christ comes to punish and destroy guilty and impenitent nations and churches.—Nothing is more certain than that in all past ages, seasons of divine judgments on communities, either civil or sacred, have ever been seasons of great security, and reigning impiety.—The truth of this observation is evident with respect to the Jewish nation, in all the public judgments God poured out upon them.—And the conduct of Providence towards this nation, ought particularly to be observed; for it is designed as a specimen of the ordinary methods, in which God will deal with communities that he has distinguished with the honorable relation to himself, as his church and people.—It is evident God never visited them with any public remarkable calamity, but some remarkable public defection is mentioned as the immediate reason and ground of it.—They indeed often disowned the imputation; they denied their guilt; were insensible of any such remarkable degeneracy, for which they should be so severely visited; they refused to accept those judgments as the punishment of their sins; and had the common disease of an unhumiliated heart to exculpate themselves.—But from them we learn, that public judgments on a professing people, are always the ordinary effect, and designed punishment of public declensions from their duty, and regard to the covenant and oaths of God they are under. And their not seeing themselves in this light, nor being affected with them is no argument at all that this is not the case.

3. This will be the case, when Jesus Christ shall be revealed from Heaven to hold the general judgment.—Awful security, and awful wickedness will then prevail; for scarcely will faith be found upon the earth.

There is a day, a dreadful day, fixed by divine decree, when Jesus Christ shall be revealed from Heaven, with his mighty Angels in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them, that know not God, and obey not the Gospel—to call all nations, tongues and languages; all the kindreds of the earth, and every individual that ever existed, to his bar;—to lay open the secrets of every heart—to disclose the hidden springs of action, and determine the real characters of men, and fix their eternal destiny! One would imagine, that the certainty of an event of such high consequence, and everlasting importance, would have an irresistible effect: that it would interest and penetrate every heart, and determine all universally to the most studious and incessant attention to those things, whereby they might be prepared to stand in the awful day! And yet we are assured, notwithstanding, that it will be a time of great and general security. Jesus Christ's coming will be as a thief in the night; when men are in a profound sleep, altogether inapprehensive of danger. *As in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the Ark, and knew*

not until the flood came and took them all away ; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.

I proceed now to close this discourse with a few reflections.

I. How great is the resemblance between our present state, and that of mankind before the flood ! The similitude bears in all respects, and that too with peculiar aggravations on our part. It is so glaring to every serious observer, that the very mention of it were sufficient to bring all to an humble confession, and mournful sense of our danger. But, it is the dreadful unhappiness of sinners, the nearer they approach to judgment and ruin, the more blind and insensible they grow.— This arises from two general causes. 1. The proper nature of sinful courses, which always blind the mind, and harden the heart. 2. The additional judgment of God, who permits the malignity of the human heart to exert itself with less control.— He ceases to apply those usual methods of restraint—gives them up more to themselves—leaves them to the government of their own heart's lusts—denies them restraining grace—takes his spirit from them.

The resemblance between us and the old world, is evident in the following respects.—The universal prevalence of deep security—the great means which God is using with us to reclaim us—and the amazing wickedness which abounds among all ranks of men notwithstanding.

I. The resemblance is evident in the universal prevalence of deep security. Let us look around us, and do we not find in ourselves and others, stupidity and unbelief in its strongest likenesses, to that we see drawn for those beyond the flood? Are we acting any otherwise than they? Are we doing any thing else but *eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage*, buying, selling, planting, building, &c.—though the wrath of God is ready to burst upon our devoted heads!—Are we doing any thing but increasing our guilt, which is already gone up to Heaven? Are we not by adding iniquity to iniquity, blowing up the fury of God Almighty to an unquenchable flame? Are we not walking in security, taking no notice either of his word or providence, as though we were resolved to make trial of what God will do after all his threatenings? Oh foolish people! do you thus provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are you stronger than he? Remember if you thus continue, your feet shall slide in due time. The things that come upon you make haste:—And nothing but repentance—nothing but a speedy entrance into the Gospel Ark—nothing but taking refuge immediately under Emmanuel's wings, can secure you an escape.

II. The resemblance between us and the old world is strong, in respect to the great means God is using with us to reclaim us. Noah was a preacher of righteousness to them, but we have Jesus Christ and his Apostles preaching righteouf-

ness to us. The exhortations to repentance—the warnings of our danger recorded in the scriptures, are very many; and these exhortations and warnings are so clear and pointed, that he that runs may read them. He must be absolutely stupid, and nearly sunk into a state of Atheism, that does not perceive and understand thier voice. They proclaim aloud the height and enormity of our wickedness, and the displeasure of Heaven against us.

How loudly have we been called upon to repent and change our ways! How earnestly and frequently has the importance and necessity hereof been inculcated upon us!—How express have been the warnings we have had, and still have of the danger of our natural courses of sin and pleasure!—How often have the terrors of that wrath, to which we expose ourselves by impenitence, formality and negligence in religion, been painted and exhibited to our view, from the word of God!—How distinctly have the glories and divine rewards of the Gospel been set before us, to induce us to prefer the service and work of Jesus Christ, to all the flattering, delusive, and sinful enjoyments of this world!—How many events have we met with in the course of our lives; to rouse our attention to the vanity of all things below the sun!—*We have had line upon line, and precept upon precept*—and notwithstanding all this, does not an awful and fatal security prevail among us, as it did among the inhabitants of the antediluvian world?

III. The amazing wickedness which abounds among all ranks of men, bespeaks a too great likeness between us and them. It is recorded of them, that *all flesh had corrupted their way, and the earth was filled with violence.* And is not this awfully true with regard to us?—I cannot now pursue this argument in all its parts, or give the black detail of reigning vices, which demonstrate the imitation to be general and true. Would to God that the matters and evidences, applicable to the support of this representation, were less obvious and less abundant!—What a growing contempt for divine revelation takes place among us?—What attempts are daily made to weaken its authority and influence?—Vain are all devices to support virtue by ingenious theories, and labored arguments, when the plain and simple doctrines of the Gospel of Jesus Christ are set aside. Oh! how blasphemous an insult on the perfections of God, is the attempt to substitute other methods to promote virtue in the room of the ever blessed Gospel, in the place of this glorious instrument of Heaven for the support of Religion! Will not a jealous God take vengeance, and confound the designs of all such deistical and antediluvian builders!—But leaving this, what sort of wickedness does not abound among us? How is the name, the dreadful name of God profaned? How often are our ears stunned with hellish oaths, and direful imprecations?—How are God's sabbaths abused? How are the ordinances, and special institutions

of Jesus Christ neglected? What restraint of prayer? What thoughtlessness, respecting all the great realities of eternity, take place? How does beastly drunkenness, and more than beastly uncleanness, in all their horrid forms, defile our land?—And how has love and friendship among mankind ceased? What extortion and injustice—what tricking, defrauding, over reaching, and cheating, almost every where abound?—Alas! how few are of clean hands, how few are of pure hearts!

How are mankind plunged and sunk into iniquity!—How do they add drunkenness to theft, licentiousness to liberty, profaneness to foolish jesting, and to all these, a total neglect of divine admonitions, and yet vainly imagine they shall have peace!—Will not the eternal God cause his jealousy to smoke against such secure and bold transgressors?—Jehovah's wrath is already enkindled, and unless we awake to repentance and reformation, it will surely *burn unto the lowest hell!* It will consume *the young man and the virgin, the suckling also with the man of grey hairs.*

Let us hearken to the divine voice, and not be found proclaiming defiance to the vengeance of Heaven. Oh! that secure, stupid, and careless sinners would make a stand; lay your ways seriously to heart; consider what is likely to become of you, and what you will do at the awful appearance of the Son of Man!

Go, confess your sins ; mourn for your iniquities ; break off from your transgressions ; and cry unto the Lord, and it may be that he will restrain the fierceness of deserved wrath, and bestow blessings upon you.

Let the wicked man forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts ; and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.—Let there be a general preparation. The Lord is on his way. Behold he comes quickly ! Gird up the loins of your minds, and go ye forth to meet him, repenting of your sins, acquiescing in the Gospel plan of reconciliation, observing all the commandments and ordinances of God. But if this advice seem evil unto you, prepare, O Sinners, for judgment ! Prepare to meet an incensed judge ! Our God is a consuming fire !—*Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest ; this shall be the portion of your cup.*

Let it be the fervent prayer of all, that God would awaken the secure, alarm the stupid and inconsiderate, and turn multitudes to righteousness.

The first part of the history of the world is the history of the human race. It is a history of progress and of the struggle for existence. It is a history of the triumph of the good over the evil, and of the victory of the just over the unjust.

The second part of the history of the world is the history of the human mind. It is a history of the development of the human intellect, and of the progress of the human sciences. It is a history of the discovery of truth, and of the conquest of nature.

The third part of the history of the world is the history of the human soul. It is a history of the development of the human spirit, and of the progress of the human religions. It is a history of the search for God, and of the quest for the eternal life.

The fourth part of the history of the world is the history of the human society. It is a history of the development of the human community, and of the progress of the human institutions. It is a history of the formation of the state, and of the establishment of the law.

The fifth part of the history of the world is the history of the human art. It is a history of the development of the human culture, and of the progress of the human arts. It is a history of the creation of the beautiful, and of the expression of the sublime.

The sixth part of the history of the world is the history of the human destiny. It is a history of the development of the human future, and of the progress of the human hopes. It is a history of the aspiration to the infinite, and of the desire for the eternal.

The seventh part of the history of the world is the history of the human love. It is a history of the development of the human affection, and of the progress of the human passions. It is a history of the union of the hearts, and of the triumph of the love.

S E R M O N VII.

GROWTH IN GRACE.

B Y

JOHN H. LIVINGSTON, D. D. S. T. P.

One of the Ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church, New-York.

2 P E T E R iii. 18.

— *But grow in Grace.* —

NOTHING can be more worthy of our attention than the great truths of Religion.— There is no science so sublime in its object, so sure in its principles, or so important in its consequences. Nothing can be conceived more extensive for speculation, and at the same time more immediately influential upon our conduct. Theory and practice are here inseparably connected, and *the acknowledging of the truths* will always lead to *godliness*. A superficial acquaintance with some particular doctrines, and a bigotted attachment to favorite tenets may soon be obtained, and considered by many as an important acquisition. But the least reflection must convince us, that such have reason to conclude, *they are not taught of the Lord, and know nothing yet as they ought to know.*

There is in Religion a connection, a harmony, a chain so firmly united, that it cannot be understood, if taken only in detached parcels. Like a beautiful and useful machine, when deprived of any essential part, the whole is deformed or destroyed. In a coherent system of doctrine, there can be nothing useless, nothing repugnant, nothing which ought not to occupy the very place which the divine author, who composed the whole, has assigned it. What will become of Religion if we embrace any of its doctrines separately? What is the Religion of the Gospel, if the law can justify, or the Redeemer be not honored as the righteousness and strength of his people? What becomes of Religion, if faith be not productive of good works, or an hope is entertained of seeing God without the love and practice of holiness? How mutilated, how changed, how opposite to itself the whole can be made to appear, when only a part is brought forward to view! and how unsafe and wavering must that man remain, who rests satisfied with small attainments, and a partial knowledge of divine truths!

The Apostle Paul reproves the Hebrews for their little progress in knowledge, and urges them to go on unto perfection. There are some truths which may be considered as *principles of the doctrine of Christ*; so plainly revealed, so simple and evident, that mere babes in understanding can receive and digest them. But to be always contented with these, without aiming at farther pro-

gress, would be to feed upon milk, when an advanced age renders it proper to take stronger meat.

In the verse, of which our text is a part, the Apostle Peter also exhorts believers to grow in knowledge. *Grow*, says he, *in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*. He comprises all religious knowledge, all that believers ought to be anxious to attain, as far as it relates to salvation, in knowing the Lord Jesus Christ; and with great propriety, for *in him the fulness of the godhead dwells bodily*. The eternal Son is one with the Father, and is very God. *All the riches of the full assurance of understanding, is found in the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ*. In him also, as mediator, are *hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*; and to him, as the glorious centre, all the lines of Religion are directed. *To know him, therefore, and to experience the power of his resurrection*, was the sum of Paul's desires, and ought to be the highest wish of every believer.—In this life, at best, we *see through a glass darkly*. The clearest manifestations of the Redeemer are but *the bidding of his power*; and the most lively views of faith discover only a *part of his ways*, and prove how little a *portion* is known of him. How little do his people know of that depth of humiliation, to which the Saviour stooped; of the greatness of his sufferings; and of the height of that glory to which their Emmanuel is now exalted!—How little have they discovered of the mystery of their

union with Christ; and of the value of his righteousness! How small is their acquaintance with the ways of the Lord in his sanctuary, and his dealings in providence! After the longest experience, after the greatest progress, there is still a *breadth and length, a depth and height*, which they have not comprehended; there remain riches in the love of Christ which pass their knowledge, and leave an unbounded field for farther investigation. Rest not therefore satisfied with what you have attained, *but grow*, says the Apostle, *in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

But Peter premises as his first and principal exhortation, to *grow in grace*. This may be considered as comprising knowledge, and including still more. The last part of the verse can be viewed as explanatory of the first, while it directs in what way believers are chiefly to grow in grace, namely, by growing in the knowledge of Christ, as we shall directly see.

Without referring you to the context, which would lead us too far from our subject, let it suffice to observe, that the exhortation now before us, is immediately connected with the warning, the Apostle had just given, respecting the abuse of scripture; which was often *wrested, by the unlearned and unstable, to their own destruction*. This gave occasion for the last word of advice, and one of the most important Peter ever wrote, *but grow in grace*. As if the the Apostle had said, whatever others

may do with the scripture, however erroneous in their doctrines, or wicked in their lives they may prove; be you, believers, upon your guard. Beware lest ye be *led away with the error of the wicked*. Although you cannot totally and finally fall from grace, if ever ye have, indeed, been united to Christ, yet ye can *fall from your own steadfastness*; you may lose your comforts, and forfeit your usefulness; you may become involved in darkness, and bring a train of afflictions and chastisements upon yourselves. As an antidote against this, as the best preservative against backsliding, as the sum of all the christian duties, *grow in grace*. Whatever progress you may have made in Religion, you must still proceed. There is no fixed point at which a believer may stop. Each portion of life has its peculiar duties. To what degree soever you have brought your sanctification, unless you carry it farther, go on and persevere, you will act contrary to the spirit and letter of the Gospel. You may be nearer the end than others who have not made the same progress, but you have not yet obtained the prize. You may have performed the duties of youth, but those of manhood and old age remain to be discharged. You may have fulfilled the duties of prosperity, but those of adversity, of sickness, and of dying, are yet to be accomplished. To confine yourselves to a certain circle of duties, comforts and exercises; to stop at any determined period, to be satisfied, with what you have already attained of love, of faith, or holiness, is so contrary to the nature of

true Religion; that whoever finds a reluctance for farther advancement, or feels lukewarm respecting a progress towards higher perfection, has reason to call in question his former attainments, and examine, narrowly, whether the spirit of Christ dwelleth in him.

Religion, like every other principle in the soul of man, is progressive. Wherever it is planted it will increase. This is one never failing mark of its truth and its divinity. It is not only the command of God, but it is the sincere desire of every regenerate soul to *grow in grace*. This is the subject to which your attention is this evening to be called. To assist you in forming right ideas respecting growth in grace, and excite you to attend thereto, is what, as the Lord shall enable me, I now propose. In doing this I must, first, explain the apostolic exhortations; and then, secondly, direct you to the best means for complying with the same.

GROW IN GRACE, this is the exhortation of the apostle, this the solemn charge, expressive of a duty universally binding upon all believers, and extending to Christians of every description. None so young in the service of Christ as to be exempted; and none so old or advanced in station, character or perfection, as to be raised above it. All have need of growth in grace, and the exhortation is addressed to all. To enable you to understand this, I must *first* shew you wherein growth in grace consists. And *then* what is implied in the exhortation.

To know wherein growth in grace consists, it is necessary previously to ascertain the idea that is here to be affixed to the word GRACE. This, in its usual and highest acceptation, means the love of God ; but it means his love considered in a particular view as it is exercised towards sinners, as it has for its object not only the miserable, the helpless and forlorn, but the rebellious, the vile, the unworthy, who have forfeited his favor, and deserve his wrath. Thus, *by grace ye are saved*: that is, not by merit, but by love freely extended to guilty and polluted creatures. And again, *the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men*: that is, the love of God, who so loved the world, as to give his only begotten son, is now by a preached gospel made manifest to Jews and Gentiles, and publicly offered to all, without distinction of nation, age, sex, or character.

But GRACE expresses also, in the language of scripture, the effects of this love, and comprehends all the benefits of the new covenant, as they are freely bestowed and savingly applied to the elect sinner. Thus justification through the imputed righteousness of Christ, is grace. *Being justified freely by his grace*. All that is wrought by the blessed influences of the holy spirit in the souls of his people, is grace. Effectual calling, a new heart, sanctification and perseverance; in one word, whatever is necessary to render believers meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, is all grace. *Of his fulness have we all receiv-*

ed, and grace for grace. The foundation is laid in grace, and when the head stone is brought forth, the redeemed of the Lord will shout, in regard to the whole plan, *grace, grace.*

It is with respect to grace in this last view, we are to understand the apostle in the text, when he exhorts believers to GROW IN GRACE. The love of God, on his part, is not susceptible of increase. It is perfect and absolutely unchangeable. *He* loves with an everlasting love; and whom he loveth, he loveth to the end. But *we* may advance in experiencing the blessed effects of redeeming love. We may grow in the graces of the spirit, and become more universally holy. This is what the apostle means, and this is what I now must endeavor to explain.—Could I content myself in summing up the whole in few words, I might say—to grow in grace is to improve in holiness. It is to become more conformable to the image of the Son of God; more established in the truths of religion; and more genuine, habitual and uniform in all our acts of obedience. But this general view of the subject is not sufficient. To shew you in what it consists, I must descend to particulars. I observe, therefore:—

1. To grow in grace, is *to grow in habitual repentance*; to become more humble and contrite; *to know the plague of our own heart*; and loathe and abhor ourselves on that account more sincerely before God.—The leading exercises of the soul in

conversion, respected the malignant nature and exceeding greatness of our sins. The holy spirit first taught us from the word to know our misery, and mourn over our depraved natures; and he continues, by his blessed operations, to lead us into clearer views of the spirituality of the divine law, and more accurate discoveries of our own vileness and unworthiness. Under such teachings, a greater hatred against sin must arise, a more constant sorrow for it, and ardent longings to be delivered from *the body of this death*. To grow in grace, is to grow in habitual repentance.

2. To grow in grace, is to grow in *faith*. *We are bound*, says the apostle, *to thank God always for you brethren, because that your faith groweth exceedingly*. By adverting to the nature of faith, and what is predicated in the word of God concerning it, you will be able to see, in what respects, the saints may grow in faith, and how essential a part this constitutes of the subject now before us.

Saving faith is not merely the simple act of the understanding, which receives a report, and assents to its truth upon credible evidence; but it is a complex act, comprising also the consent of the will, and conformable exercises of the affections. It is not only a believing there is a Saviour, and even that we need his help; but it is an actual acceptance of him as he is offered in the gospel; a receiving him for ourselves in all his glorious offices, as the Lord our righteousness. But what now

are the effects of this faith? What does it produce? How does it work? We answer in few words:—By faith the soul becomes united to Christ. *He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.* The spirit of Christ is the bond of this union upon his part, and faith upon the part of believers.—Faith is that grace by which we are justified. *Being justified by faith.*—“Not that we are
 “ acceptable to God upon account of the worthi-
 “ nefs of our faith, but because only the satisfac-
 “ tion and righteousness of Christ is our righte-
 “ ousness before God, and we cannot receive and
 “ apply the same any other way than by faith on-
 “ ly.”—Faith purifies the heart; and *without works it is dead.*—It magnifies the Lord Jesus: *Unto you who believe he is precious.* It introduces the soul to solid peace and rest. *We which have believed do enter into rest.*—Faith overcomes the world.—Faith leads to a patient waiting for the accomplishment of the promises. *He that believeth, shall not make haste.* It directs to the throne of grace, and enables the saints *to draw near with a true heart.*—It is a grace more precious than gold, and the believer must expect to have it tried. In a word, faith is the gift of God. It is the *substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.* It is that by which the believer lives. He walks by faith; and it will abide until it has performed its whole work, and is at last changed into vision. *I live, said Paul, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me* &

and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

From this general view, you may anticipate what is meant by growing in faith. It is to become more confirmed in the truth; and, from doubts and fears, to rise into a strong and filial confidence. It is to realize the union which is effected with Christ, and more habitually to derive all needed supplies from him, as our living and covenant head. We grow in faith, when it becomes more active, vigorous and productive of good works. When we are enabled in the spiritual warfare to take *the shield of faith, and therewith quench the fiery darts of the wicked.* And when in the darkest seasons and the severest trials, we learn to say, *though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.*— Then we improve, when we are taught more cheerfully to submit to the yoke of Christ; to look unto Jesus; and to esteem it our highest honor and happiness to deny ourselves, take up our cross daily, and follow him. *Lord, said the disciples, increase our faith.* To grow in grace, is to grow in faith.

3. To grow in grace, is to improve in our love to God. To love God, *is to set him always before us, as seeing him who is invisible;* to meditate upon his glorious perfections; and feel a fervent outgoing of the heart towards him, as the first, the greatest, and the best of beings, the treasure, the portion

of the soul, our Father and our God. We grow in love when we increase in our desires to become holy as he is holy, and prefer his communion and fellowship above our chief joys. When having tasted that he is gracious, and experienced his love shed abroad upon our hearts, we are pained at his absence, and anxious to *draw near to him*, and have him *lift up the light of his countenance upon us*. Then we grow in love, when we feel it becoming *strong as death*, and engaging us to live for him, *whose we are and whom we serve*. When we can lose the creature, and yet find a satisfying portion in God. And when we can truly say, not only with respect to the earthly sanctuary, but to his courts in glory: *My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God! because thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live. I will lift up my hands in thy name. My soul shall be fed as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips. To grow in grace is to grow in love to God.*

4. To grow in grace is to advance in zeal for the glory of God. Innumerable motives press upon the mind to engage us to glorify him. *Whether we live we are the Lord's, and whether we die we are the Lord's, whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. We are witnesses for God; a people formed for himself, that we should shew forth his praise.* When we understand these motives better, when we feel their influence more,

and by these are urged to dedicate all we are and have to God, and improve our influence upon others around us to do the same, then we grow in zeal. We grow in zeal when we become more uniform in our obedience, more single in our views, and more fervently active in shewing forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light. *The zeal of thine house, says the Psalmist, hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me. Horror hath taken hold upon me, because of the wicked that forsake thy law. Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end! O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!*

There is indeed frequently in young converts, a zeal without knowledge; a boldness of spirit, unrestrained by prudence, and untaught by experience. Like Jehu, they are ready to say—*come with me and see my zeal for the Lord.* The principle, in part, is right, although it is mixed with unhallowed passions, and tainted with pride. But a more extensive acquaintance with the deceitfulness of their own hearts, and maturer attention to the nature and difficulties of the Christian life, is found soon to humble their forward spirits, and lead them into the paths of sober and genuine zeal—*It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing;* and the Lord Jesus gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. It is proper to serve God, not with a luke-warm

soul, which *offers the lame and the sick*, but with our whole heart, with raised affections, and with fervency of spirit. To grow in grace is to grow in zeal.

5. To grow in grace is to become more *heavenly minded*. The Redeemer has brought life and immortality to light, and opened prospects to our view, which could only be obtained by a divine revelation. He has raised his people, especially under the New Testament dispensation, to exalted privileges, and made *us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*. To comprehend these privileges more clearly; to relish them higher; and have our conversation more and more as citizens of Heaven, is to grow in heavenly mindedness.— When the temper and views of strangers and pilgrims prevail in us, and we find our affections more placed upon things above; when the work of Heaven is more pleasant and habitual, our worship spiritual, and our praises affectionate, then we become more heavenly minded. To meditate upon *the heavenly Jerusalem, the innumerable company of Angels, and the general assembly of the church, and first-born which are written in Heaven*; to feel an habitual desire of joining with them:—

As with a Seraph's voice to sing!

To fly as on a Cherub's wing!

Performing with unwearied hands,

The present Saviour's high commands!

to be weaned from this world; willing to stay, and yet desirous to depart and be with Christ; this

is to become more heavenly minded, and this is to grow in grace.

6. Finally, to grow in grace, is to be *emptied of all dependance upon ourselves, and practically to constitute the blessed Jesus our all and in all.* He must increase, but we must decrease. We take him for our all when *first we believe*; but what that fully implies, we do not, when first we believe, yet understand. To grow in grace is the unfolding of that mystery. It is experimentally to know that Christ is of God made unto us, *sanctification.* That in the Lord we have not only righteousness, but in him also we have *strength.* It is to experience that when we are weak, then we are strong, and when we grow downward in humility, patience and resignation, then we most effectually grow upwards in holiness. — In this last particular, perhaps more than in any other, the saints are enabled to discern their growth in grace. They become in their own eyes, more vile, more empty and helpless, while the grace of Christ proves sufficient for them, and his *strength is made perfect in their weakness.*

Time would fail me to enumerate all the fruits of the spirit, or descend to all the branches of duty in which a growth in grace is exemplified. Let it suffice to close this part of the subject, by saying in one word, which sums up the whole, that as far as our wills become conformable to the will of God, so far and no farther we grow in grace.—To

this we are exhorted in the text. This distinguishes the real Christian from the hypocrite, the living saint from the dead formalist. To this the principle implanted in regeneration will prompt us; and this the Redeemer expressly declares to be characteristic of his disciples. *Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit. I am the vine, ye are the branches, he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me ye can do nothing. Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples.*

Having seen what is meant by GROWING IN GRACE, permit me now, in a few short observations, to shew you what is *implied* in this exhortation. And,

1. It is evident, to grow in grace, implies that a soul has *received* grace. The tree must be planted before it can grow. The Lord is to be sought and served *after the due order*. The exhortation indeed extends to all who read the word. It is the duty of all men to grow in grace. But the unconverted must obtain grace, they must first receive the Lord Jesus as their Saviour, before they can follow him; the principle of holiness must be formed in the heart by regeneration, before it can possibly grow.

2. Growing in grace, implies an *actual increase*. It is not a mere nominal, but a real; not a fictitious, but a true and substantial advancement in holiness. Who ever has grown in grace, is become wiser and

better than he was before. It is opposed to a stupid satisfaction with past attainments, and especially, to all backsliding. It has its own peculiar marks and evidences, by which it may be distinguished from all counterfeits, and is essentially different from the highest accomplishments which the natural man can possibly possess.

By study and attention, an extensive view not only of science in general, but of religion, may be obtained. The doctrines can be known, their connections observed, and the arguments by which they are supported, properly brought forward. Reason and revelation supply materials for vast erudition, and this, when joined to great gifts, may recommend a man to the world; but after all, that man may fail of the grace of God, and his knowledge only serve to puff him up. *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and have not charity, I am nothing. Thou believest there is one God, thou doest well, the devils also believe and tremble. A mere growth in knowledge or gifts, is not a growth in grace.*

Education, connections and prejudice, may create a violent attachment to some particular doctrines and forms of worship; and in this it is easy to go great lengths; it is very easy to cry, *the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord,* without pos-

possessing the least degree of holiness or love to the Lord of the Temple—To grow in *bigotry* is not to grow in grace.

From a weakness of understanding, from passions liable to be quickly moved, and from unsettled principles, the human mind is susceptible of strange impressions, and is often wrought up to most extravagant heights; but a growth in *enthusiasm* is no growth in grace.

Our holy Religion is a most reasonable service. Its principles will bear the severest scrutiny, and believers can give a reason of the hope that is in them. Nothing therefore that is dishonorable to God, unworthy of man, or that is not founded upon scripture, must be considered as genuine. *To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.*

3. The exhortation to grow in grace implies, that *holiness is progressive*; that religion, when it first begins in the heart, is not so extensive; not, if I may use the expression, so complete in all its parts, so distinguished in all its features, as it afterwards becomes. It is the usual way of God, in all his works, to rise from smaller beginnings to perfection; and we know it is so in religion. By progressive steps his people are led, and they become gradually more and more prepared to glorify him on earth, and enjoy him in heaven. Hence, believers are compared to babes, to children, to

young men and to fathers. The very words imply very different degrees of knowledge, strength, usefulness and perfection.

4. This exhortation implies a *positive duty* incumbent upon all believers, to desire and strive to grow in grace. It is their duty, because it is the express command of God—because it is promised to all his people—and because it has always been the wish of the saints, their *principal* prayer and constant practice. The passages in scripture which refer to each of these are so numerous, that to mention them would be almost to repeat the bible. As a proof respecting the practice of the saints, let me only remind you of the apostle Paul. ‘Do you know,’ (to use the words of a very celebrated preacher*) ‘do you know a greater than Paul? Can you conceive virtue in a more eminent degree? Behold a man fired with zeal, making what he thought the cause of God his own cause, God’s enemies his enemies, the interest of God the interest of himself! Behold a man who turns his attention to truth, and, the moment he discovers it, embraces and openly avows it! Behold a man, who not content to be an ordinary Christian, and to save himself alone, aspiring at the glory of carrying through the whole world for public advantage, that light which had illuminated himself!—Behold a man, preaching, writing!—What am I saying? Behold a man, suffering, dying, and sealing with his blood the truths he taught! An ar-

* Saurin Sermon. 1. Cor. ix. 26, 27.

dent zealot, a sincere convert, an accomplished minister, a bleeding martyr!—Shew me in the modern or primitive Church, a greater character than Paul! Let any man produce a Christian who had more reason to be satisfied with himself, and who had more right to pretend that he had discharged all his duties! Yet this very man, this Paul, *forgot those things which were behind!* This very Paul was *pressing forward!* This is the man who feared he should be *a cast away!* And you *smoking flax, you bruised reed,* you who have hardly taken root in the Christian soil, you who have hardly a spark of love to God, do you think your piety sufficient? Are you the man to leave off endeavoring to make new advances?"

5. To add no more, this exhortation implies, that as it is our duty to attend to this one thing, so we may be assured that God has provided proper *means* for our obtaining the same. Sanctification, considered on the part of God, and as wrought by him in our souls, is one of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and inseparably follows after justification. But he deals with us as rational beings, and therefore, sanctification considered on our part, becomes an essential duty; and we must see to it, that we are faithful and diligent in the use of those means which God has appointed, and which are wisely calculated to produce a growth in grace. But what are those means? In what way, and by what method can this great end be best attained?

The reply to these enquiries was the SECOND thing I promised, and which I now intended to make:—But the subject is too important to be slightly passed over, and to do justice to it, will require more time than is allotted to our present exercise. I shall therefore reserve this, with an application to the whole, as the substance of another discourse. And shall now close, with only requesting you seriously to reflect upon the duty to which we have been exhorted.—GROW IN GRACE! How great, how solemn a charge! Like a voice from Heaven, it addresses us with authority divine, and love inexpressible! A voice, similar to that which called to the apostle in the Apocalypse, *come up hither!*

Adore, my brethen, the God of grace, and bless his holy name for providing a ransom!—*What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.* A new and living way is consecrated for us, and we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. How sure the atoning efficacy of his death! How rich the justifying merit of his righteousness! For his sake the holy spirit will dwell with men, and powerfully apply what the Redeemer purchased. He renews their souls, bestows his graces, and by a progressive sanctification, prepares them *as a bride adorned for her husband.*

But is this the great work which God has wrought? Is this the work which he has been carrying on in the hearts of his people in every age? And are there thousands now upon earth, who are united to Christ, and, by growing in grace, are preparing to dwell forever with him? Let it alarm your minds, and excite in you most earnest and fervent desires to participate in the same blessing: O that you may obtain grace to surmount every obstacle, and resolve to join the company of the redeemed! O that you may say, and perform what you say, *we will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you!*

This world is the first stage of our existence.— Here we are preparing for future scenes, where our state will be unalterably fixed, in happiness or wo. Now is the accepted time for us, *behold now is the day of salvation.* Dream not of any probation hereafter. From hell there is no reprieve. The wicked will go away with the irrevocable curse of the Supreme Judge, and remain sealed down into an everlasting, an absolutely everlasting punishment. There scripture leaves them; *and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever.* While life then remains, and the means of grace are enjoyed, harden not your hearts and wrong not your own souls. The Son of God has come to you in a preached gospel; see that you reverence him.— *Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little:—Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.* Amen.

S E R M O N VIII.

GROWTH IN GRACE.

B Y

JOHN H. LIVINGSTON, D. D. S. T. P.

One of the Ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church, New-York.

2 P E T E R iii. 18.

— *But grow in Grace.* —

THE service in the Temple, under the Old Testament, was fitted to the dispensation of the Church before the coming of the Messiah. The types and sacrifices directed the views of believers to the Lamb of God, who was to take away the sins of the world; and when their faith was in exercise, they attended the offerings with raised affections, and surrounded the altar with songs of praise. At their three great stated feasts, they repaired to Jerusalem with great willingness, and cheerfully surmounted the difficulties and discouragements which attended them on the way. The Psalmist celebrates this in the 84th Psalm, and pronounces a blessing upon those, *in whose hearts are the ways of them.* Who having fixed their happiness in God as their highest end, rejoice

in all the ways which lead to him, and are faithful in using the means he has appointed to strengthen their graces, and keep up their communion with him. *They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.* As they travelled towards the temple, their company increased by the accession of more from the towns through which they passed; and with respect to individuals, instead of wearying with the fatigues of the journey, they found their strength recruited, the nearer they came to Jerusalem.—What is said of the Israelites in that Psalm, is fully accomplished, in the highest sense of the words in all believers, under the New Testament dispensation. *They go from strength to strength.* They grow in grace, and shall at last become perfect in glory. The righteous shall hold on their way, and they that have clean hands shall be *stronger and stronger*.—They are changed from one degree of glorious grace to another, until at length *every one of them appeareth before God in Zion.* Blessed therefore is the man *in whose heart are the ways of them.* Who loves, and earnestly improves the means of grace, because of their connection with the end, and has no care, delight or pleasure so near his heart.—What those means of grace are, we now, my brethren, are particularly to consider.

In a former discourse upon growth in grace, I proposed—

I. To explain the exhortation of the Apostle.
And,

II. To direct you to the best means for complying with it.

The *first* I have finished.—It now remains to attend to the *second*. What are the MEANS appointed of God? In what way, and by what method can we best attain a growth in grace?—I shall first premise a *general* answer, and then descend to *particulars*.

FIRST, I answer in *general*, that we cannot expect to grow in grace without *vigorous exertions*. The progress of Christians is always mentioned in scripture, by terms which imply the most active and resolute efforts. It is called a warfare, a wrestling, a race; and the exercises of believers are described as such, which call up all their attention, and require their utmost exertions. They are to give *all diligence*, to be *strong*, to quit themselves *like men*, to *watch* and to be *sober*; they are to *strive to enter in*, and in a certain sense, are to use violence, *for the violent take it by force*. The obstacles which render such efforts necessary, are not on the part of Religion, in itself considered, *for the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace*; but they arise from the remaining depravity in our own hearts; that *law in our members*, which wars against the law of our minds, and too often brings us *into captivity to the law of sin*. We are not therefore to suppose when we are justified by believing in Christ, our whole work is done. Then first we put on *the armour*, and must *fight the good fight of*

faith before we can obtain the crown. If we sleep, the enemy will soon sow tares; our corrupt natures, before we are aware of the danger, will prevail against us, and sins and lusts which for the time appear dead, will arise and put on new strength. It is *the hand of the diligent that maketh rich*, as well in Religion, as in the common affairs of life. To grow in grace we must be *active*, we must be *vigilant*. Again, I answer in general, that to grow in grace, the believer must always remember his total dependance for direction and assistance in every duty, upon the Lord Jesus. *Work out*, says the Apostle, *your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his own good pleasure*. Exertions on our part are altogether compatible with the operation of God in and upon us. So far from proving an objection against salvation through grace; this very union of duty and promise, of our efforts and the divine aid, is a strong argument of its truth, and recommends it as worthy of all acceptance. These very exertions prove that of ourselves we are insufficient, and that our *life is hid with Christ in God*. We are not called to this warfare in our own strength, or sent out upon our own charge. *My son*, says Paul to Timothy, *be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus*.—Without remembering this, the Christian will find himself, however well furnished in other respects, like David when girded in the armour of Saul; incumbered with weight, but unfit for the combat. *I cannot go with these,*

said the stripling hero to the monarch ; and I cannot go with these, will be the reply of every believer, whom experience has taught ; but *I will go in the strength of the Lord God : I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only.*

But let me specify particulars, and enumerate some of the principal means, which are most efficacious, with the divine blessing, to promote our growth in grace :

The *first* I shall name and recommend to you is, a frequent meditation upon the once crucified but now exalted Saviour. This I name first, not only because it is a leading motive, but because our Apostle has mentioned it in this very verse before us, as most intimately connected with growth in grace.

In the life of the blessed Jesus, we have the brightest display of the beauty of holiness. The law of the Lord was within his heart. Zeal for his Father's glory like a fire consumed him. *He went about doing good.* What an example ! What love to God ! What love to man ! How holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners ! How amiable religion appears in him ; and how indelible the impressions which a believing meditation upon the life of Christ must make upon the soul ! When Moses returned from conversing with Jehovah in the mount, his face shone ; and frequent converse with the holy Saviour will make believers shine, and shed a lustre upon all their conduct. Beholding his life will change them into the same

image, and compel the world to acknowledge *that they have been with Jesus.*

But in the death of Christ, an equal if not a superior motive, is found to engage us to fervent holiness. The malignant nature of sin appears in contrasting it with the law of God; but it is never seen in all its odious and accursed colors so clearly as when viewed in a crucified Saviour. God *spared not* his only Son, but delivered him up to all the demands of divine justice, when he made *his soul an offering for sin.*—Who can remember the agonies of Gethsemane, the horrors, pains, and conflicts of the cross, and not find an abhorrence of sin excited in his soul? Who, when meditating on the sufferings of the Redeemer, can refrain from exclaiming; shall I cherish those lusts which murdered my Saviour!—shall I dishonor God with my iniquities, and renew that guilt which nothing less than the precious blood of his Son could expiate! By the cross of Christ *the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world!*

The whole character of the mediator, his glorious person, his important offices, the gracious errand upon which he came, the wonderful methods by which he finished his work, and the faithfulness and compassion which he now exercises while seated on his throne, are all calculated, when viewed in faith, and frequently meditated upon, to constrain us henceforth not to live unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us, and rose again. By this we shall grow in grace.

But *another* mean, and one absolutely necessary for growing in grace is, the *word of God* ; the frequent reading of it in secret, the hearing of it explained in public, and attending faithfully upon the ordinances.—In the holy scriptures the soundest principles of morality are taught, striking examples are exhibited, and the most animating sanctions of rewards and punishments are produced. *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness.* It is through the truth that God sanctifies his people. *His word is truth.* But to profit by the word, it is necessary to attend to its genuine meaning ; to view it not only in detached passages, but in its connection, and thus endeavor to understand the design and scope of the holy spirit. There are, however, some important texts, which are more immediately calculated to direct, to warn and to encourage the soul in the practice of holiness. These ought to be fully digested, laid up in the memory, and by frequent meditation rendered familiar. The Emperor Antonius, gave this lesson to himself ;—“ As
“ surgeons always carry their instruments with
“ them, to be ready for any sudden emergency ;
“ so let what you have learned be prompt, and
“ ready at hand, to direct you in whatever relates
“ to things divine or human.*” And Seneca relates this sentiment of Demetrius the Cynic :—“ It is
“ better to retain a few precepts of wisdom, and

* Lib. iii. sect. 13.

“ have them familiar, and ready for immediate
 “ use, than to learn many things, and after all,
 “ not be able to produce them when they are
 “ needed.*” If heathen philosophers could give
 such lessons respecting their systems of morality, and
 if they found so much benefit by this method, how
 much more must it be our duty and advantage to
 draw water from the pure fountain, and have al-
 ways some texts of scripture ready and applicable
 to every duty, temptation or trial. This David
 experienced ; *how sweet are thy words unto my taste !
 yea sweeter than honey to my mouth. Through thy
 precepts I get understanding ; therefore I hate every
 false way. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a
 light unto my path.* This the apostle recommends—
*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wis-
 dom.* And this our Lord has taught by his exam-
 ple, when he answered the tempter—*it is writ-
 ten.*—

The ordinances of the sanctuary are also pecu-
 liarly calculated to promote growth in grace. It
 is by *the foolishness of preaching*, that God enlarges
 the kingdom of his Son ; by this he subdues sin-
 ners to his obedience, and by this he reclaims
 backsliders, builds up his people, and prepares
 them for glory. The word and sacraments are the
 green pastures into which he leads his flock ;—
 there he meets with them, and makes them *to rest
 at noon.* All therefore who desire to grow in grace,
 must be diligent in reading the scriptures, and es-

* De beneficiis lib. vii. cap. i.

teem it their duty and privilege to attend the ordinances ; for these are the established means appointed of God, and there he bestows the blessing. A *third* particular I mention as necessary to promote a growth in grace, is a practical acknowledgment of the necessity of the constant *influences of the holy spirit*. He dwells in his people as in his temples ; he is given to them as the spirit of adoption, to work in them the temper and confidence of children. He is the comforter to lead them into the truth, and shine upon his own work in their souls. But he is especially the sanctifier, the creator of the new heart, and the promoter of holiness in all his saints. Live then under an habitual sense of your dependance upon his blessed operations. *Quench not the spirit. Grieve not the holy spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption.* But plead daily with the Psalmist—*Cast me not from thy presence, and take not thy holy spirit from me. O send out thy light and thy truth, and let them lead me !*

In connection with this, it is proper next to name *prayer*, as an efficacious mean for growing in grace. Whatever may be said of the prayer of nature, it is certain from scripture and experience, that grace teaches a sinner to pray from proper principles, and in a right manner. The holy spirit helps the infirmities of his people in this important duty. They are made to love prayer.—They delight in the exercise, because it introduces them to *the fellowship of the Father and his son Jesus*

Christ; and because it is an established rule in the dealings of God with his children, that *the Lord will be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do for them whatever he has promised.* Be much then in this duty. *Faint not; but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.*

What I shall mention as a *fifth* mean for obtaining growth in grace is, *self examination.* A partiality for ourselves, and the deceitfulness of our hearts, will prompt us to draw favorable conclusions, and determine we are something, when perhaps we are nothing. What can be better calculated to prevent pride, and teach us our true character, than a frequent and accurate examination of ourselves? By this we may learn whether we grow or not; whether we increase in the knowledge of God our saviour, love him more, and serve him better, than we formerly did. Heathen moralists have been exemplary in this duty. It was an observation of Seneca, “that every day
 “ the soul should be called to render an account to
 “ itself. Sextius,” says he, “did this. At the
 “ close of every day, before he retired to rest, he
 “ interrogated his soul—which of your lusts have
 “ you conquered this day? What vice have you
 “ resisted? In what respect are you better than
 “ you were? Can there,” says the moralist, “be a-
 “ ny thing more excellent than thus to conclude
 “ the day? How peaceable, how exalted, how free
 “ one feels, when his soul is either commended or

“ admonished, and, as a watchman and secret censor, is conscious of its own conduct.”*—Shall men under the influence of natural religion speak and act thus? And will not Christians, who are taught by a divine revelation, and seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, under the sure guidance of the Captain of their salvation, be equally attentive to their conduct? Shall heathen be watchmen and censors, and will not believers examine themselves? Go, my brethren, and do likewise; do more than they did, and daily search into your *principles* as well as conduct, if ever you expect to grow in grace.

I might add many other excellent and approved duties which are immediately connected with growth in grace; but I have already mentioned as much as your attention and patience will bear.—I shall therefore only add, by barely naming them, a frequent renewal of your covenant with God in Christ;—a chearful bearing of reproof;—and an attentive observation of the providence of God.

These, all these in their proper time and order, are the means best calculated to promote growth in grace. *And if these things be in you and abound, they make you, that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. If ye do these things ye shall never fail; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

* Seneca, lib. iii. de Ira, cap. 36.

My brethren, you have seen wherein growth in grace consists, and what it implies : you have also seen the means appointed of God, and the necessity of improving these means for obtaining that invaluable blessing. The whole is practical, and many have doubtless applied the truths to their own souls as I proceeded. Something, however, must be added, to direct to the improvement which all ought to make of this important subject. From what you have heard then, learn,

First, that true religion is a real and inestimable acquisition. It is not a fiction :—It is not bigotry, superstition, or a devised fable :—It is not the mark of a mean, but of a great mind ;—It is wisdom in the understanding, and rectitude in the will and affections. The man who is truly religious, is born again. He is brought out of darkness into marvellous light. The principle of holiness is implanted in his soul, and, like the returning prodigal, he comes home to his father. How great a change ! What an unspeakable blessing ! It is worthy of God to give, and ought to be the highest object of our desires to receive. Without this, it is impossible *to enter into the kingdom of God*, or experience the exercises and consolations of his people.—Religion is profitable with respect to *the life that now is*, as well as of *that which is to come*. It prompts to a zealous discharge of every duty ; and, in a moral view, it renders a person greatly superior to what he was before his conversion.—Religion forms a better parent or child ; a better

magistrate or subject ; a better master or servant ; and a better friend and member of society, than, without it, can possibly be formed. It suppresses the baser passions, suggests the noblest views, and animates the soul to *be rich in good works*. No principles ever known among men, are so efficacious in promoting holiness, and none actually abound in good works so much as those, who feel the constraining influence of the doctrines of grace.

Let the enemies of revelation, let the scoffers, therefore, learn to think and speak with reverence of what bears the stamp of divinity, and is so essential even to the good of society. They are enemies to mankind as well as to God, who ridicule sacred things, and oppose the progress of the gospel. You, who are of this class, may glory in your growing numbers, and by your sophistry and impudence expect to drive religion from the field ; but know, that it is supported from on high ; it has triumphed over much more formidable antagonists, and will live and grow against all the opposition of the gates of hell. And with respect to yourselves, be assured, that however much you may be esteemed on other accounts, yet as infidels and scoffers, you are pitied and despised by the wise and good. And know also of a certainty, that if you persevere and die in the same mind you now are, you will be forever shut out from the presence of that God whom you never loved, and from those blessings which you never relished, nor

fought. But should convictions of sin and guilt ever arise in your heart, you will then find that the religion of nature is not sufficient for your salvation. It may teach you something of your misery, but it is from the gospel, that very gospel which you now affect to despise, you can alone learn what you *must do to be saved*.

As to you who profess the religion of Christ, and receive the Bible as the standard of your faith and practice, what conclusion do you draw from the subject you have heard? Will mere orthodoxy in doctrines; will regularity in your conduct, or punctuality in worship, render you truly religious? Will these produce pardon for your sins, or make you meet for glory? Alas! in all these you may abound, and yet have no love to God, or sincere submission to the Lord Jesus. To constitute vital piety, and make you a real disciple of the Redeemer, you must obtain a new heart, and by faith become united to Christ,

Shall I alarm your fears by appealing to the terrors of the law? Shall I arraign your consciences at the dread tribunal of your Judge? Shall I remind you that you have to do with the *living God*, who is, out of Christ, *a consuming fire*? Shall I repeat, that without holiness no man can *see God*? I will rather at present plead with you, and, as a humble suppliant, beseech you to be reconciled to God. What will it avail to have a name to live, if yet you are dead? To toil through duties, and

profess religion, without feeling its power, or sharing in its comforts? What will you be profited, if you gain the whole world, and lose your own souls? Will riches, fame or wisdom, will pleasure, or any other acquisition, ultimately benefit you, if God is not your father, if Jesus is not your saviour, and you have not the spirit of Christ? This is the one thing needful—Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all necessary blessings will be added unto you. O that you may hear the voice of love, which invites the *weary and heavy laden* to come; which repeats the call to all who *will*, and declares that he who cometh, *shall in no wise be cast out*. Come in all your guilt and unworthiness, and rest not until you have obtained repentance and faith, from the exalted Saviour. Both are his gift, and you lie at his mercy. This is your first step; this you must experience before you can grow in grace.

Are there any present who are blessing themselves with the remembrance of some former convictions, and rest in these as sufficient and complete? Our present subject brings a message to such. If you are contented with your past experiences, if you can sit down satisfied because you have joined with others in worship, when perhaps there was a revival of religion, if you are not troubled with your own wicked heart, and have no desire for improving in holiness, you have reason to be alarmed. The text administers no immediate comfort to you. Instead of telling you

to grow in grace, I must in faithfulness declare to you, that there is reason to fear you have never had grace. Your work has not been in truth.—You have rested short of Christ.—You are yet in your sins.—O perish not at the threshold! Let not the character of an almost Christian satisfy you; but look unto Jesus.—Attend to the first works speedily, that Christ may give you life.

But *secondly*, we have seen that wherever grace is implanted in the soul it becomes an active principle, it grows, it is a fountain of living water springing up into everlasting life. Let all then, who have obtained the unspeakable happiness and honor of believing in Christ, adopt the language and sentiment of Paul. *Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* Have you received Christ Jesus as your Lord and Redeemer, then walk in him. Put on the whole armour of God, and learn *to fight the good fight of faith.* Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure. Lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset you, and *run with patience the race that is set before you.* Look unto Jesus, and so run that ye may obtain. So run, *not as uncertainly, so fight, not as one that beateth the air,*

Strive to preserve the clearest evidences of your justification, and conscientiously improve your talents, *for to him that hath shall be given.* Remember, that to glorify God by a humble and holy walk; to promote the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom; to do good to others, and fulfil all the duties of your respective stations, are the worthy objects which grace inspires. In performing these you shine as lights in the world, you glorify your heavenly Father, and most effectually work out your own salvation. To these you are called, and these as you grow in grace, will become more and more habitual, pleasant and easy. Be not satisfied, O believer! with your past attainments; the half has not been told you of the comforts of religion, of communion with God, and of the manifestations of Christ to the souls of his people. Be not contented with your former exertions in the service of your Lord; the half has not been done of what you ought to do, or what through grace you can perform. Look at some of your brethren who have felt the constraining power of his love, and see what they have done, and suffered for their blessed master. What zeal! What self-denial! What animated worship! What fervent love! What laborious efforts to promote the glory of God, and bear a testimony against the prevailing sins of their day and generation, have characterized many in the church of Christ!—Go believer! go, and endeavour to imitate them. As long as life and breath remain, let all be devoted to the

service of your exalted Saviour. And while gratitude unites with faith and love, you will never judge you have done too much for him, who died for you.—In choice and in affections you have left all for Jesus, and have openly associated with the people of God: you delight in their company and are not ashamed of Christ.—Perhaps some of us present have dedicated our whole lives to his immediate service in the gospel, and given up all the flattering prospects of wealth and preferment in the world for his sake. But we have none of us suffered persecution, or yet *resisted unto blood*. We have none of us endured what many of his dear children have frequently sustained. “As for us,” says Justin Martyr, speaking of the Christians of his day, “As for us that have entertained the religion of the holy Jesus, yourselves know very well, that there is nothing throughout the world that is able to subdue or affright us out of our profession, Nothing is more evident than though our heads be exposed to swords and axes, our bodies fastened to the cross; though thrown to wild beasts, and harassed out with chains, fire, and all other instruments of torment, yet do we not depart from our profession. Nay the more these things happen to us, the faster do others flock over to the name of Jesus, and become pious and devout followers of Christ.” “Amongst us,” says Cyprian, “there flourishes strength of hope, firmness of faith, a mind erect amidst the ruins of a tottering age, an immovable virtue, a patience serene and chearful,

and a soul always secure and certain of its God." Instead of producing particular instances in which these declarations were abundantly verified; let me only repeat the noble answer which the celebrated old Polycarp made before the tribunal of the Proconsul. "These fourscore and six years have I served Christ, and he never did me any harm, and how then can I blaspheme my master and my Saviour!"—In this manner Christians formerly spoke and acted; and while the same Saviour, the same relation and grace remain, an obligation continues for the same sentiments, and a similar boldness and zeal.

Are any of you, while I am speaking, conscious of having proved false to your vows, and stand chargeable with backsliding instead of growing in grace? Alas, my brethren! you have robbed your souls of many comforts; you have brought reproach upon the holy religion you profess, and it is an unspeakable mercy if you have been kept back from *presumptuous sins*, and not given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. But hear with gratitude and astonishment, ye backsliders! The exhortation to grow in grace is addressed also to you. The unchangeable Jesus is waiting to restore you. He is Jehovah Rophi, the Lord that healeth thee. And his language to you this day is, *return ye backsliding children and I will heal your backslidings*. O let it be the language of your souls, we come unto thee compassionate Saviour! *We come unto thee for thou art the Lord our God!* To re-

turn is your first step towards growth in grace. *Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen and repent, and do the first works.* To yourselves take all the shame and guilt, and let none presume to make God the author of their sin. *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God.* God forbid! *You have not so learned Christ.* You are convinced that *every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lusts and enticed, and then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin.* Be deeply humbled, and confess your sins to him, who has declared that he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. Though a sense of guilt may prompt you to say, *I am cast out of thy sight,* yet look, my brethren, *look again to his holy temple.* Look in faith to Jesus, and you will find, *he is the propitiation for our sins.* May the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit, offered himself without spot to God, *purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God!*

But there are many of the children of God, whose souls are cast down from a failure of those vigorous exercises which they once had; and who, notwithstanding they cannot charge themselves with any positive backslidings, are yet often crying out, *O that it was with me as in days past! Will the Lord cast off for ever, will he be favorable no more!* Ye tossed as with a tempest, remember that *this is your infirmity!* The exercises of his people are not always of the same kind. Believers pass through various seasons. They are not forever on the

mount rejoicing in the Lord, but often descend into the valley of affliction and trouble. *They sink sometimes in deep mire where there is no standing; and find themselves in a situation which may be compared to a horrible pit, and miry clay.* Be not therefore, my brethren, disheartened. These are the footsteps of the flock. *Who then is among you that feareth the Lord; that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.*

But darkness and want of former comforts is not the only case must here be attended to. A humbling sense of indwelling sin, of small progress in holiness and continued barrenness often discourage the saints. They see others, who perhaps began in the service of Christ, much later than themselves, advancing far beyond them in knowledge, zeal and love. Upon the strictest examination they appear to themselves, not only defective in growth, but even worse than they were at first. To these, and to similar complaints we answer, the Lord is sovereign in his dispensations. But after all, the judgment you form of yourselves may probably not be just. Is not the depravity which you discover in your own heart; is not a view of your deficiency in love and zeal, over which you mourn, a proof of more light and of enlarged experience? Do not these tend to humble you and render the blessed Jesus, in all his offices, more precious? And is not this a growth in grace? Forget not, O be-

liever! that you must decrease and Christ must increase; and be persuaded, that by these very methods, of which you complain, he is emptying you of pride and remaining confidence in your own righteousness, and thus making room for his becoming all and in all to your souls. It is thus *he leads the blind by a way they know not, and in paths that they have not known.* Fear not. Let faith and patience have their perfect work; and continue to wait upon the Lord and you shall renew your strength.

Let those who are young disciples become animated with the exalted prospects which the service of the Redeemer opens to their view. Be assured that faithfulness to God will bring its present reward, besides the glory which remains in reversion. Remember your relation is now changed, and you are no longer your own. You counted the cost when you gave yourselves away to Christ, and you are not to look back. Serve the Lord, then, with full purpose of heart. Flee youthful lusts, and assort with *them, that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.* In every trial, in all your temptations look unto Jesus. Be not discouraged, he is faithful, he will establish you and keep you from evil. *Little children,* says the Apostle John, *I write unto you because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.* And surely they, to whom much is forgiven, will love much. Indulge this love and prove it, young Christians, by keeping all his commandments. Grow in grace.

And now, believers, while we excite you all to grow in grace, you cannot fail, in proportion as you understand the exhortation, to mourn before God that this is so little attended to, in our day. Cherish this generous sorrow, and let it deeply affect your hearts, that such faint traces of holiness are discernable in the visible church: that so many deceive themselves and dishonor Christ, by professing his religion, while their lives and conduct announce them to be baptized infidels. But let it most affect you, that many, even of the children of Zion, appear to have departed from that strictness in piety and conscientious holiness, which always ought to characterize real believers. Alas, *how is the gold changed, and the fine gold become dim!*

Let all, who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, often unite in prayer for a revival of religion, and plead fervently for the outpouring of his spirit. We have been witnesses to the wonderful interpositions of Providence in the progress and issue of the late war, and the national blessings in which we are now established. *The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad.* We now wait for his salvation to Zion; for a day of power in his churches, when he shall bear witness to his own truths, and numerous converts submit to the Redeemer. Pray much for this. Your fervent intercessions will be a happy token, that the *time to favor Zion, yea the set time is come.* Pray for ministers and people, that they may seek the glory of God and not their own honor; and that all may

unite by holiness and growth in grace, to recommend the religion of Jesus.—But whatever cloud may be still impending over Zion, and whatever may be the consequences of the spirit of dissipation, error and infidelity which has gone forth; be ye, believers, faithful, and your souls *will be given you for a prey*. God will preserve and strengthen you, and *he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ*.

You are under indispensable obligations to forsake all sin and glorify God, not only as his creatures, but especially as his children who are created anew in Christ Jesus. Often meditate upon these obligations, and remember that *ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price, and therefore whatever others may do, ye are to glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's*.

Strive to obtain clear apprehensions of growth in grace, that you may determine with precision, wherein it consists. Despise not the day of small things. It is by little and little the enemy shall be driven out before you. Through many fallings and risings, changes and vicissitudes, your progress lies. By many sad experiences you will know that your lusts are not yet all destroyed; but by many comforting evidences you will assuredly find the promised aid of the spirit, and the power of Christ in promoting your growth in grace.—Be afraid of sin and of temptations, but be not afraid of the cross. Trials and afflictions

prove no impediment to sanctification. When sufferings produce proper exercifes, they yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness; they make us sensible of our weakness; they imbitter sin, and lessen that attachment to the world which mars our progress and hinders our growth in grace. Be then of a *good courage* and go in the strength of the Lord. Your salvation is *nearer than when you believed*, and you may, in humble hope, look forward to your everlasting home, which is full in view: for yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry. And now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make 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.



17

1877

The first part of the year was spent in the
 study of the history of the country and
 the progress of the various branches of
 science and literature. The second part
 was devoted to the study of the
 history of the various nations of the
 world. The third part was spent in
 the study of the history of the
 various religions of the world. The
 fourth part was spent in the study
 of the history of the various
 governments of the world. The fifth
 part was spent in the study of the
 history of the various arts and
 sciences of the world. The sixth
 part was spent in the study of the
 history of the various languages of
 the world. The seventh part was
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 the various customs and manners of
 the world. The eighth part was
 spent in the study of the history of
 the various laws and constitutions of
 the world. The ninth part was
 spent in the study of the history of
 the various wars and revolutions of
 the world. The tenth part was
 spent in the study of the history of
 the various discoveries and inventions
 of the world. The eleventh part
 was spent in the study of the history
 of the various improvements and
 progress of the world. The twelfth
 part was spent in the study of the
 history of the various states and
 nations of the world. The thirteenth
 part was spent in the study of the
 history of the various empires and
 kingdoms of the world. The fourteenth
 part was spent in the study of the
 history of the various republics and
 democracies of the world. The
 fifteenth part was spent in the study
 of the history of the various monarchies
 and absolute governments of the world.

18

S E R M O N IX.

A STANDING REVELATION, *once ATTESTED, the best*
EVIDENCE *of a FUTURE LIFE.*

B Y

J A M E S D A N A, D. D.

Pastor of the first Congregational Church at New-Haven, Connecticut.

L U K E xvi. 31.

— *If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.*

THESSE words conclude the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The former, amidst an outward fulness, is supposed to have lived regardless of future retributions. The latter, in the depths of poverty and distress, was mindful of the reference, which the present life hath to an after one. Wretched as his external circumstances were, he found refuge in the principles of revealed religion. The change, which death made in the state of these opposite characters, was great. One received all his good things, the other all his evil things, in this life. When death closed the scene, the former was tormented, and the latter comfort-

ed. *He*, who experienced the sad consequence of irreligion, and assured that there was no redemption out of hell, earnestly solicited that a messenger might be sent from the invisible world, to his kindred on earth. They were as thoughtless of futurity as he had been. And he presumed, that such a messenger as he requested, warning them of the issue of their living in pleasures, and dwelling carelessly, might be instrumental to save them from the torments he felt. To this request he received for answer, *They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.* He most importunately renewed the request: *Nay,—but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.* The final answer is in the words of the text: *If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.*

If what is here said of the evidence of religion, from Moses and the prophets, be just, much more may the same be said of the evidence which Christianity furnisheth.

Two propositions will come under our consideration.

First, a standing revelation, once properly confirmed, is sufficient to assure men of future retributions, and lead them to repentance.

Secondly, there is no probability that those, who withstand this evidence, would be persuaded by the proposed method, of one coming to them

from the other world,—one, whom they once well knew on earth.

First, a standing revelation, once properly confirmed, is sufficient to assure men of future retributions, and lead them to repentance.

The knowledge of futurity belongs to God. If he hath borne testimony to the doctrine of a future life, by setting his seal to the scriptures which declare it, this should satisfy us. We receive the testimony of men to things which we have not seen nor known. Is not the witness of God greater?

Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed. A sceptic cannot receive this: He believes not the things which he sees: Demonstration, and testimony, are alike disregarded. But let us consider this declaration in the instance to which it immediately relates, *the resurrection of Jesus*. This, if it really happened, is allowed to be a miracle. It is, however, urged, that a miracle is “a fact of such a nature, as no human testimony can support.” ‘Though we may, and must believe, in other cases, without seeing; yet in this we may not.’ The enquiry then is, whether a miracle, the resurrection of Jesus in particular, may be believed on testimony?

To enforce his request for his brethren, the rich man useth this argument; *If one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.* This supposeth the pos-

sibility of a revelation, and the confirmation of it, by miracle. The same is supposed, in the declaration of the doubting disciple: *Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.* To qualify him for the office of an Apostle, it was necessary that Thomas should see Jesus, after he rose from the dead. He could not otherwise have preached the resurrection, as a fact, of which he was a witness: But the testimony of the other Apostles was sufficient for his own conviction. For if they were *competent judges*, whether their master was risen, they were also *competent witnesses* of this fact. We will, *first*, enquire whether they were *competent judges*. And if they were, we will shew, *secondly*, the justness of our inference, that they were *competent witnesses*.

First, the Apostles were *competent judges*, whether Jesus rose from the dead.

A resurrection, if real, may be as well known, and attested, as any fact whatever. The Apostles could *see*, and *bear*, and *feel*; and these were the only requisites in the present case. By the last *sense*, they could determine, whether Jesus had flesh and bones, or were a mere spectre. By the second, they could know, whether he uttered articulate words. By the first, they could know, whether he was, or was not, the person whom they saw crucified, a few days before. They could not, therefore, from weakness, credulity, or surprize, be incapable of judging in a case, so plain. To sup-

pose them incapable, would be to say, that common men are incapable of giving testimony to any common fact. If they ate, and freely conversed with him, forty days together, what room was there for deception? Suppose him risen, might he not be seen, and known to be risen, with the same certainty, as any person is seen, and known to be living? What is there in the nature of the fact, that a dead man is come to life, which renders it less discernable by the senses, than this fact; that one, who never died, is alive? If a particular friend or acquaintance, lately deceased, should rise from the dead, on his first appearance, your surprize might lead you to suspect your own senses: but should he continue with you, converse freely, as before his death, and eat with you, should you not know him to be the same? Might not the sisters and friends of Lazarus, (if we admit that he was raised) know certainly, that it was the same brother and friend, whose death they deplored? Should the fallacy of our senses be objected in such a case, why not in any other, depending on *their* report? Why may we not question, whether any of those, with whom we converse from day to day, are really living?

The Apostles constantly attended, and were most intimate with their master, for several years, next preceding his death. They testify, that in their presence, and before many others, friends and foes, he caused the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk, and the dead to rise—that he

healed all manner of disease instantly with his word, and did many other wonderful works—that they followed him to his trial, and to the cross—saw him crucified, and give up the ghost. They further testify, that they saw him alive, after his passion—that he continued forty days with them, bringing to their recollection things he had before said to them, eating with them; shewing them his hands and feet, in which was visible, the print of the nails that fastened him to the cross, and shewing them the side pierced by the spear.—Could they not judge of what they saw, heard and handled? Are the unlearned more liable to imposition in distinguishing persons, whom they have seen and been conversant with, than the learned? From the frequent appearances of Jesus to the Apostles, singly, or to two, or more, or all of them; and to them all, when in company with many others; at one time, to more than five hundred, they had full opportunity to know, whether he was, indeed, risen.

But if the Apostles were competent judges of the resurrection, we infer hence, that they were also *competent witnesses* of it. Let us then shew, *secondly*, the justness of this inference.

If being eye, and ear-witnesses, they were in a capacity and situation to judge whether Jesus had risen, their testimony is not to be rejected, merely on account of the *nature* of such a fact. For this would imply, that they could not determine for

themselves, whether that was real, which they saw with their eyes, and heard with their ears, and their hands handled: Their capacity to judge, and their capacity to testify, must, therefore, be alike admitted, or denied. If their testimony may be suspected on the score of *interest* or *design*; this is quite another matter. Their *integrity*, in bearing testimony to the resurrection, is a distinct thing, from their *capacity* to give witness in such a case.

They were, however, as *credible* witnesses as they were *competent*: Their number was sufficient; their character was not doubtful. They had no interest to serve. In the manner of delivering their testimony they did not hesitate, nor assert with warmth, as false witnesses do. The union of their testimony strengthens and confirms it. There are no contrary testimonies to balance theirs.— They sacrificed every thing dear in life, and life itself, to the word of their testimony. These things might be distinctly evinced. But it is not my present business to examine, particularly, the original testimonies to the resurrection of Jesus.

One further observation may properly be added here: It is this: If the Apostles bore false witness, this must have been, at least, *equally miraculous*, as the fact they testified. For in confirmation of this fact they were, in the presence of thousands, from all nations, enabled to speak instantly, readily, and forcibly in the tongues of all nations, having never learned. If you deny that the disciples

were thus filled with the Holy Ghost, on a public Jewish festival, then all the vast concourse, assembled on that occasion, were deceived in the report of their senses; and, at the expence of demonstration, should have disbelieved. Or you must maintain, that neither had the disciples the gift of tongues, nor was there any such concourse of nations, who supposed they had. The consequence will then be, that the New Testament writers have declared, as a fact of the greatest notoriety, a matter, the falshood of which, they knew, was palpable to all in Jerufalem; and declared it to be a confirmation of another matter, as notoriously false: to which falshood they pertinaciously adhered, and sacrificed their lives. Men have died martyrs to false opinions: But when have they thrown away life, in asserting things as facts, which the public knew had no existence?

The dispensation of the Holy Ghost after the ascension, in tongues, prophecy and miracles, was the last sanction of divine authority set to the religion of Jesus. These gifts were continued in the church, through the apostolic age at least; that is, about sixty years. They were exhibited in all places, and before all ranks. Thus was *the Holy Ghost a witness of the resurrection*. These gifts were as great miracles, as the resurrection which they confirmed. What further or greater witness to the truth of Christianity could there be? They who saw these miraculous powers, had the greatest reason to believe the resurrection, though they saw

not Jesus after he rose from the dead. They, who withstood this witness of the Holy Ghost, could not be persuaded by any. Some, who saw and acknowledged the miracles of Jesus, and of his first disciples, yet demanded further witnesses. Their minds were closed against conviction; as were the minds of others, who departed from the faith. Hence the declaration respecting apostates in the primitive church, that having fallen away, after their *illumination and participation of the Holy Ghost, it was impossible to renew them again to repentance.*

Let us attend to this point, that the ministers of the Christian Religion confirmed it after its author returned to Heaven, by the Holy Ghost sent down from thence. Had those, who saw the gifts of the Holy Ghost, sufficient reason to believe on such proof? If they had, then the resurrection of Jesus might be proved to those who did not see him by the testimony of those who did. For these constantly declared, that their miraculous gifts were conferred on them by Jesus, and for the purpose of proving his resurrection. All, therefore, who believed their commission, on the evidence of these gifts, must also have believed that Jesus was risen. But if those, who saw the gifts of the Holy Ghost after the ascension, had yet no sufficient reason to believe, then, miracles are not proof even to those who see them. A revelation is impossible, for it cannot be confirmed.

Enough, perhaps, hath been said to shew, that those, who enjoyed the ministry of the Apostles,

had abundant reason to receive their testimony concerning Jesus, confirmed as it was by the powers wherewith they were endowed. In other words, it may be laudable to believe, though we have not seen. It is no excuse for unbelief, that men have not been eye-witnesses of the resurrection.

If then the religion of Jesus was fully confirmed in the apostolic age; was this original confirmation sufficient for after ages? Is revelation binding on those only who see its miraculous confirmation? May it not concern all men, of all nations? Must it then be confirmed by a perpetual miracle before every individual, of every nation? Christianity hath not been thus confirmed. It has not been thus confirmed before our eyes. Shall we therefore say, that it doth not oblige all to whom it comes—that we ourselves are not obliged to believe and obey?

We must needs be very incompetent to judge beforehand, after what manner a revelation from God would be confirmed. But surely we cannot object to evidence, similar to that we have, for the being and providence of God. The original evidence for Christianity was of this kind. Succeeding ages have had miraculous evidence also, in the obvious and constant fulfilment of prophecy. In the *internal* frame of Christianity, its doctrines, morals and motives, we have the same proof of it, as they had in the beginning. And may we not contemplate these internal characters with more

deliberation than they could, when the overbearing evidence of miracles compelled an immediate assent? The *external* evidence also, from the accomplishment of prophecy, may be more coolly examined. The miraculous fact also, that persons of such rank and circumstances, published such a Religion, may now be weighed more fully than when the splendor of their miracles foreclosed enquiry. At the first promulgation of Christianity, the world was sunk in every kind of superstition and idolatry; lost to the knowledge of the true God, whatever were the improvements in other knowledge. Was there the like occasion for miracles after Christianity was once introduced, and had made its way against an *interested priesthood*, the *pride of philosophy*, the *sword of the magistrate*, and *popular zeal*? It might well be left to continue and extend itself by its own intrinsic evidence, and the accomplishment of its prophecies, added to its original confirmation. Is there the least propriety in calling for new witnesses of its facts, when the original witnesses have been long since dead? Or in demanding, as a condition of our faith, that similar facts take place before our eyes? The foes to this Religion, when it was first set up, saw, to their confusion and amazement, the facts it records. By irresistible demonstration they were compelled to acknowledge the facts, while they obstinately denied the *consequence*, insisting that they were performed through the agency of the Devil. The modern infidel takes a different part. He boldly

denies the *facts*, from a conviction, that if these are admitted, they establish our Religion. But the burden of proof lies on him, not on us. Thus it is in all cases where men deny ancient facts, once well known and established; facts, which could never have gained belief, but on the supposition of their reality. The original witnesses could not but believe what they heard and saw. What they declared from personal knowledge, ought to be received on their testimony; allowing them to be unexceptionable witnesses, in other respects. One fact they testified, which, if true, proved Jesus to be the Christ of God. Of this fact, the resurrection, those who heard their testimony, had miraculous proof; though they saw not the risen Saviour. For the works, done by these his disciples in his name, confirmed their testimony. Thus was the truth of Christianity proved by miracles to them, who saw not our Lord after he rose from the dead. The miraculous gifts of the spirit are called in question at this distance of time. But by whom? We undertake to say by those, and *those only, who, had they seen these gifts, would still have denied, that Jesus was risen; or had they seen him after he rose, would still have denied his divine mission.*

Some men undertake to reason on matters of fact in this sort; 'We cannot investigate the *cause*, therefore the facts never existed.' This is a mode of reasoning which at once denies all kind of existence, finite or infinite. It denies the existence

even of the reasoner himself; though it is certain he could not reason, did he not exist. Yet such, if I mistake not, is the reasoning of the sceptical Mr. Hume against revelation. We reason *from* matters of fact—but in the enquiry *whether* they are fact, reason and argument have no place.—They are either personally known, or depend on testimony. If personally known, this is intuition, or demonstration, and therefore, precludes all reasoning. If dependant on testimony, the only enquiry is, whether the witnesses are competent, and credible. Nothing can be more impertinent than to suspend belief, till the nature and cause of the facts are explained. In this view, neither a miracle, nor any other fact, is a subject of *argument* :—But is either, therefore, a subject of *derision*? He, rather, is a subject of derision, who thus applies argument and reasoning—equally so, whether the facts, about which he thus reasons and argues, are ordinary, extraordinary, or miraculous. It doth not exceed the power of God, to perform a miracle; nor doth it contradict any divine perfection. If a miracle is possible, it may be an object of faith, as much as the existence of a material world, or any thing in nature. It was most dishonorable to the understanding or integrity of Mr. Hume, to say, that, “ In proportion, as a fact is marvellous or unusual, the evidence of testimony is diminished;” and, “ destroyed, if the fact be miraculous”—that, “ there is a direct and full proof, or an uniform experience, from *the nature of the*

fact, against the existence of a miracle"—that, "a miracle, supported by any testimony, is a subject of derision rather than argument." We should merit derision, did we undertake to argue respecting the *existence* of a miracle. But if we see the dead raised up, we will *own the finger of God*. We will not withhold our assent, till we first know *how the dead are raised*. A resurrection is possible—is a miracle—and may be known to be fact, with as much certainty as any common fact. But on the principles above quoted, not only is a revelation impossible, but any special interposition of heaven, is equally so. The whole doctrine of divine providence is denied. The all-wise Creator and Governor of the Universe, is chained down to the original laws of nature.

We have mentioned the accomplishment of prophecy, as a standing and miraculous confirmation of revelation. One illustration of this point, may, not improperly, be introduced in this place; I mean, the desolation of Jerusalem and dispersion of the Jews. The prophecies and the events, are well known. In order to defeat our Lord's prophecy, Julian the apostate, A. D. 361, undertook to rebuild the temple on its former foundation, and to peopple Jerusalem with Jews. He committed the principle direction of the work to Alypius, whose "abilities and diligence were strenuously supported by the governor of Palestine, and the zeal of the Jews, assembled from all the provinces. Every purse was opened, and every

hand claimed a share in the labor." But *there is no counsel against the Lord*. "On this occasion, the joint efforts of power and enthusiasm, were unsuccessful. An earthquake, a whirlwind, and a fiery eruption, which overturned and scattered the new foundations of the temple, are attested," (as an enemy allows) "by cotemporary and respectable evidence"—particularly, "by the unexceptionable testimony of Ammianus Marcellinus." Mr. *Gibbon*, however, intimates a doubt, whether such prodigies really took place, by adding; "A philosopher may still require the original evidence of impartial and intelligent spectators;" and by hinting at other causes which might frustrate the attempt—this among others, that it was undertaken, "only in the last six months of Julian's life." Would this historian undertake to defend the sentiment, that a philosopher may require other than *cotemporary, respectable, and unexceptionable* evidence to a matter of fact? Had an historian of that age taken pains to select particular testimonies to an event, to which many thousands were witnesses, for months together, after times might well have supposed, that the historian knew there was room to question the fact. The appeal in general, to thousands then living, an uncontradicted appeal, hath at least as great weight as any particular testimonies. The vigilance and malice of the Jews, would have prompted them to the most severe animadversions, on this story of a miraculous interposition of providence, had it

been fabulous. Was not a space of *six months* sufficient to have laid the foundations of the work, when such great exertions were made?

But suppose there was no "real prodigy," nothing more than some "singular accident of nature," on this occasion. Is the fulfilment of the prophecy less apparent? The restoration of the temple was undertaken—undertaken with design to defeat the prophecy, and thereby overthrow Christianity. The Christians, through three centuries, appealed to the desolation of Jerusalem, as a fact which confirmed their religion. Civil power united with Jewish zeal and inveteracy, could not repair the ruined temple and capital. The reparation of them has been the ruling passion of the Jews, in every age; but is not yet effected. These facts are all admitted. The consequence is obvious; that the exertions to baffle, have but the more signally fulfilled the prediction, *Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, till the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled.* The ruin was at first without a parallel. The duration of the ruin is so, all circumstances considered. Both were circumstantially foretold. All succeeding ages have been witnesses to the accomplishment. More than fifteen hundred years before their desolation, Moses prophesied, that the Jews should be *removed into all kingdoms of the earth, and be an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word among all nations.* They have accordingly been for seventeen full centuries successively, an example in all the earth, of the

righteous severity of God ; exiles, an opprobrium, an astonishment, oppressed, kept a distinct people. “ They no where live according to their own laws, no where elect their own magistrates, no where enjoy the full exercise of their Religion. They flow into all parts of the world; mix with all nations, and yet keep separate from all. The northern nations have come in swarms into the more southern parts of Europe ; but where are they now to be discerned and distinguished? The Gauls went forth in great bodies to seek their fortune in foreign parts ; but what traces of them are now remaining any where? In France, who can separate the race of the ancient Gauls, from the various other people, who, from time to time, have settled there? In Spain, who can distinguish between the first possessors, the Spaniards, and the Goths, and the Moors, who conquered and kept possession of the country for some ages? In England, who can pretend to say which families were descended from the ancient Britons, and which from the Romans, or Saxons, or Danes, or Normans?— The most ancient and honorable pedigrees can be traced up, only to a certain period, and beyond that, there is nothing but conjecture and uncertainty, obscurity and ignorance. But the Jews can go up higher than any nation. They can even deduce their pedigree from the beginning of the world. They may not know from what particular tribe, or family, they are descended, but they know certainly, that they all sprung from the

stock of Abraham. After so many wars, massacres, persecutions, and the contempt with which they have been treated, they still subsist, and profess, and glory in their original. If the hand of Providence is not visible in these things, where will it be found?''*

Is not the accomplishment of prophecy as ample a testimony to Christianity, as the miracles of the first century were? An attentive observer of these things, will have no occasion to request a messenger from the dead, that he may believe.— We have no reason to look for any other miraculous testimony to Christianity, than that of prophecy, till the time of the restoration of the Jews.

The *other* proposition to be discussed, is this: There is no probability that those, who withstand a revelation once confirmed, would be persuaded, by the proposed method of one coming to them from the other world—one, whom they once well knew on earth.

The words have immediate reference to the assurances of a future state of misery, contained in Moses and the prophets; but are equally applicable to a future state of happiness, (Matt. xxii. 31, 32.) and to the general evidence of religion and a life to come. If the evidence, from Moses and the prophets, were sufficient, well may this be said of the Christian institution, which brings life and immortality to light.

* DOCTOR NEWTON.

God, the only fit judge, has given such confirmation to Christianity, as seemed good to him. Is he obliged, on the demand of the infidel, to renew the original confirmation, or add any other of the same, or an higher kind? Shall he be directed in what manner to confirm his revelations—what evidence is best adapted to moral agents? Would the rejecters of a religion, to which he hath once borne witness, be persuaded, were it again confirmed in the same, or some other manner? Israel were witnessers to a constant miracle, forty years in the wilderness, and during many centuries in Canaan; but as constantly rebelled through unbelief. The Pharisees, who saw the miracles of Jesus, still required a sign. May every age, country and person, demand a new confirmation of Christianity; and insist, *except we see signs and wonders, we will not believe?* One may, with as much propriety as another, insist, that nothing short of miraculous evidence shall persuade. This, however, is a temper which is not persuaded by miracles. Would the tragedy of the crucifixion, and triumph of the resurrection, if perpetually displayed, work conviction in those, who are not convinced by the standing testimony of God in the scriptures? This is, moreover, to require impossibilities. For how could Christ be crucified, and rise before the eyes of every man, in every age?

Omnipotence could irresistibly convert sinners, or raise up a spiritual seed from the stones. Heaven might be set open before us, and hell without a

covering. Moral evil might have been prevented, and consequently natural. But mankind are treated as moral agents and probationers.

Were it left to us to say what evidence is fit and necessary to establish a revelation, one would insist on this kind, another on that. No two persons might agree on the same attestation. No finite mind is competent to judge beforehand, what evidence would best answer the purpose of persuasion. All will agree, that should any general confirmation be fixed upon, it would be such as all men can understand, because all men are alike concerned in the subject.

If miracles, *once* performed, and the *constant* evidence, in the fulfilment of prophecy, and the internal characters of the Christian religion, do not prevail on men to believe and live according to it, what reason is there to suppose, that the renewal of miracles would have this effect? What reason is there to suppose, that those who are now infidels, would not have been so, had they lived in Christ's day, or in the Apostolic age? What probability, that one coming to them from the dead, could persuade them? The standing assurances of future retributions, contained in the Bible, are more just matter of conviction, than any which, we might presume, a messenger from the dead would bring. Suppose this messenger to be one whom the unbeliever was acquainted with, doubtless it would be a great surprise at first, to see him risen from the

dead. But the surprize would be transient. Should he immediately disappear, after the delivery of his message, no sooner would the unbeliever's first astonishment be over, than he would begin to suspect, that the whole was delusion.

Further, If this request, that a messenger might come from the dead, be reasonable in one instance, it must be so in another, and in every instance.— Should it be gratified in every instance, the effect would be lost in the frequency and commonness of such messengers.

The crime of the rich man's brethren is supposed to have been *practical*, rather than *speculative* infidelity. They did not give so much attention to the subject of revelation, as deep speculations in infidelity, imply. Heedless inattention to religion, is an inseparable attendant on a life of dissipation. This is much the same in its influence on morality, religion, and futurity, as direct scepticism, and often terminates therein. *The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.* This is the natural consequence of the character ascribed to him. *Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity. The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God—God is not in all his thoughts.* Experience, in another world, first convinced the rich man of the ruinous issue of a life of irreligion and dissolute manners. To reject a religion, confirmed as Christianity hath been, and coming recommended as this doth, by its doctrines and pre-

cepts, example and promises, *is to determine, not to receive a revelation from Heaven.* The assurances it gives of future retributions, and which the resurrection of its author have confirmed, are not weighed ; perhaps, not so much as read. They are practically disbelieved. Admonitions unregarded, are as though their authority was expressly rejected. No kind of evidence, which licentious men may ask for themselves, will suffice.— For if they will not examine, or attend to the evidence actually laid before them, neither would they attend to any other. They do not consider, at all, the nature and tendency of the course they are pursuing. Having *pleasure in unrighteousness, they love darkness rather than light.* There are others, in whom *speculative pride* is predominant.— These will not believe, because they resolve to admit nothing on the common principles of evidence. They must think out of the road of common sense, to shew the world the superiority of their talents. Thus, *professing themselves to be wise, they become fools.*

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

From what hath been discoursed, we may form a judgment of those who employ their talents to diminish the evidences of Christianity, and destroy its authority. To reject it without enquiry, must be a mark of great folly ; not to mention the possible impiety of such conduct. To make it a subject of enquiry, and yet determine beforehand

not to embrace it, *is unfair*. The doctrine of our accountableness of a future life, as there taught, so well accords with the sentiments of the human heart, if not hardened, that we cannot object on this account. We may rather wish for the authority of revelation to confirm, and enforce the operations of our own minds.

It is at least possible, and there is a degree of probability, that there may be a state of future retributions, in which we shall receive the consequences of our present moral conduct. If there is, revelation *only* can inform us; to be sure, it can *best* inform us, how to demean ourselves in this probationary state, so as to shun the misery and secure the happiness, of the life to come. What argument have we to shew that this life is the whole of our existence? What thanks do we owe to the man who would persuade us that it is, or would lead us to live as though it were? Is he a friend of virtue, or of our peace? This world is a most important part of our existence, when viewed in reference to another, and as our probation for eternal recompences. On the bare possibility of such a world to come, it is the highest wisdom to lay up a good foundation against the time when we shall pass into it. Such provision for that world, will not lessen, but increase the real enjoyments of this world, and render us far better members of society. Whosoever, then, would erase from our minds a sense of moral obligation, and subvert the foundations of virtue, co-operates with the enemy

of all righteousness, to spread confusion and misery in the world. If he boasts of superior talents, he may be told, that, while the giver of his talents is entitled to his gratitude, and should direct the application of all his powers, Satan hath the direction of them: For such, what remedy is provided? *If the light which is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!*

Further, A general habit of inattention, and indifference to the truths and precepts of revealed religion, is much the same in its effects, as an open denial of them: On such, instructions and admonitions are lost. The realities of eternity are treated as idle tales. They do not consider, because they will not be disturbed in their amusements, sensual indulgencies and worldly pursuits: Overcharged with these, the *solemnities of death, a resurrection, a judgment to come, and eternal rewards and punishments, make but a feeble impression, if any at all.* Some imminent danger may give a present alarm; but no sooner is the immediate hazard removed, than they return to folly without any concern. An affluence and continued prosperity, are often accompanied with forgetfulness and contempt of religion. The rich man and his brethren were listless to the concerns of futurity. They believed not Moses and the prophets. *They feared not God, because they had no changes.* In such circumstances, there is much occasion to guard against luxury, voluptuousness, uncharitableness and a spirit of self-sufficiency.

Faith and repentance, are of universal importance, unalterably connected with each other, and with the hope of divine acceptance. The true believer, the true penitent, is conformed to the image of Christ.

God knows what means are best adapted to the end of our faith: He hath established these means; he hath annexed to the diligent use of them, every encouragement of his concurrence and blessing.—To neglect and vilify them, or devise other means of acceptation, is to despise God, and make his revelation useless.

He that hath an ear, let him hear. “ Search the scriptures—in them we have eternal life—they testify of Christ.” The language of God in them is, REVERENCE MY SON. In him, in no other, is God reconciling the world to himself. In vain must those intercede for mercy in the other world, who will not be persuaded through Christ, to be reconciled to God, in this accepted time, this day of salvation. *Then the door will be shut. He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned.* Neglect not the means of grace. *Quench not the spirit. If they escaped not, who refused to hear Moses and the prophets, we surely shall not escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him: God also, bearing them witness by signs and wonders, divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost.*

S E R M O N X.

CHRISTIAN MORALITY.

B Y

J A M E S D A N A, D. D.

Pastor of the first Congregational Church at New-Haven, Connecticut.

M A T T. vii. 28, 29.

And it came to pass when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine. For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.

THES E words are St. Matthew's reflection on our Lord's well-known sermon, contained in this and two preceding chapters. When he had finished his discourse, the multitude, who heard it, *were astonished at his doctrine*: The reason of their astonishment is assigned. *For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.* His instruction was very different from theirs, both with respect to the matter and manner of it. His countenance might strongly express the weight of the truths he taught. He also lived according to his own maxims; whereas, *they said, and did not.*

What I propose is, *first*, to lay before you an imperfect sketch of the morality of our religion.

Secondly, to shew that on this account, it merits the high approbation and esteem of all to whom it is offered.

Thirdly, that the superior excellence of its moral system, proves the truth of Christianity.

First, I am to lay before you an imperfect sketch of the moral system of Christianity. This is summarily contained in that discourse of its divine author, on which the Evangelist makes the reflection in the words read.

— Here it will be proper to specify the principal virtues which Christianity inculcates, whether personal, social, or divine—to consider the foundation and motives on which it inculcates them—and to take a view of the corresponding example of its author,

I would, *first*, specify the principal virtues, personal, social, and divine, inculcated by our Religion.

The virtues of *self-government* are these; moderation in our worldly wishes and enjoyments; contentment and freedom from anxious care; meekness and patience under injuries and provocations; humility or poverty of spirit, not thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought, but soberly, not exercising ourselves in things too high for us. By forbidding inward lust and hatred, it lays the ax at

the root of the tree, and teacheth us with what care to keep the heart, that it may be clean from all allowed impurity.

As to the *social* virtues, our Lord in his discourse enjoined the greatest simplicity and integrity in our intercourse with others, by directing that our communication be yea, yea, nay, nay. He cautioned against uncharitable thoughts and censures. He pronounced the merciful and peace-makers blessed. He has taught us to seek timely reconciliation of those whom we have offended—to dispense our alms in the most private manner, and to all who may stand in need—to forgive injuries, however great, or how oft soever repeated; to love our enemies, bless them that curse us, do good to them that hate us, and pray for them who despitefully use and persecute us, that we may be the children of our heavenly Father. His sun riseth on the evil and good, and his rain falls on the just and unjust. Our goodness extendeth not to him; but, like his, it should extend to all without discrimination, as we may have opportunity to do them good.

This distinguisheth Christian benevolence from other kinds. Ties of affinity or blood, friendship or former obligations, union in religious profession or in secular pursuits, similitude of afflictions or dangers, and even a combination in wickedness, attach men to one another, and prompt them to kind offices. Sinners and publicans love those

who love them, and do good to those who do good to them, or whose interest may be considered as their own. But Jesus has taught his disciples to *do more than others*. Christian benevolence is finely illustrated in the story he relates of the traveller, who on his journey fell into the hands of merciless robbers, and in the depths of distress found relief from an unexpected quarter. This unfortunate man was a Jew. He that shewed mercy on him was a Samaritan. There was a deeply rooted enmity between the two nations. Notwithstanding this, the Jew, ready to perish, was befriended by the Samaritan, after he had been neglected by one and another of his own nation, and those persons of an high religious profession. Forgetting any national prejudices and affronts, considering not at all the *character* of the helpless man, but only his *necessity*, the compassionate Samaritan felt his bowels moved, and instantly ministered to his relief. Thus was he neighbor to him. Such is the love of our neighbor which Christianity enjoins. This is to observe the golden rule, *Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them*. The reasonableness of this rule applies to the sense and feeling of every man, however difficult and rare a conformity to it may be.

With respect to the duties of *piety*, how different are the Christian precepts from those of the Scribes? From an affected deference to rites and ceremonies, they neglected the weightier matters of the divine law, judgment, mercy and faith.

They condemned our Lord's disciples for attending to a matter of necessity, on the sabbath, and him for doing good on that day. By their traditions they made void both moral and positive precepts. The Christian lawgiver declared their worship vain, and taught a righteousness far superior—to avoid all ostentation and affected severities, and to worship, not with the eye, but with the heart—to attend the forms of religion ordained by God, as necessary means of cultivating a spirit of piety, of expressing a supreme reverence, esteem and confidence towards the great object of our homage—means, also, of exciting and improving our love to men. For according to him, the whole of religion is comprehended in the love of God and our neighbor. The former is the first and great commandment, and the latter is like unto it. External worship is, in no instance, required, further than it is subservient to this temper of love. Christianity rescues the moral law, contained in the ten commandments, from the corrupt glosses of men who thanked God that they were exempt from gross scandal, when within they were full of all uncleanness; who, under pretence of zeal for God, devoured widows' houses, persecuted the just, and undertook to absolve children from their duty to their parents. The Christian scheme of morality admits of no reserves: for no man can serve two masters. It requires a firm adherence to its injunctions, though persecuted for righteousness sake. It extends to the heart and thoughts, as well as to the lips and life.

Consider then the purity, sublimity and extent of the Christian morals; their perpetuity, as Heaven. Compare them with the celebrated schemes of heathen philosophers and moralists, or of modern deists. The latter confine the rule of moral obligation very much to external conduct, without reference to the heart; or they limit morality to visible sobriety and justice—or at most, extend it no further than the pretended virtues of friendship and patriotism. They fall as much short of the Christian scheme, as an occasional (perhaps unintentional) act of generosity, falls short of a steady and uniform course of benevolent action—or as doing good to one who has obliged us, or whose welfare is as our own, falls short of kind offices performed to our revilers and persecutors.

The love of our country is indeed an illustrious virtue, when connected with love to mankind, of every nation. But if it interferes with universal benevolence, it is no other than the narrow spirit of a party, and hath the same aspect on the welfare of other nations, as selfishness hath on the welfare of our own; or, as party-zeal in religion, hath on all denominations, except its own. Christian morality includes private friendship, and the love of our nation. At the same time it inculcates more elevated and extensive benevolence, *peace on earth, good will to all mankind.*

It is brave, we grant, to hazard life for the public liberties; but is it so, to throw away life in a

duel? or to fall on one's own sword? He that doth the latter, acts the part of the coward, who meanly deserts the post of danger assigned him by his General. He that doth the former is like one who, to save his house when on fire, should throw himself into the flames. Both deserve the burial of an ass. They sacrifice the honor and comfort of all their dependents and friends, the private and public affections, to a small misfortune, to imaginary honor. When, on the contrary, men acquiesce in evils they cannot prevent or remedy; when it is not in the power of external things to take from them their self-enjoyment; when they avenge not themselves; when they lose life to save their country from slavery, or their own souls from perdition; this is true magnanimity; this is Christian fortitude. For our faith overcomes the world: It teacheth patience and resignation under sufferings from God, and forgiveness of men whatever wrong they do or design us. It establisheth an inward serenity, and a firmness which makes the feeble and timorous more than conquerors.

Secondly, of the foundation or principle of Christian morality. This is, the approbation and glory of God, or a regard to him as moral Governor. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father in Heaven. Any system which doth not fix moral virtue on the throne of God, will be found to fix it on a weak and precarious basis. His perfections are immutable. Respect to his authority and approbation

is, therefore, a permanent, uniform principle of right action. The difference between good and evil is unchangeable, because God is so, and because his will is rectitude. He will always do what is fit:—He only knows what is so:—All relations and fitnesses are from him and by him:—To him be glory for ever. His glory and the happiness of his creatures unite. With him we have to do, who is God over all, who hath constituted the various connections and dependencies of mankind, the subordinations of families and larger societies, and enjoined their mutual duties. *His authority is the highest possible obligation.* Whoever hearkens unto God will therefore pay due respect to earthly superiors, and fulfil all relative duties; and, at the same time, will dare to assert the authority of conscience and of God against any allurements or menaces whatever. This principle of piety operates alike in all relations and circumstances of life, in all instances of social or personal virtue, and at all times, whether we act under the view of others, or are retired from every human eye. The all-seeing eye of God, a sense of his perfections and our accountableness, and this only, can secure us in the cause of virtue when temptation is strong; when no power on earth can animadvert on our crimes, when we have every assurance of secrecy. Reputation, health, ease, gain, will, in some instances and to a certain degree, favor the cause of morality; but the *fear of God* is the only principle whereby we can attain to perfection in holiness.

Christian morality has special respect to the glory of God, through a MEDIATOR: It teacheth *whatever we do, to do it in the name of the Lord Jesus. The fruits of righteousness are by him to the praise and glory of God.* The faith of him peculiarly works by love to God and men.

Consider, *next*, the *motives* which Christianity exhibits, to enforce the admirable scheme of morality it inculcates.

Among the gracious words which proceeded from our Lord's mouth, and which his hearers so justly admired, are these:—*Ask, and it shall be given you: Seek, and ye shall find: Knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven, give good things, the holy Spirit, to them that ask him?* Therefore, (as it soon follows) *enter ye in at the strait gate:—Take my yoke upon you, and ye shall find rest to your souls.* It is ample encouragement to our religious endeavors, if God is attentive to our necessities, as a parent to those of his offspring; will guide, support, and succeed our religious labor. The objection to Christ our master is, therefore, without foundation, and dictated only by sloth and depravity of heart;—*Thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown.—For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that*

hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath.

As the recompence of their labors and sufferings in the cause of truth and righteousness, the servants of Christ shall receive in the present time, an hundred fold for whatsoever they do or suffer in his cause; and, in the world to come, a distinguished reward. *If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him. If we suffer, we shall also reign with him.* Shall the difficulties of the Christian life be objected, when we may, if we ask it, have aid from on high? After all the labors and sufferings of Jesus for us, can we entertain this thought, that his commandments are grievous? What doth he command but this, that we deny ourselves, and follow him? Shall the disciple object that his Lord saith, *learn of me?* To whom else shall we go for the words of eternal life, but to Jesus the Son of God? And can we go to him, while we refuse or complain of his terms?

Unless we admit a future life, what sufficient motives are there to virtue? Is it its own reward, when the oppressor hath power, and the oppressed have none to comfort them? Where is the beauty of virtue, when her friends are dropping into eternity, if they have no hope beyond the grave? The wisest and best heathen were totally ignorant of the resurrection, and had no other than unsettled, confused notions of future retributions; yea, they had many doubts even of the immortality of the soul, and were in darkness whether God would direct and aid human endeavors,

Their speculations were rather refined than solid ; at least, the irmaxims were not exemplified. Adequate help, and prospects were wanting. But Christianity reveals the redemption of the body from corruption, and promiseth eternal life to them who patiently continue in well-doing.— Through Christ's strengthening them his disciples can do all things. Their conversation is in Heaven, because there he has prepared mansions for them :—He hath set before them motives to virtue, as much superior to those of heathen moralists, as the morality of the gospel is superior to theirs.

Lastly, The perfect moral character of Jesus Christ, exemplified all his heavenly maxims. Elevated as the morality of his religion is, he doth but call upon us to imitate his example. His private and personal virtues, his spotless innocence and purity of life, heavenly-mindedness and self-denial, meekness, humility and patience, teach his followers an indifference to all things temporal ; to purify themselves, that they may resemble him who was holy, harmless, and separate from sinners—teach them to bear reproach for him, who when reviled, reviled not again ; and when he suffered, threatened not. Though from malignity his enemies accused him of many high crimes ; yet they never could convict him of a fault. His conversation was without guile. His benevolence was manifest in emptying himself of the form of God, and appearing in fashion as a man ; revealing the way

of righteousness and peace; going about doing good, to persons of all conditions and characters; enduring with dignity, every species of distress and ignominy, from those to whom he came to do all possible good; giving himself a ransom for a guilty world. *Every other example sinks and fades before his. It hath no part dark; all is light.*

High encomiums are passed on such as expose life for a friend, or their country. What must we then say of him who died for enemies, for all mankind? None of the human race were endeared to him by any peculiar ties, antecedently to his interposing to save them from death. He could *not look on his own things*, when he undertook the cause of rebels. His philanthropy includes every kind affection that consists with the greatest good: It includes particular attention to our kindred, friends and country, so far as comports with moral rectitude, and the good of the universe. He loved a lost world, and gave his life to save it. He was also susceptible of the national and friendly affections. He *wept over Jerusalem*; and at the grave of Lazarus, whom he loved. On the cross, he beheld his mother with filial affection. His murderers were instant with one voice, *crucify him*; and he prayed, *Father forgive them*.—He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter. While such an example is before us, how should our hearts burn within us! What bowels of mercies, humbleness of mind, long-suffering, forgiveness and charity, can answer to his example!

Further, consider his *piety* and *devotion*. He oft resorted; with his little family, to a place consecrated to social prayer. After days full of labor, his nights were often spent in this exercise. His watching opportunities for retirement, enforceth his injunction, *Enter into thy closet, and pray to thy Father which is in secret*. His example also shews, that the public rites of religion may not be neglected, though moral duties are to be preferred.

In becoming obedient to the death of the cross, he shewed perfect acquiescence in the will of his Father, appointing him to suffer and die. *The cup my Heavenly Father giveth me, shall I not drink it? Father, glorify thy name*. Assured that he should see of the travail of his soul; for the joy set before him, he endured the cross. How instructive is his example, in the principle and practice of all virtue? While it raiseth our esteem and admiration, the imitation of it would be our highest felicity and glory. Had we the same mind, all bitterness and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and envy, and malice, would be laid aside; all trespasses forgiven to them, that hate and persecute us. Christ's command is, that we love one another, *as he hath loved us*. Then do we thus love, when we are ready, if need be, to *lay down our lives for the brethren*. For such was *his* love. *He laid down his life for us*. If in this highest instance, our love emulates his pattern, *many waters cannot quench, nor the floods drown the flame*. Every other expression of love, is small compared with this. But after the great-

est heights in this God-like virtue, his disciples follow him at an unapproachable distance. Yet the nearer they copy the pattern he has left them, the better. *We have not resisted unto blood.* And shall common obstacles discourage us? If, after the example of Christ, we are animated by *the joy set before us*, we shall lay aside every weight, and the sin that easily besets us, and run the Christian race with patience, looking unto Jesus.

Though *sinless* perfection is not the condition of salvation, yet *Christian* perfection is. This denotes, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have our conversation in the world—that every thought is brought into captivity to Christ. He requires, *give me thine heart.* A barren contemplation, or admiration of his sayings and example will be unavailing. The same mind must be in us, or we build on the sand. If we follow him whithersoever he goes, then we build on a rock.

From the foregoing sketch of the morality of our religion, we proceed to shew,

~~Secondly~~, that it merits the high approbation of all to whom it is offered.

The divine original of Christianity is neither taken for granted, nor the subject of enquiry, in this place. The Deist allows the morality of it, to be superior to that of any system, which the world ever before received.

The Christian precepts of purity, frugality and temperance, conduce to health of body and fere-

nity of mind, fit men to endure hardness, to face danger. Its precepts of doing to others as we would they should do to us, of loving our neighbor as ourselves, naturally conciliate friendship and esteem, and diffuse benevolence and peace. Suppose a society composed of members of such a character, each regarding the property and reputation, life and liberty, security and comfort of his neighbor, and of the community, as his own; none invading the rights of another, or of the society; but all dwelling in unity, conspiring to promote the interest of each other, and of the whole. Suppose also that the fear of God is the supreme, reigning principle with them. How happy must such a society be in itself? How respectable in the view of other communities? *If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it: If one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.* Should there be a diversity of opinion on common concerns, mutual trust and condescension would prevent any ill effects. Should any from without be so injurious as to invade their rights, such invaders must be under peculiar disadvantage. United in affection, having no domestic enemies, collecting all its wisdom and force against the invasion, confiding in public virtue and the divine defence, such a society will rise superior to difficulties, and emerge from distress. *The foot of pride will be turned back, and the stout-hearted spoiled.* The spirit of love and religion in such a society befriends public liberty, and consequently private, without which there can-

not be public. The wisest and best men are exalted ; and these exalt their nation. The laws are framed to the circumstances of the society ; founded on stable principles of moral rectitude, not adapted to answer a temporary purpose merely, or gratify a capricious humor. From the highest to the lowest, every one knows what treatment to expect, according to his behavior.

Such would be the state of a community, acting on Christian maxims. It would resemble those times when *they shall not hurt in all God's holy mountain*—when, as we expect, Jesus shall reign *king of nations*. Who then but must highly applaud the Christian scheme ? And the rather, as no other contains such an assemblage of moral virtues, or furnisheth assistance to the practice of all righteousness and goodness, or exhibits such a pattern, or such hope of immortality. How deficient are all other schemes in the foundation and extent of moral obligation ? In the sanctions and rules of virtue ? How many vices are inculcated by them as eminent virtues ? How much greater stress is laid on rites and ceremonies, than on things of a moral nature and immutable obligation ? How have the framers of them contradicted their own best maxims ? When we have surveyed them, and find them unsatisfactory, we may contemplate Christianity, the moral system of which requires nothing that needs correction, or admits amendment ; the author of which exhibited, in his own life, a perfect transcript of his own admirable rules.

We cannot contemplate his rules or example, without the highest approbation of both.

The most clear and honorable conceptions of the moral perfections and government of God, and the best instructions in the nature of his worship, are derived from the Christian Religion. All who wish to know the true God, and become his true worshippers, will therefore highly value the directions herein given. How did it claim the attention of such as were *feeling after God, if haply they might find him?* Such as were paying homage to the Host of Heaven, to the deified souls of men, to beasts, birds, and reptiles, to gods of gold, silver, stone and wood? Among whom, every species of cruelty, impurity and immorality, was sanctified with the name of religion.

Further: If Christianity is calculated, in the best manner, to make all men, and all societies of men, virtuous and happy, this must recommend it to every benevolent mind, every friend of virtue, every lover of his country and mankind. What veneration is due to the irreprehensible character of Jesus?—A character not merely harmless and unblemished, but eminent above any for public and private virtues, for piety, humility and charity; and which no one, who hath any sense of moral worth, can survey, without wishing that it were, in a measure, his own. If Jesus went about *doing good*, rendered blessing for cursing, and endured unexampled sufferings with invincible patience

and magnanimity, *forgive him this wrong*. Forgive the non-resistance of evil, and the benevolence *which passeth knowledge*, expressed in his *giving his life a ransom for all*.

Some of the *friends* of Christianity may have spoken on the subject of morals, in derogatory terms. It hath given them no occasion to assign to the moral virtues a *low place*. It hath enjoined every virtue comprehended in love, divine or social—enjoined them as the weightiest matters, on the surest foundation, by the strongest motives, and brightest example. His disciples know not what spirit they are of, if they depreciate the virtues for which the life of their Lord was conspicuous, in which he demands their imitation of him.

The *foes* of Christianity, on the other hand, have sometimes reproached it as deficient in some principal moral virtues; and as having inculcated other things as virtues, which betray meanness and pusillanimity. We may with the greatest truth deny the charge; and fix it on them. Shall suicide, murder, and spreading the ravages of war over the earth, to make all nations tributary to one, be extolled as virtuous? Valor, in the cause of truth and righteousness, charity and peace, is to be admired; but in the cause of error, unrighteousness, misanthropy, private revenge, or discontentment with providence, what is it but brutal rage? In the former cause, what valor may compare with that which Christianity inculcates and exempli-

sies? In the latter, other systems may claim the honor as all their own. If we commend friendship, the friend of all mankind claims our esteem above all others. Had all who have named his name, governed themselves by the principles and maxims which he taught and lived, instead of spending their zeal about external rites, or peculiar opinions and professions, it had been happy for church and state. Christianity would have appeared all glorious—*fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.*

When the opinions and lives of many professors are objected, we blush; and should not know what to answer, if the corruptions of it were chargeable to Christianity itself. But the enquiry is not, how have some of its professed friends believed and practised? It is, *how did Jesus himself teach and live?* and what would be the consequence to the world, if all men learnt of him? However his religion may have been disparaged by the misapprehensions and bad lives of professors, or the misrepresentations and calumnies of open enemies, its moral system is allowed to be better adapted to human virtue and happiness than any other; and the author of it lived according to it. Our business, then, is not, by traducing his character, to lessen the respect due to his maxims; but, from principles of benevolence and views of personal happiness, to form ourselves upon this system, and use our influence that others may.

Suppose Jesus to be no other than an human person, the eminence of his character as a teacher, and example of moral virtue, claims high respect. Whether we have any special connexion with him or not, we at least ought to admire and copy his virtues, as we revere illustrious characters in history, and take them for models. We applaud their wisdom, we dwell with pleasure on the rehearsal of their excellent qualities. Shall then the author of Christianity and his institution be treated with neglect and scorn? Such treatment can proceed only from a mind unfriendly to universal virtue and happiness—from a wish to overthrow the foundation of morality, which hath ever been considered as the support of order and government. If Christianity is not from Heaven, it hath done mankind no wrong. The benefits of it have been more and greater than can well be conceived. “The belief of it is the only principle which can retain men in a steady and uniform course of virtue, piety and devotion; or can support them in the hour of distress, of sickness and of death.” “A total rejection of all religious and moral principles whatever,” is the usual consequence of rejecting it. It is the commendation of Christianity, that none hate it, but those whose *deeds are evil*.

Some have represented the body of the human species as made for compliance and punishment. Those have been extolled as heroes and patriots, whose most splendid actions have sprung from no other motive than their own advancement on the

degradation of their people. Often are societies and kingdoms torn with discord, and merged in distress, through the interfering views of different partizans. As to religion, the Deity is presumed to be too great to require, or be pleased with, any acknowledgments from his creatures. The benevolence of a Deist may involve his dearest connexions in a multitude of sins, and teach his best friend to err fatally from the truth, or sacrifice him to a transient passion. It scorns inferiors, and envies superiors. The disciple of Jesus, on the contrary, feels the force of the following maxims: *All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility. The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor the head to the feet, I have no need of thee. Those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary.* Engaged in the same cause as his Lord, swayed by the same principles, formed on the same maxims, the disciple comparatively forgets his own things in a concern for those of others. Partial views and attachments are subordinated to universal benevolence. He doth not suffer sin upon his brother. His benevolence prompts his exertions to convert his worst enemies from the error of their way, save their souls from death, and hide a multitude of sins. *Christian charity envieth not, vaunteth not itself, seeketh not her own, thinketh no evil, beareth all things, and endureth all things.* It doth good to men of every description, not seeking recompence on earth, but in heaven.

We now refer it to all judges of *taste*, whether the *graces* which shone in the discourses and life of

Jesus have, on the whole, been tarnished by the wanton pens of the foes to his religion. What a mind must he have, who employs fine talents in wiping off from vice its deformity? Virtue can have no beauty, if vice is comely. The admirers of a noble lord may be asked, whether his writings have not disseminated a moral contagion beyond all in the present age? If to draw an enticing picture of vice, to convey irreligion and profligacy in an agreeable channel, to pollute the morals of Christendom, to initiate a favorite son in *the mystery of iniquity*, be a worthy employment, this was the peculiar ornament of that nobleman's character. But if to seduce the age, inexperienced years especially—if to seduce from the paths of virtue and integrity into those of error and pollution, one of whose tender years nature and providence had appointed him the guardian—if to lay before the child of his hopes a system replete with impiety to God and misery to man, can mark a character with reproach, too heavy censure cannot fall on CHESTERFIELD.

It remains to be shewn, *thirdly*, that the superior excellence of the Christian morals proves this religion to be divine. If Jesus were a mere man, how could he have delivered principles and maxims of life, which so much excel those of the wisest philosophers and moralists? He was not bred to letters. His parentage, education, and external circumstances render it impossible that he should be the author of such a system, if we deny his di-

vine mission. He had never learned, and yet spake *as never man spake*. After he had delivered the sermon on the Mount, in the hearing of multitudes, the people were *astonished at his doctrine*. Nor were the Jewish doctors less astonished, when they heard his discourses on one occasion and another. They might well ask, *How knoweth this man letters?* His doctrine and miracles alike amazed them.

Further: If Jesus was a mere man, he was of all men the vilest: For he not only declared that he received his Religion from Heaven, but added, that God was his Father. He assumed divine titles and honors; and declared that all men should honor him, even as they honor God, whom he called his Father. This was the height of blasphemy, if he was not a teacher sent from God. Now suppose him such a blasphemer, was it possible he should be the author of so admirable an institution? Should exhibit so perfect a pattern? Could the vilest of impostors publish a Religion most honorable to the divine moral perfections, containing the brightest discoveries of them, placing the essence of piety and virtue in a conformity to them? A Religion perfective of human happiness, shewing by his own example, what exaltation our debased nature is capable of?

We must, therefore, either deny the superior excellence of the Christian scheme of morality; or else admit that Jesus was sent of God. The former the Deist doth not deny. They, who believe that Jesus was the Son of the blessed, can give a reason why he taught and lived as never man did.

But the Deist, on his principles, must say, that the most complete system of morality, a system replete with love to God, and men, and goodness, proceeded from Satan, the avowed enemy of them—that the most perfect character was the messenger of Satan. Let him reconcile this, or else acknowledge with one of his brethren who guarded the crucifixion, *truly this man was the Son of God.*

Whether the moral system of Christianity, *in itself considered*, is or is not a sufficient proof of the Heavenly original of this Religion, yet when we add, that the author of it, separate from his divine mission, was every way incompetent to frame such a system, I see not but the conclusion is undeniable, that God was with him. Admitting this conclusion, it gives a rational account, and the only rational account, of the transcendent excellence of the instructions and moral character of Jesus. This supposition, and no other, furnisheth us with a solution of an acknowledged fact, that a person of low parentage and education, despised and rejected of men, who had not where to lay his head, yet taught “more sublime truths, and maxims more essentially promotive of the good of mankind, than all the writings of” ancient philosophers, legislators and moralists could afford; and exemplified them in his own character. If then his institution and character claim high esteem and reverence, viewing him as a mere man; how much higher esteem and reverence do they claim if he came from God.

Can “an opposer of our Religion lay his hand on his heart, and say his design is friendly to man-

kind? If he should succeed in his endeavors to overthrow it, has he a clearer system of theology to propose? Better rules of private and social virtue, or higher motives thereto? Has he a more efficacious plan to lay, for promoting the honor of God and good of men? Or can he relieve our ignorance, and point out the designs of God to us? Let the writings of modern infidels answer these questions. If then in proportion as one weakens the faith of Christianity, he hurts the interests of peace and order, virtue and happiness, the presumption is violent that" his "*head*" and "*heart*" are "*wrong*." Men of this turn have reason to examine themselves closely; *for truth comes not to destroy men, but to save.*"

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

From what has been discoursed we infer, first, that *practical* truths are the most important. This appears from the instructions of Jesus, the best teacher. Not a sentence in his excellent sermon on the Mount but directs us in the matter or manner of our duty to God, or men, or ourselves—in the rule, the principles, or motives of it. Religion is designed to improve the understanding and the heart. While it informs the mind with the best sentiments and principles, these are a foundation to the best temper and conduct. If not improved to this end, they do but aggravate our sin and shame. In vain must we plead our knowledge, faith and profession, if we are not followers of Christ. He will say at the day of accounts, *I ne-*

ver knew you! But they that do his commandments, *have right to the tree of life.*

Hence religious doctrines are important or otherwise, according to their practical tendency.

Hence those hopes are groundless which men build on the mere observance of religious rites. These are to be regarded in subserviency to judgment, mercy and faith. For love to God and men is more than *whole burnt offerings and sacrifice.* Shall then the power of Religion be postponed to the form? Or will any *partial, superficial and occasional* respect, even to the moral precepts of Religion, distinguish us from hypocrites and heathen? What but the obedience of the heart, an unreserved and persevering obedience, an obedience founded in Christian motives and prospects, can do this? The morality our Religion inculcates *is that of the heart, whose praise is not of men, but of God.* The dearest lust must be sacrificed. We must endure in the hour of temptation. Love to God and men, faith unfeigned, or believing unto righteousness, gives the victory over temptations within and without. The faith that doth not work by love, cannot save us. Charity is the qualification for Heaven, and will abide for ever. Taking our principles and maxims, our aims and hopes, from the author of Christianity, regardless of other systems and guides, we cannot miscarry. *Let this mind be in you, which was in Christ Jesus. Whatsoever things are true,—honest,—just,—pure,—lovely,—of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*

S E R M O N XI.

THE FOLLY AND GUILT, OF BEING
ASHAMED OF CHRIST.

B Y

S A M U E L S. S M I T H, D. D.

Col. N. C. V. P. et S. T. P.

M A R K viii. 38.

Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, and with the holy Angels.

TO perform our duty, and then, without ostentation to avow it, is our most honorable and useful character. It is fulfilling the first law of our nature, and extending the prevalence of religion and virtue in the world, by the influence of our example. To be *ashamed* of our duty, is to be ashamed of our glory. To acknowledge its obligation in secret, and yet disguise it before men, discovers a weakness and duplicity of mind, that is no less inconsistent with dignity, than with piety.

The sentiment of *shame*, that gives to the opinion of others so great authority over the mind, is originally a wise and excellent law of nature. But, the depravity of man hath perverted the best principles, and changed the most ingenuous feelings of the heart, into ministers of sin. Great crimes are evidently opposed to the interests of society, and therefore they are condemned by public opinion.—The depravity of the human heart is equally opposed to the spirit of true Religion; and therefore, the manners, and at least the ostensible opinions of the world, contradict the purity and simplicity of the Gospel. The one opposes vice in the extreme, the other tends to encourage vice in a certain degree.

The world hath so accommodated its conversation, its wit, and its opinions, to its manners, that men, in the cause of piety, are afraid of incurring its censure, or contempt. They want courage to oppose the stream of custom—they renounce their duty in compliance with fashionable vice, or they conceal their inward reverence for it, and, against their conviction, they live like the world.

To be ashamed of Christ, is a sin that may be considered in a variety of lights. Our Saviour, in pronouncing this sentence, had probably an immediate view to the testimony which his disciples would be called to bear to his name, before the tribunals of their unrighteous judges; where the splendor of courts, the scoffs of enemies, the ig-

nominy of punishments, and the humble and unfriended condition of the first Christians, would all contribute to subdue their minds, to make them ashamed of their master's cross, and to deprive them of the courage necessary to profess, or to suffer, for his despised cause.—Honor elevates the mind, and gives fortitude to the weak. Shame is an enfeebling principle, that takes even from the brave, the confidence necessary to avow truth, and the firmness necessary to endure suffering.—Indeed, to be *ashamed* of Christ, and to *deny* him, are so intimately connected, as cause and effect, that St. Matthew, in expressing this declaration of our Saviour, says, whosoever shall *deny* me before men, him will I also *deny* before my Father who is in Heaven.

Through the goodness of God, *we* are not exposed to persecution; but living in an age in which custom, in which the powers of wit and ridicule, in which the honors of society, and in which even reason and philosophy have been engaged on the side of vice, we are liable to disguise the truths of the gospel, and to be ashamed of Christ, with a more criminal weakness than they who suffered their constancy to be shaken by the majesty of tribunals, and the terror of flames.

It is this evil which I propose, from the text, to explain and condemn.

I. By pointing out what is implied in being ashamed of Christ, and of his words.

II. By demonstrating its folly and its guilt.

I. In pointing out what is implied in being ashamed of Christ, and of his words, I shall treat of the *sentiment* of shame directly—and unfold some of its principal *causes*—and its *consequences*, as they affect the profession of Religion.

1. In the first place, the *sentiment* of shame—This, like other simple feelings and emotions of the human mind, cannot be easily understood, except by exciting the perception, and calling to mind the occasions on which we have most sensibly felt its constraints.—Let us recollect those seasons in which a sinful regard to the observation of men has tempted us to decline the duty to which we have been urged by our own hearts—or, in which we have gone into criminal compliances with the world, through a weakness of mind, that was unable to support the presence, or to contradict the opinions of our fellow sinners. Let young persons, particularly, recollect their fears, lest it should be known that they worship God, and pay to the Creator the first duty of a creature.—Recollect what it is that sometimes clothes you with a light and thoughtless air in the house of God, afraid to be serious, lest you should appear too much to believe the gospel, or to be affected by its truths. When, at any time, the divine word begins to seize upon your hearts, what is it that excites you to shake off the conviction? And, when almost persuaded to be a Christian, what withholds

you from being persuaded altogether?—It is *shame*. You are afraid the world will remark it—the world whose presence weighs more with you than the authority of an invisible Deity. If you feel the compunctions of repentance, you fear lest they should be imputed to melancholy, or to weakness. If you perceive the duty and importance of making salvation your first care, and of honoring your Saviour by a public profession of his name, yet, you want the necessary resolution to encounter the world—to meet the sneers of your companions—their looks of suspicion, their hints of hypocrisy, their presages of inconstancy.—Thus may every hearer understand this sentiment by recalling to mind the occasions on which he has felt it, and on which it has checked his desires, or destroyed his resolutions of duty.

2. I shall further illustrate it, by pointing out some of its principal *causes*. These may be reduced to the three that follow—the pain of singularity—the power of ridicule—the want of sincerity.

Singularity is always painful to an ingenuous mind. It seems to hold us out as exceptions from the general law of human nature—as insensible to its feelings—and worthy neither of the affections, nor of the confidence of mankind. Singularity always attracts the censure of the world; or, by contradicting general practice, or opinions, it invites contempt. The public manners have numbers on their side, sufficient to brand with ignominy

whatever, by differing from them, implies their condemnation. Superstition, contraction of sentiment, weakness of mind, illiberality of heart, are the mildest reproaches that fashionable dissipation bestows on piety that dares to be singular. Wealth and power, objects before which the human mind is prone to bow, being too often on the side of vicious fashion, give it great advantage in establishing wrong ideas of honor and disgrace. And because the multitude of men of science, like the vulgar multitude, are frequently on the same interests, even philosophy and wit have been pressed into its service by these its obedient sons. To withstand so many formidable enemies, is an arduous task, even for confirmed virtue. Little is the wonder then, if first resolutions in Religion should be shaken by them; and if the young should sometimes not have fortitude to bear up against them. To be singular in piety, is to dare incur contempt for the despised cross. A hard sacrifice this for human pride! and especially for juvenile virtue!—Many more are found who are ready to forsake the Saviour, than who have firmness of mind sufficient to overcome the constraints of a false shame. Imperious fashion, both in conduct and opinion, will for ever sway the worldly heart. To rise above its influence requires an extraordinary zeal in Religion, that seems to annihilate the temptations of the world, or a long and respected character in Religion, that gives a man authority over his own actions. But, in the commencement of a religious life; and before a

character in piety hath become appropriated and sacred, for a man to enter into the society of his companions with reserve—to go with it only a certain length—to seem to enjoy it with constraint—to reproach them by more severe and corrected morals—and to incur their suspicion, obloquy, or contempt, requires uncommon prudence, and uncommon fortitude.—How often does the dismaying power of shame subdue the heart before so many difficulties!

Another source of false shame is found in the *power of ridicule.*

Ridicule is, perhaps, the severest assault which a man, about to enter upon duty, is called to sustain. It is apt to dismay and humble him much more than the coolness of contempt, or the violence of power. So sensible of its force are some infidels, that with this weapon alone do they attack Christianity, which they have so long in vain assailed by reason. It is a species of attack which every man can use against Religion, because all can laugh, though few can reason. It can be used against Religion with peculiar success, because its perfections are often invisible to sense, or withdrawn from the view; while the imperfections of its professors, which are mistaken for it, are obvious to every eye.—The *saints!*—the *hypocrites!*—the *weak fools!*—are titles that will furnish abundant sources of amusement to those who mistake *names* for *characters*, and *laughter* for *wit*: And, when other

matter fails, mimicry, the lowest species of ridicule, comes in with a thousand malicious and false additions, to dress out the last scenes of impious diversion. The wise and experienced Christian arrives at length, to feel his superiority over these ludicrous attacks—but the young and inexperienced find them almost irresistible. They feel the humiliating contempt of laughter—they are degraded in their own esteem—ridicule dismays them—a senseless smile subdues their hearts—and before a sinful generation, they are *ashamed of Christ, and of his words.*

In the consciousness of *want of sincerity*, we find another cause of that weak shame which is prone to deny, or to disguise, our reverence for Religion.

Pretences to an unsupported character are, in the highest degree, dishonorable and reproachful. The world, that differs in so many things from the disciples of Christ, agrees with them in condemning *visible hypocrisy*. Many young persons, dreading the contempt that is due to this character, are deterred from making a declared choice of Religion. Conscious that a conduct grave, devout and holy, should accompany the profession of piety, and fearing lest they want that sincere and courageous zeal, which will enable them to make such a resolute and conspicuous change of life, as becomes the followers of Christ, they decline to appear openly for his cause; they are afraid of discovering for it that reverence and attachment which

they really feel, lest they should not be able to support the profession with uniformity and consistency.—Ah! my brethren, if our hearts were sincere, the importance and glory of divine things would at once decide our choice, and overcome the apprehensions of being ever willing to sacrifice them to worldly interests, or to worldly pleasures; to the solicitations, or the sneers of men. But insincerity fears the reproach of hypocrisy, more than it fears hypocrisy itself—insincerity shrinks from the opinion of a worm, but does not tremble before the justice of the Creator—insincerity is ashamed of our glory, in the midst of sinners who are forever glorying in their shame!

3. The consideration of the *effects*, as well as the *causes* of this principle, will assist in explaining its nature.

One of the most certain consequences of being ashamed of duty, is to *lead to boldness and audacity in vice*. Shame is, perhaps, the evidence of a middle character, neither virtuous nor abandoned. It is always accompanied with some remaining reverence for God. But, judging from the licentious face of the world, that other sinners are not subject to the same constraints, it blushes for this sentiment, as for a weakness. Endeavoring to cover its belief, or its fears, it assumes a greater shew of infidelity and license than perhaps is real. It soon affects to talk in the stile of the world—to divert itself with serious persons, and at length, with serious things—it gives hints of libertinism, which

it represents as superiority to vulgar prejudice—it sometimes pushes these appearances farther than would be necessary, if men were really infidels, to secure to themselves, without controversy, that honorable character. But conscious insincerity urges them to extremes to cover its own deceptions. And men being prone to form their opinions, no less than to derive their feelings, from sympathy; these mutual appearances contribute to create, at length, that vice and infidelity to which all, in the beginning, only pretend. It is, besides, a principle of human nature, that pretence itself, will ultimately form those dispositions and habits, which it continues to affect.

But if shame, more *modestly* resolves not to renounce but to *postpone* the care of our salvation; is there not reason to fear, that this unhappy resolution will eventually come to the same issue? Need I repeat in this assembly the usual fruits of delay? Ah! my brethren, men always find the same reasons for delaying—and those who, through a false shame, and fear of the world, postpone their duty, may usually be considered, in effect, as *resolving to renounce it*.

If conscience, however, or, if other motives prevail with some men, who are, notwithstanding, under the influence of a criminal *shame*, openly to acknowledge their Saviour; will it not, often, corrupt the principles, and pervert the spirit of Religion? They study to accommodate their spirit

and principles to the opinions and manners of the world; that the world, seeing nothing in their piety but its *own image*, may cease to reproach them. Piety becomes with them prudential maxims of behaviour. The distinguishing doctrines of the gospel, the denial of ourselves, the regeneration of the heart, and spirituality of life, are little to be observed in persons, who are afraid of nothing so much as of being remarked for religious singularity; and who aim no higher than to pay the same ceremonious respect to the church, which they do to the world. Lest their piety should be reproached as superstition, they are careful perhaps, to make it understood, that they do not place too high a value on the public institutions of Religion—Lest it should be derided as enthusiasm, do they not banish from their devotion, *all appearances of zeal*? Lest they should incur the imputation of a narrow, or illiberal mind, do they not often run so far into the principles and manners of a dissolute age, that hardly can you discern, that they are the *friends of Religion*?

Having thus far considered, what is implied in being “ashamed of Christ, and of his words”—I proceed,

II. To shew its *folly* and its *guilt*—*Of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed.*

The *folly* and the *guilt* of this vice are reciprocal. They mutually contribute to illustrate, and aggravate each other. In this connexion, its *folly* de-

ferves, in the *first place*, to be considered with the most serious attention.—It consists,

1. In being ashamed of our true glory.
2. In hoping to avoid, by renouncing Religion, an evil which cannot be shunned among men, I mean, detraction and ridicule.
3. In fearing an imaginary evil, that is, reproach for real virtue and piety.
4. And, finally, in exposing ourselves to infinite danger, for the sake of covering a fruitless deception.

1. It consists, in the first place, in being ashamed of our true glory.

What is the *highest glory* of man?—Whether we consider ourselves as creatures, as sinners to be redeemed, or as moral agents, the most important lights in which we can be viewed; our glory and our duty are the same—Obedience to the Creator, gratitude to the Saviour, and conformity to the laws of our nature.

If God is our parent, and the author of our being, doth not every idea of duty and of honor require us to worship him, and publicly to claim our relation to him? On the worthy and obedient child, the virtues of the parent are reflected, and every related object derives a splendor from the dignity of the principal. But examine all the things on earth, that are the subjects of human

boasting, and are they not in his presence, *less than nothing and vanity?*—O God! the universal Father!—Origin of Being!—Fountain of good!—in union to thee—in conformity to thine image—in obedience to thy will, consists the glory of the rational and moral nature! To be ashamed of thee, is not the absurdity only, but the madness of human folly!

Gratitude to the Saviour, is the second duty, and the second honor of man. To shew a defect of gratitude where it is justly due, is a decisive proof of a degenerate and ignoble mind. But the greatness and condescension of the Redeemer—the meanness and the guilt of man, concur, in this case, to impose a boundless claim on our gratitude and love. Is it not our true glory, my brethren, to feel, with all their force, the infinite obligations created by redemption?—Is it not our glory, to acknowledge them with warmer gratitude, in proportion, as they are forgotten, or neglected by the world?—Yes, this is the dictate of a true, a generous, a grateful, as well as pious heart.

Lastly, the honor of man consists in *fulfilling the end of our being*, which is the will of God. But this *weak principle*, which makes him desert his duty, changes, at the same time, and degrades his rational and moral nature, and sinks them from their original and native glory; the one, to a resemblance of brutal natures, the other, to an image of infernal spirits.—O man! ambitious of glory!

afraid of nothing so much as of disgrace! Unwife and foolish man! thou art ashamed of thy glory! and thou gloriest in thy shame!

2. The *folly* of being ashamed of our duty, appears, in the next place, in vainly hoping to avoid, by renouncing Religion, an evil, which cannot be shunned among men; I mean, detraction and ridicule.

What is the world but a vast theatre, where envy and malice are perpetually sharpening the tongues and the wit of men against each other? What is half the intercourse of life but a scene of obloquy and sneer, where the characters of the absent are the constant sacrifice to the vanity of the present? Wherever you have rivals, and that is, wherever you have acquaintance of the same sex, or age, or profession with yourself, you find those whose weak minds have no other means of exalting themselves but by depressing you. Change then your life—you only change the subject of discourse. You cannot gain, by continuing of the party of finners, what you fear to lose, by embracing the cause of Religion—their friendship or their good opinion. And why should you fear, in the service of God alone, an evil to which you must be equally, or even more exposed, by remaining in the interests of the world?—I say more exposed; for it greatly augments the folly of this sin.

3. In the next place; that while it incurs *a real*, it flies from *an imaginary evil*. It fears reproach

for Religion, when, in reality, *the world has no reproach to make; when, instead of despising, it respects the beautiful and supported character of piety.*

Wisdom and goodness, rightly understood, can never be the objects of ridicule or censure. They vindicate themselves to the judgment and conscience, even of the vicious. Misrepresentation, to which an honest mind should ever be superior, is here the only ground of reproach. And what can even misrepresentation alledge?—That, in youth, it is an affectation of wisdom and virtue, above your companions and above your years?—Alas! can any age be too early to be wise, and to seek for real and durable felicity?—If the multitude of your companions afford few examples of piety, is it not the greater honor to rise to a degree of wisdom, rarely attained even in mature life, and at an age in which we think it much if you learn with docility, to be able already to give an example worthy of imitation?—Will the world busy itself to find out false motives for your change? Let such malice serve only to disgust you the more with a world, the true character of which, you are now just beginning to discern.—Will they say with a sneer, *the saints! the hypocrites! the weak fools! Ah! this zeal will not last long!*—Let such ungenerous insults only determine your resolution, more firmly to support the dignity of Religion, by the integrity of your conduct, and by perseverance in virtue. If you do thus, be assured that the world itself, after proving your sincerity, and spending

its first resentments upon you, for having forsaken its party, will regard you with reverence and esteem. It is not indeed Religion, but insincerity and hypocrisy they despise. If then you would silence obloquy, and obtain an honorable place in their hearts, be not ashamed of the doctrines of Christ. But you must be careful to mix with your Religion, nothing weak or superstitious;—nothing libertine or worldly—Do not resemble too much the man of the world—*It is their own image which they despise in a Christian.* Persevere in the path of duty. They will convert contempt or hatred into veneration—they will applaud your resolution—they will envy your destiny—and if they cannot bring their lives to resemble you, they will *secretly sigh*, that their end may be like yours.

4. The folly of this evil consists, in the last place, in its exposing us to *infinite danger*, for the sake of covering a *fruitless deception*.

Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, said the Saviour, *of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed.*—Wo to that man, of whom the Son shall be ashamed! God, when offended, might be reconciled through his atonement. But, when the Saviour is rejected, *there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.*

Is this the issue of being ashamed of the gospel?—Is this the reward of that frivolous honour which we would preserve in the opinion of a corrupted world, by renouncing virtue?—Is this the

fruit of that criminal deception which we strive to maintain, by unworthy pretences against the struggling sense of inward duty?—do we derive from it even present gain, to make a momentary compensation, for the *eternal loss*?—No, *worldly* reputation and interest are, when rightly considered, *in favour of Religion*. But when the *soul*—when the *hopes of salvation*—when the *judgment of God*, are put in the balance against a *slander*, a *sneer*, a *suspicion*, a *look* of miserable mortals, and outweighed—Oh! infinite folly! My brethren, eternity alone can disclose it in its full magnitude; when we shall see, in the dreadful light of everlasting burnings, the vanity of human opinion, and all the terrors of that denunciation, *of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed*.

Secondly, having endeavored, in few words, to illustrate *the folly* of being ashamed of Religion, I shall, with equal brevity, illustrate *its guilt*. Its guilt consists in exalting the authority of man above the glory of God—in ingratitude to him, who was not ashamed of us—and in promoting vice by the pernicious influence of our example.

I. In exalting the authority of man above the glory of God.

His *infinite perfection*, independently on his rights as our Creator, has a supreme claim to our adoration and love. He is infinitely *more worthy* than any of his creatures, of the fervent and entire devotion of our hearts. He who hath created the powers of understanding and enjoyment, is able to

fill them with consummate and eternal consolations. Not to love him, therefore—not to make his glory predominant over all other objects, is an evidence that the heart is blind to moral beauty, and corrupted in all its affections. But, to make man the arbiter of our duty to God—to make the divine glory stoop to the pleasure, or opinion of a miserable worm, is a crime beyond expression. Its malignity is to be estimated, from the perfection of him who is offended; and, like that, it is infinite.

2. The guilt of this sin consists, in the next place, in ingratitude to him who was not ashamed of us.

Ingratitude to a benefactor is among the most detested vices. If the ingratitude of men, for the blessings of salvation, strikes us with less horror, than other examples of this sin, it is because *we* are involved in the common crime—it is because we do not discern in the light of faith, the infinite distance between the Creator and the creature.—But when he descends from his eternal throne—when the incarnate deity submits to suffer—when the divine glory was not ashamed of human weakness, that sinners should be ashamed of him—be astonished O Heavens, at this! And tremble thou Earth, who bearest in thy bosom such guilt!

It has sometimes been asked, by those who are not willing to make great sacrifices, whether we may not acquit ourselves of duty in secret, with-

out exposing our profession to the view of those who would *insult or deride it*?—I answer, no.—Sincerity glories in its object: And when God is the object, the soul, occupied in the blessedness of its portion, forgets, in a measure, the applause or censure of the world—his glory will be a sufficient portion when the world frowns—the sense of his love will support the heart against the fear of its reproach. *Shame* to that worldly prudence that is ashamed of its God!

Shall sin, the disgrace of our nature, walk among us with elevated and impudent forehead?—And shall Religion, the glory of the reasonable soul, blush and retire, lest the profane eyes of men, dazzled with its beauty, should not be able to endure the sight.

3. Its guilt consists, in the last place, in promoting vice, by the pernicious influence of our example.

Example is contagious—and the world becomes more corrupted, from the vice that is already in it. To decline the profession of Religion through false shame, is, in some respects, more injurious to the interests of virtue in the world, than open impiety. This, sometimes, prevents imitation, by a certain horror at its enormity.—That, by preserving greater decency, more effectually insinuates its poison. Your example proclaims your unbelief, or your contempt of the gospel; and invites others to receive it with incredulity, or to

treat it with scorn. In account of the divine justice, *the depravity and perhaps the perdition of many sinners*, shall be charged to that criminal shame, which alienates you from the life of God, *and shall go to augment your guilt.*

In the *conclusion* of this discourse, permit me to remark, that although divine grace alone can effectually secure the heart, and raise it above the influence of a false and unholy shame; yet it will greatly contribute to this happy effect, to have early established just ideas of honor and shame, by a well directed education. It is of great importance, in the beginning of life, to pre-occupy the mind by good impressions—to teach it to reverence God, before it has yet seen the beauties of holiness—to *honor*, before it has learned to *love* religion—and to prepare it to *despise*, before it has arrived to *detest* the vices and the follies of the world. It is of the greater importance, because our habits and opinions are constantly and imperceptibly forming, by all that we see and hear. If Religion does not early impart such as are rational and just, the world will necessarily prepossess the mind with such as are pernicious and false. False shame will withhold it from the influence of piety—false honor will raise up within it the most dangerous enemies to salvation.

Let parents and instructors, therefore, be diligent to discharge their duty with fidelity to the rising generation. The most happy fruits will reward your prudent and honest zeal. Reflect what

advantages you enjoy, when you plead the cause of piety against vice—and of Heaven against the world. What can be more glorious than the service of the King of Kings? What more great and worthy than virtue, which brings to perfection all the best and noblest principles of human nature? Religion is the true glory as well as happiness of man. It is sin only that is his real shame.—It is filled, besides, with unspeakable danger, and is speedily tending to eternal ruin.

Suffer me to extend a little this idea.—It is strongly implied in the expression of our Saviour, *of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy Angels.* All miseries are included in this threatening.—When God condescends to treat the sinner in this language of sarcastic contempt, it strikes me as the most fearful denunciation of divine vengeance. Other threatnings seem more definitely to mark their penalties: This presents nothing distinctly to the imagination, but holds up every thing most terrible to our fears.—Shall I call up to view the last tribunal? The Heavens on fire? The Earth shaken, and moved out of its place? The elements melting with fervent heat before the wrath of God and of the Lamb?—Shall I speak of *Tophet that is ordained of old, the pile whereof is fire and much wood; and the breath of the Lord as a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it?* And shall I not say, after all, that his most fearful sentence is, *“of him shall the son of man be ashamed?”*—This is indignant jus-

tice, heightened by contempt. The flames of anger may consume the sinner—shame will bury him for ever from his sight.—What! banished from thy sight, O merciful Saviour of men! This is indeed the blackness of everlasting darkness!

Let those unhappy men who are ashamed of Christ, and of his words, deeply reflect on this dreadful destiny!—To persuade you to this wise and necessary resolution, is the whole object of the present discourse. May the Spirit of God add to these reflections his own evidence, and his almighty energy! May he impart to us a wise estimate of eternity and time! Of the opinions of men, and the approbation of God!—And now to the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, be rendered, through Jesus Christ, all honor, glory, and praise, from all on Earth, and all in Heaven! Amen!



S E R M O N XII.

ON THE FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES.

B Y

SAMUEL S. SMITH, D. D.

Col. N. C. V. P. et S. T. P.

M A T T. vi. 14.

If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

THE forgiveness of injuries, which is among the most important duties of morals, and to which mankind have always submitted with so much reluctance, is here enforced by our Saviour with the highest sanction of Religion. In inculcating this great law, he proposes the mercy of God to our imitation, he recalls to memory our offences against him, that this humiliating reflexion may render us mild and indulgent to those who have offended us—And he touches the deepest springs of interest, by making our own pardon from God depend on the spirit with which we treat others.

Philosophy has often recommended the contempt, but rarely the forgiveness of injuries. It

is a doctrine not, indeed, above the reach of reason; but reason is too weak to establish it as a general principle of action. It required the authority of a Divine Legislator to enforce the duty, in this extent, on the pride, or the meanness of mankind.

To illustrate this duty is the object of the following discourse.—With this view, I propose to explain its nature and extent—and to shew that it is founded in the justest reason.

I. I beg your attention, therefore, in the first place, while I endeavor to illustrate the nature and extent of this duty.

The first impulse, usually, which men feel on receiving an injury, is to revenge. This dark and furious passion is always violent and extreme in its purposes, and is prone to justify its excesses by representing its object in a criminal and odious light. It outrages the divine spirit of charity, and tends to rend asunder those amiable and happy ties, by which God would unite society together, and connect man with man. To prevent, or to correct these disorders, Christianity hath promulgated the law of forgiveness. This law comprehends the following great principles of duty—to love our enemies—and to return good for evil.

I. To love our enemies.—No injury can cancel that original obligation that lies on all mankind to love one another. Derived from one origin—partaking of one nature—united in the same interests—and heirs of the same hopes, they are connected

by so many, and such powerful ties, that no cause can be sufficient entirely to dissolve them, or to justify an unforgiving temper. If every man should conceive himself intitled to repay injustice with hatred, would not that amiable spirit be destroyed which was intended to unite the world together, and the family of God be rent with irreconcilable dissentions? Hence, he requires us to love even our enemies—to regard them as brethren—to sympathize with their distress—to find apologies for their rash and mistaken resentments—and to pity those whose injuries are more pernicious to themselves than to us.

This spirit, when it is sincere, will not be restrained to those emotions and wishes of a good and benevolent heart, that are confined within itself. It will seek every prudent and practicable mean of reconciliation. It is the law of Christ—*if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*—A good and delicate mind will feel exquisite pain in having given even involuntary offence. If innocent, it will be solicitous to make those explanations that may be necessary to remove improper prejudices from a brother's breast. Or, if through prepossession, or the transports of passion, it hath given him real cause of umbrage, it will not be too haughty to make the just and reasonable concessions. Nay, where the heart of a brother is to be regained, a

good man will not too rigorously examine or contend for his own rights---he will display a certain generosity in his advances, which is the dictate of a benevolent and noble mind, conscious of the purest intentions.

2. To forgive injuries, is not only *to love our enemies, but, to return good for evil.*—*Bless those who curse you, saith Christ, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who despitefully use you, and persecute you. If thine enemy hunger feed him, if he thirst give him drink; for, in so doing, thou wilt heap coals of fire on his head*—that is, thou wilt either reclaim him by the painful conviction of his rashness and guilt; or thou wilt dissolve his heart, if he hath yet a heart to be dissolved, by the warm persuasion of your goodness. If there be a way in which you can render him essential service—by speaking well of the deserving parts of his character—by drawing a discreet veil over his foibles—by generously producing his virtues to light—or by advancing his fortunes, you will not only fulfil an elevated duty of Religion, but probably attach him for ever as an useful friend.

It may be demanded, perhaps, whether this doctrine of love to our enemies, requires such reliance on their virtue, and such confidence in the appearances of reconciliation as might put us too much in their power if they were designing and insincere.—By no means—Piety is not inconsistent with prudence, nor the most warm and generous charity with those precautions that are necessary

for our safety. You may pity, you may assist, you may forgive, you may love an enemy before you confide in him. Experience is necessary to lay a just and solid foundation for trust. Your own duty is certain and clear—his character may still be dubious. It requires time and variety of proof to assure us sufficiently of the integrity and goodness of others. A heart, prompted by warm benevolence, and, at the same time, under the direction of a sound understanding, will be, on this subject, the best interpreter of the divine law.

It may serve, however, farther to illustrate the nature and extent of this duty, to point out the false principles on which the reconciliations of men often turn after they have been once embroiled, and the false substitutions that are often made in the room of the forgiveness of injuries.

False principles of reconciliation are numerous and various. We see it sometimes accomplished with difficulty by the assiduity and management of common friends, who are offended at the excesses to which it is carried, or afflicted at the derangement it occasions in the circle of their society. The parties, perhaps, fatigued with their importunity, or ashamed of their own obstinacy, yield at length to their remonstrances.—But, observe with what reluctance they come together! what mutual coldness and distrust they discover! how many punctilios must be adjusted! how many explanations must be made! how many compromises must be attempted, evidently calculated to save a

false idea of honor, and to evade the genuine spirit of evangelical reconciliation! Sometimes it is sought merely as a cover from the perpetual shafts of obloquy, or to avoid the anxiety and disgrace of eternal self-vindication and recrimination.—Sometimes to save ourselves the irksomeness of shunning, or the awkwardness of meeting in the same companies. How often in the numerous and capricious changes of party of every kind, does an unexpected coincidence of interest reunite men whom an accidental opposition had divided? How often hath the dishonor of becoming the subjects of public satire or mirth induced them to overcome or restrain their passions? And a few, perhaps, affecting the glory of moderation, or of magnanimity, have endeavored not so much to forgive as to shew a superiority to injuries.

These principles contribute to preserve a certain degree of order and union in human society; but they do not rise to that elevation and purity which is required by the gospel. They are imitations of Religion, not its genuine spirit—and although they may be employed as useful auxiliaries of piety, yet, if they are the sole principles of action, their value is destroyed by the selfishness and pride with which they are accompanied. You widely mistake if, in consequence of a reconciliation that has proceeded upon these grounds, you imagine you have forgiven your brother, or have fulfilled the views of the law. The world that judges with more impartiality, sees you are not

friends. It sees in your conversation, in your conduct, in your whole manner, a secret coldness and alienation from him that is not consistent with the meekness, the benevolence, and the disinterested spirit of this duty.—You should forgive for no oblique or selfish views—you should forgive from the principle of charity—you should forgive for the love of God—you should forgive because you need to be forgiven.

I shall now illustrate this duty farther, by considering, in another view, the false substitutions that are often made in the room of the forgiveness of injuries.

The first that I mention, is a certain apathy of mind that hath ceased to feel the emotions of resentment, not because the injury is forgiven, but because time has abated our sensibility. My brethren, this partakes nothing of the vivacity of true charity. Charity is a warm and active principle. It embraces a forgiven enemy like a reconciled brother—and an enemy who refuses to be reconciled, it regards with that spirit of meekness and benediction which can flow only from a heart touched and animated with the love of God.

Another substitute is a reconciliation merely ostensible; and a return to the exterior decencies of society, while a warm remembrance of the injury is still cherished in the breast.

It is not uncommon to say, I forgive him, but he has no reason hereafter to *rely* upon my friend-

ship. My brethren, this hint is too insignificant. We discern in it the evident symptoms of an alienated mind. Is this to forgive? Does love thus studiously cherish the memory of an offence? Does the meek temper of forgiveness thus swell the heart with a proud resentment? True forgiveness implies much more than a constrained and artificial submission to the exterior decencies of life. It is a principle that unites the hearts of men by the inward and powerful cement of divine love, and not their persons merely by the loose and vulgar ties of ordinary association.

Another, and much more unjustifiable substitute for this duty, is a resolution, indeed, not to prosecute an open and public revenge, but accompanied at the same time, with a purpose to avoid, towards the offender, all the common civilities of life.

Men who act on this principle seldom mollify their resentments so far as to submit to a formal reconciliation. Yet because an unforgiving temper is condemned by Religion, and still more, because it is odious to the world, they profess to forgive, when they mean only they will not prosecute their rage to extremes. But they refuse to see their enemy—they shun the companies he is known to frequent. Wherefore? Because his presence might excite painful recollections, or create an embarrassment that would destroy the pleasure of society. My brethren, let the common sense of mankind decide upon this question. Can we have

Forgiven our brother if we exclude him from our sight? If his presence still irritates? If it recalls ideas that should be forgotten? If it awakens emotions that should be composed by the spirit of love?—Certainly not.

The last substitute which I shall mention for the *forgiveness*, is the *contempt* of injuries.

A man is so closely connected with his actions, that it is difficult to despise his vices, which is permitted by Religion, without despising his person, which is not permitted. The sentiment of superiority to an unworthy act too easily degenerates, in a common mind, into improper pride. And so foreign from true charity is all pride and haughtiness of spirit, and so difficult is it not to involve the person in our idea with his character or cause, that it is safest, perhaps, for a Christian to regard even the vices of others with pity, rather than with contempt.

Having, thus far, endeavored to explain the nature and extent of forgiving injuries, and pointed out the wrong conceptions which are entertained of it by mankind, both in the improper principles of their reconciliations, and in the false substitutions which they are prone to make in the room of this duty.—I proceed now,

II. To illustrate its foundation in reason, as well as in the command of the Saviour.

This may be done from a double source of argument—from the excellence and amiableness of

the disposition from which this virtue is derived—and from the insufficiency of the causes on which revenge is justified.

1. In the first place, from the excellence and amiableness of the disposition from which this virtue is derived.—It contains a high and general philanthropy, which is a sweet and elevated affection—it contains the love of our enemies, which is a generous principle—it will attract respect and honor from the world—and finally, it is the most perfect resemblance of that attribute in the Deity which is the most interesting to man.

1. It contains a high and general philanthropy which is a sweet and elevated affection.

Love is the highest principle of union among all sensible beings. Its exercise is always accompanied with pleasure, and with the consciousness of its excellence. The common proverb that revenge is sweet, is a maxim of passion, not of reason. And, like most other strong and sudden dictates of the passions, it is false. Are not the plans of revenge filled with anxiety and pain? Is not their execution accompanied with the bitterness of undisguised rage, or the baseness of secret treachery? Doth it not, when most successful, recoil in its effects, upon ourselves, either from the resentment of the world, or from the reflections of our own breasts? And doth it not, when unsuccessful, render us the victims of our own impetuosity, and pride, and involve us in a succession of hostilities, and a

tempest of hateful passions, that destroy, at once, our security and our peace?—No, revenge is not sweet—it embitters our enjoyments—it incurs the hatred and opposition of mankind—and, even in our own view, degrades us in the moments of calm recollection. On the other hand, the mild and heavenly principle of universal love, exalts us in our own esteem—It diffuses a divine sweetness through the breast, and spreads tranquillity over the whole scene of life—it escapes injury by avoiding offence—and tends to render all men our friends, by being ourselves the friends of all. Such is the genuine principle of forgiveness—such is its dignity and happiness—and the reasonableness of the duty becomes evident, from the excellence of its source.

2. It contains, in the next place, the love of our enemies, which is a noble and generous affection.

Whatever excellence or beauty there is in that general philanthropy that unites us to mankind, it is greatly increased by embracing our enemies. There is a generosity in forgiving an enemy that exalts the action. There is a heroism in being superior to injury, that cannot be acquired by the boldest and most successful efforts of revenge.—What is an enemy?—One who has treated you with injustice—who has attacked your interests—who has attempted to blast your reputation—who has touched you in those points that are most tender and dear to an honest and feeling mind.—

What can be more great and elevated than that divine charity which enables us to forgive him? Doth it not display a fortitude that disdains to fear? or a consciousness of innocence that cannot, eventually, distrust the justice of the world?—Or, is it not, at least, the fruit of penitent humility that forgets *his* injury in the self-reproaches which returning virtue always makes to our *own* past folly?—Reproaches which are the certain indications of a worthy and ingenious mind.

But, apart from these considerations, our enemies themselves have some claim to our regard, for the benefits we may derive from them. Friends are too tender to our foibles. Flatterers, while they soothe, beguile, and often do us an essential injury, by cherishing a false vanity, and a contemptuous indifference to the opinion of the world. Frequently, our imperfections are first learned from our enemies. And although they may be magnified by unfriendly passions; yet even malevolence has usually some ground on which it raises its exaggerated pictures. A wise man, by prudently attending to its censures, may learn to correct his errors, and to perfect his virtues. And the laudable desire of reforming every fault, and a generous wish of perfecting the character may contribute, in such a mind, to extinguish resentment, by the obligation which it feels, even to an enemy.

3. This spirit, in the next place, is not only honorable in itself, but it will attract respect and honor from the world.

No, reply the passionate advocates for the manners of the world, such mildness and forbearance will only invite injuries, and will certainly degrade us in the public opinion. It is contrary to the established maxims of honor; and a man is no longer well received if he has forfeited his character in so delicate a point. My brethren, let me beg your patience a moment, while I combat the truth of these remarks; at least so far as they regard a good man, who has acquired an established character for piety and prudence, who is cautious of giving offence, and who is ready to acknowledge his fault, if he has inadvertently suffered himself to be betrayed by his passion. We rarely see examples of that innate and inveterate malice which will pursue benevolent worth of this kind, with unrelenting injustice. The vicious world itself respects goodness that is supported with dignity. If there are a few instances of such atrocious spirits, their own violence disgraces themselves, and saves the reputation of a worthy character. Even in that point, in which modern manners have peculiarly placed the idea of honor, more real glory, and more public esteem will follow from forgiving than revenging affronts. That affectation of meekness, indeed, which flows from pusillanimity, is a contemptible character.—It is easily distinguishable from the mild and benevolent temper of the gospel which *may* be associated with the highest bravery. And much of the reproach which has been poured upon those who,

in the stile of the world, have not *properly resented injuries*, has arisen from their own weak and unequal conduct. Rash enough, perhaps, to give unnecessary offence, they are not believed when they plead principle, for refusing to make the customary satisfaction. A good man should be uniform throughout. He should be equally inoffensive in his conduct, as he is careful not to violate the law that forbids retaliation and violence.—There is a mild way of doing every thing—even of opposing the world. And when steady virtue is supported by a calm and placid conduct—when equal pains have been taken to avoid offering an offence, as there is reluctance shewn to answer for it—when readiness is shewn to acknowledge and correct every inadvertent transport of the passions—and when, on other occasions, permitted and approved by religion, a proper firmness of mind has been discovered, no degradation can result from refusing to comply with the common but false maxims of honour.—It was an excellent reply made by a brave and virtuous officer, to one who had challenged him to single combat—“ You know I am not afraid to die, but I am afraid to commit a fault. If you wish to bring our personal courage to the proof, I challenge you to shew, in the next battle, which of us shall lead our troops with the greatest bravery to the charge.”—Many weak minds are capable of putting their lives to hazard in a sudden impulse of rage; but it requires much higher fortitude to encounter great and real

dangers with coolness at the call of duty, and to display a shining virtue in the service of our country or of mankind.

The maxims of revenge have been formed, if I may speak so, by the populace of the world. And whatever comes from that school, is always marked by its native characters of ignorance and weakness. Is not this remark verified by observation? Where are those doughty combats for honor found? Are they not usually among those who have little other claim to merit? who, having forfeited the real honor of wise and good men, are the more furious for the name? Are they not, most frequently, at the termination of those bacchanalian debauches where men have given up, not only the honor, but almost the character of human nature? Are they not, at best, in those moments of blind and intemperate passion, when man is no longer rational?

These are not merely professional declaimings, or the narrow reflexions of a religious spirit unacquainted with the manners of the world. If the celestial purity of the gospel—if the divine majesty of truth can receive support from earth, they will find it in the opinions of the wisest philosophers, and the bravest men of antiquity. The elder Cato had it for a maxim, “that we ought to pardon the faults of every other man, but never our own.” “Revenge, says Plato, although approved by the world, is never proper; nor can any injury

justify retaliation." Seneca declares, that "Revenge is inhuman, however it be authorized by a pernicious custom." On the other hand, says he, "how amiable is it when a man is incapable of being penetrated by any weapon, or of being hurt by injury or reproach!"—When Dion, that celebrated general and philosopher, had conquered Syracuse, two of his most inveterate enemies fell into his power. His friends persuaded him to take vengeance on them. But mark the wise and magnanimous reply of a great soldier—"other generals delight in war and arms alone; but I, who have employed so much time in the pursuits of science, have studied, by its aids, to overcome anger, revenge, envy, obstinacy, and other pernicious passions of this kind. The surest proof of my success is, not only kindness to my friends, but lenity and forgiveness towards my unjust and inveterate enemies." Cleomenes, king of Sparta, once said, "It is the office of a good prince to confer favors on his friends, and to inflict punishments on his enemies." "How much better would it be," replied Socrates, who heard him, "to do good to your friends, and to make friends of your enemies?" And no principle of conduct can be more wise and noble than that suggested by Diogenes, to a man who enquired how he might best be revenged on his enemy?—The philosopher answered, "By being better than he."—I could fill the time of a long discourse, with quotations to the same purpose. And it must afford a good man pleasure,

in reading the works of antiquity, to observe the conduct of the greatest men refuting the false maxims of modern honor, and to see the conclusions of reason, aided by philosophy alone, coinciding with the mild and beneficent precepts of the gospel. Although it may be beyond our sphere to emulate these illustrious men in the fame of their writings, or the glory of their achievements, is it not however the duty of every Christian to emulate them in the admirable spirit of their morals? If nature could guide them by her feeble lights to this high degree of excellence, to what perfection may we arrive, if we faithfully follow the clearer lights of the Sun of Righteousness.

4. In the last place, the reasonableness of this duty is illustrated from its resemblance to that beneficent attribute in God that is most interesting to man.

All our offences against Heaven are freely forgiven us through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. When God assumed a visible form, it was to promulge the law of forgiveness and love—It was to give the most affecting example of it, by offering his life to obtain the pardon of those who had offended him. My brethren! *if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.* Behold him dying for his enemies, and while they are perpetrating the most cruel of all injuries, hear him, with infinite dignity and goodness, pronounce their forgiveness, and even make the apology of their

crime—*Father forgive them, for they know not what they do!* Interesting example to us, whose sins were obliterated by that act!—who were rescued by it from the flames which our offences against him were, at that moment, kindling around us! With what force does it recommend to you from the cross, that divine precept, to *love your enemies, to bless those who curse you, to do good to those who hate you, and to pray for those who despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your heavenly Father, who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and his rain to fall on the just and the unjust.* The Apostle beautifully applies it to this use in his epistle to the Ephesians—*be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.* Can any character be more honorable to human nature than to resemble the perfection of God? Can any duty be more just than to forgive as we have been forgiven.

So many principles concur to recommend and urge this amiable exercise of Christian charity. The reasonableness of this duty appears, however, not only from the excellence and amiableness of the dispositions from which it is derived—but

II. From the insufficiency of the causes on which revenge is justified. These may be ranked under the following classes—contradiction to our habits and opinions—opposition to our pleasures or interests—and injustice to our character and reputation.

I. Contradiction to our habits and opinions, in the first place, is apt to create an alienation of mind from those who oppose us, and to nourish the resentful passions.

What implacable oppositions have we seen grow up among men from diversity of sentiment in Religion, or in civil policy? Society, that was designed for the protection and peace of mankind, seems frequently to inflame the passions with greater ardor, by bringing them nearer together. And men, in the extravagance of misguided zeal in Religion, have thought to promote the cause of love and mercy, by the most frightful excesses of cruelty and rage.—Even on less important subjects, variety of opinion, and diversity in the habits of taste and education, become sources of mutual alienation and contempt, that create many imaginary causes of dissention, and augment and imbitter those that are real. What ridicule, what sneer, what obloquy enter into different parties, and often form the spirit of the different circles into which society is divided? Do not these causes nourish the passions of hatred and pride? Do they not represent the actions and designs of men in a false and injurious light? Do they not contribute to render their dissentions unforgiving and eternal? Ah! my brethren, are not all these occasions of mutual alienation, when seriously and calmly estimated, unworthy and unreasonable? And yet, do we not see them every day violating, in the grossest manner, the spirit and the law of charity?

2. Another cause of revenge as little justifiable, is opposition to our pleasures, or our interests.

Interest and pleasure form those objects of pursuit that usually occupy the minds of men with the greatest ardor. If these are frequently and pointedly opposed, they are apt to create strong and lasting resentments. How can I love the man, you say, who, on all occasions, sets himself against me? How can I forgive the malice that is perpetually thwarting my purposes and defeating my views?—Let us examine the validity of these reasons.—Perhaps the malice you impute to him is only the coloring which your resentment gives to his successful rivalship. He is engaged in a pursuit of pleasures, or interests similar to your own. Your common views happen to terminate on the same objects; and your passions represent the interference that springs from the lawful exercise of his own rights, as flowing from malicious design. But admitting that he is an enemy as well as a rival—do you not acquit him on your own principles, by your hostility to him? And will you add to the injury he hath already done you, a greater evil, by cherishing those unhallowed passions that offend God, and disquiet your own peace? No, these enmities are at once ill founded and pernicious to our own souls. If opposition to our interests, or our pleasures is not sufficient to justify the spirit of revenge—neither is,

3. Injustice to our character and reputation.

Character is the dearest possession to a good man. No wound afflicts him so deeply as an imputation on his honor, or his virtue? But is it sufficient to authorize the purposes of revenge?—No, Religion prohibits all retaliation, except of good for evil.—Is it the proper way to vindicate our injured innocence? No, a gentle disposition, and a virtuous conduct are the most effectual refutation of every slander. Is it even certain we have suffered the injury of which we complain?—In innumerable instances, if we carefully examine its grounds, we shall find it founded in misrepresentation. How many rash and imprudent persons take up a tale before they comprehend it, and propagate it with the coloring of their own imagination? How many malicious persons love in this way to augment the dissensions of society? How many vain and talkative persons permit themselves, without reflection, to disseminate the most pernicious and unfounded histories? What additions are made to the truth in passing only through a few mouths? How often have we known our own words to be distorted and invenomed by the malice or indiscretion of others?—And shall we, notwithstanding, take this uncertain ground to vindicate the most atrocious of all the passions? Possibly we do our brother a high injury by believing him capable of the injustice.

But admitting that he hath calumniated our character—may it not have been the fruit of inconsideration merely? May it not have been oc-

caſioned by the officious zeal of falſe friends who have poiſoned his mind? May it not have ſprung from dark and ſuſpicious circumſtances in our own conduct which we have not condeſcended to explain?—It becomes a good man rather to find apologies for ſuch actions than to proſecute them with rage. He ought to attribute them to the want of reflection, to the artifice of others, to the ſurprize of paſſion, to any cauſe rather than a malignant diſpoſition. A great wit once ſaid, “it is neceſſary only for mankind to converſe together freely every day to make them all of one Religion.” We may ſay with at leaſt equal truth, that it is neceſſary only for men to converſe together freely, to remove a thouſand prejudices, to extinguiſh a thouſand animoſities in their origin, and notwithstanding all the cauſes of diviſion that exiſt in the world, to make them friends.—But if there are ſome who, through weakneſs of mind, or the violence of paſſion, cannot be reclaimed, how ought a Chriſtian to treat their obloquy? Not ſurely by imitating their crime. This is uſually the proof of a vulnerable character in ourſelves. The moſt clear and honorable vindication of ourſelves is virtuous conduct. In the conſciouſneſs of innocence, virtue may be ſilent. There is, beſides, a dignity in ſilence that makes a favorable impreſſion on the world, and humbles an enemy much more than any retaliation of reproach or flander.—But the moſt equivocal vindication of character, and even of that courage which modern ideas have made a

substitute for character, is the single combat. No assault on our good name can justify this crime—The spirit and the laws of the gospel condemn it—A brave and virtuous man does not need it—The most illustrious nations of antiquity, who civilized the earth, and who adorned human nature by their talents, knew no such methods to vindicate their injured honor, or to prop an infirm reputation. On this subject, however, I have already made the necessary reflections; and shall now dismiss the whole by remarking, that as they are our vanity and pride that are chiefly hurt by the tales of calumny, so they are these principles, so little becoming the imperfection of human nature, that give to the resentful passions their greatest force. Thus weak and insufficient are all those causes which are usually urged to justify the spirit of revenge.

And now, in the conclusion of this discourse, let me call your attention to the following reflections.

1. The first that I make is, that as it becomes a good man never to give just occasion of offence to others, it becomes him also if he has been, at any time, surprized by his passions, to efface his fault by a speedy and candid acknowledgement. There is often more goodness and greatness of mind displayed in acknowledging, than in not having committed an error. Caution in offending, and candor in confessing, are necessary perhaps to enable us with sincerity to forgive. Obedience to this

law is less difficult when we are not conscious of a fault ourselves. There is a dignity in innocence that does not fear to be degraded by stooping to pardon. But if we have been betrayed to do wrong, and have not fortitude of mind enough to confess it, our own fault becomes the greatest obstacle to our duty, and an unforgiving spirit is cherished by a false sentiment of honor.

2. This duty I might recommend from the generosity and nobleness of its principle—from the approbation of mankind—and from the tranquillity and peace with which it will be accompanied in our own breasts—But apart from all these considerations, which can touch only a great and worthy mind, it is a duty that addresses itself to our interest and our fears—it is enjoined by all the authority, and enforced by all the terrors of Religion—*for if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father who is in Heaven, forgive your trespasses.*—Haughty and revengeful spirits! look up to that tribunal where your own punishment awaits you, and let the awful majesty of divine justice restrain your pride and rage! Remember that the measure which you mete to others shall be measured to you again. A resentful unforgiving temper can hope for no indulgence from the righteous judge. On the other hand, meekness, gentleness, forgiveness, as they are abundant sources of inward consolation on earth, so they lead also to the regions of eternal peace in Heaven.

3. This subject suggests the ardent charity with which we ought to embrace our brethren who have not injured us. If hostile intentions are to be forgiven—if actual injuries are to be forgotten—if enemies are to be beloved, with what warm affection ought we to regard those who are innocent?—Those who embrace us with kindness?—Those who are our sincere and active friends?—Those who are connected with us by the most tender relations?—And above all, those who add to these endearing ties, their union with us in the household of faith?—The united bands of humanity, friendship and religion, form the most powerful obligation to all the useful and amiable offices of fraternal love. And the power of forgiving an injury will be a certain pledge to ourselves and others of all that shall be attentive, tender and beneficent in the ordinary conduct of our life, and our commerce with society.

4. Finally, this subject is closely connected with piety as well as with morals. The tempers and habits of men give a tincture to the spirit of their Religion. The passions of revenge and hatred have contributed to clothe the divine nature in those gloomy terrors, in which the superstitions of all ages have more or less invested it. The Deity has appeared in the most dismal forms, where his votaries have been the most unrelenting. Placid manners, on the other hand, and a benevolent disposition, naturally represent him in the charms of

benignity and love. Our hearts then accord with the promise of our Saviour, and recommend it to our faith—*If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.* Put on therefore, my brethren, the meekness of the blessed Jesus, who on the cross prayed for his murderers. Prove yourselves to be the children of your Father who is in Heaven, by that spirit of love which is his image. You will hereby illustrate the beauty of Religion in the view of men—you will augment and extend the happiness of society—you will cultivate in your own bosoms the rich consolations of piety, and the hopes of eternal life—and you will at once animate your devotions, and increase the happiness which a good man finds in them, by strengthening your faith in the divine mercy.

Do thou, O most holy and gracious God! create and cherish in our hearts, more and more, these heavenly dispositions, for the sake of Christ our Lord! To whom with *thee*, and the eternal spirit, be rendered glory everlasting. Amen.



S E R M O N XIII.

THE SPIRITUAL DEATH AND LIFE OF THE BELIEVER.

B Y

W I L L I A M L I N N, D. D.

One of the Ministers of the Reformed Dutch Church, New-York.

G A L. ii. 20.

I am crucified with Christ ; nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me ; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

TO understand these words, it is necessary to attend to their connection. The apostle, in the former part of the epistle, vindicates himself against the misrepresentations of false teachers in the Galatian Church ; who alledged that he was no apostle, and that he taught doctrines contrary to Peter, and the other apostles. In the 16th verse of this chapter, he begins to establish and defend the doctrine of justification by faith, which these teachers attempted to subvert. They urged the strict observance of the ceremonial law, and particularly of circumcision, as necessary to salva-

tion. The apostle, on the other hand, excludes all works, whether of the ceremonial or moral law, from having any influence upon it; and directs to seek righteousness only through faith in Christ. He likewise answers that old and common objection made by adversaries, that if persons be not justified by their obedience to the law, then a door is opened to licentiousness, and Christ becomes the minister of sin. This he rejects, by pressing holiness, or a strict conformity to the moral law; and lest they might say, that this was *building again* what he had *destroyed*, he shows, that faith and obedience are always united; that the same faith, which looks to Christ for the pardon of sin, derives from him also, strength to subdue it. *I through the law*, says he, in the 19th verse, *am dead to the law, that I might live unto God*. By being dead to the law, we are not to understand, the being freed from it as a rule of life; but the not putting confidence in obedience to it, for justification. That obedience which the law demands, has been fulfilled by Christ the surety of the believer, and accepted in his behalf. He is also dead to the law, as being delivered from the curse of it. But though the law has neither power to save, nor to condemn him, yet he is under obligation to live unto God. His being indebted to Christ, is so far from excusing him, that it increases the obligation, and is the most powerful inducement to holiness of life. This the apostle farther explains and enforces in the text.

I am crucified with Christ. “ Through this crucified one, I die to the law, sin, and the world;— and my death resembles his. Nevertheless, as he rose and lives forevermore, so I live spiritually; having grace here, the earnest of future glory.— Strictly speaking, however, it is not I that live. I am neither the cause nor the promoter of this life; *but Christ liveth in me*; by his spirit directing the inclinations of my heart. *And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.* The great instrument of my life is; a firm belief that Jesus, who was crucified, is the Son of God: Here I lay hold upon *the hope set before me*; and this hope is *as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.*” The apostle speaks in the first person, *I*, and thus declares his own experience with respect to the doctrine he defends. This was his condition, and is truly the condition of all believers; though they may not be able, so clearly, to adopt his language, or to use the appropriating words, *who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

In discoursing on this subject, I shall direct your attention to the leading thoughts; and therefore, I shall endeavor to show, *First*, What is implied in being crucified with Christ.—*Secondly*, What we are to understand, by Christ living in the believer; and point out the great influence of faith in the divine life. Or, in fewer words, show—How the believer dies, and how he lives.

I. Expressions similar to this, of being *crucified with Christ*, are more than once used in the wri-

tings of the apostle. No one will be so weak as to imagine that Paul was a sharer with Christ in the merit of his sufferings. Such a thought would be horrid and blasphemous. Thus, though he desires to *know the fellowship of his sufferings*, yet he means only, to enjoy the benefit of them and be conformed to them in his own. Seeing his Lord suffered, he did not repine, but rejoiced in suffering for his sake. Accordingly he says, in another place, *if so be that we suffer with him*. How suffer with him? He means, in his cause; and by assistance derived from him. This is a part of conformity to Christ, as well as that he makes their sufferings his own, by tenderly sympathizing with them, strengthening and rewarding them.—There is implied in being crucified with Christ,

First, A refusing obedience to the ceremonial law, as being no longer necessary to salvation. It was only temporary. The design being fulfilled, it ceased to be of farther use. *The law*, says the apostle, *was our school-master, to bring us unto Christ; that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a school-master.* Though certain erroneous teachers held that it was still obligatory, yet he declares, that he was crucified with Christ; that his death put an end to this legal service. When he said, *it is finished*, this law was abolished, and a new dispensation introduced.

Secondly, there is implied a chearfulness in ungoing all that scorn and contempt with which a

firm adherence to the doctrine of the cross was attended. *Christ crucified* was, *unto the Jews, a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks, foolishness*. Notwithstanding the offence of the cross, the opposition to it, and the reproach to which the promoters of it were exposed, the apostle was *not ashamed of the gospel of Christ*. While his enemies in the Church constrained their profelytes to be circumcised, and gloried in it, he rejected, with detestation, the thought of glorying, *save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

Suffice it just to mention these, as what may be implied when we consider the scope of the epistle, and the circumstances of Christians in the primitive state of the Church.

Thirdly, There is implied in this expression, a partaking of the merits of the death of Christ, and the being dead to the moral law, in the manner mentioned in the preceding verse. As in this and other places, the ceremonial law is to be understood, so the moral is evidently to be included.

The believer is justified on account of the perfect obedience and meritorious death of Christ; the one answering to the precept of the law, and the other to the violation of it. Neither of these can be performed in his own person, the law admitting of no less than a perfect obedience, and the satisfaction it requires being infinite. This inability does not arise from any insufficiency in the law, but from that weakness in man, which has

taken place since the fall. *For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us.* Jesus Christ, being every way equal to the work of redemption, hath obeyed and suffered as the representative of all his spiritual seed. This righteousness is imputed to the believer. He is crucified with Christ. The demands of the law are answered for him by Christ, and accepted by God. In the plan of redemption, it is accounted the same as if the believer had done it personally.

In the first covenant, Adam, representing his posterity, by his failure, involved them in sin and misery: in the second covenant, Christ, representing his chosen, restores them to the favor of God. *For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous. There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.* The believer renounces his own righteousness as the ground of confidence before God. Any thing he does or suffers is neither whole nor part of the righteousness which saves him. The Apostle, in the third chapter of his epistle to the Philippians, sets this matter in a clear point of light. *If any other man, says he, thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more.* Then having summed up his privileges, and told us, that *touching the righteousness which is in the law, he was blameless,* he adds, *But*

what things were gain to me, those I counted loss to Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ; and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.— This righteousness, which is imputed to the believer, as the only foundation of his acceptance with God, and title to eternal life, does not supercede the necessity of an inherent righteousness. The pardon of sin and the destruction of it in the soul, are inseparable; and therefore,

In the *fourth* place, There is implied, in being crucified with Christ, an experience of the efficacy of his death. This is, no doubt, an important, if not the principal idea in the words; and which we find plainly expressed in the following passages: *Knowing this that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. And they, that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.* By the body of sin in the one place, and the flesh in the other, is meant that corrupt nature which mankind inherit since their apostacy; that evil propensity and opposition to holiness which is in us. It has been called the power or dominion of sin; and consists in want of conformity to God, and a disposition to offend.

The person who is crucified with Christ is, in some measure, brought to this conformity, the power of sin being subdued. The obedience and death of Christ produce this, as in consequence of these, the holy Spirit creates anew the heart, and cherishes holy desires and resolutions. Under the influence of this blessed agent, the believer is sanctified and prepared for the enjoyment of God. The great means of carrying on this work, are the truths of the everlasting gospel; especially those which respect the sufferings and death of the Saviour.

The contemplation of this amazing object crucifies sin in the soul. Here is a display of the holiness and justice of God. He is so holy, that he will manifest his abhorrence of sin; and so just, that he will by no means clear the guilty. These perfections of Deity, shining in the sufferings of Christ, burn up the dross of sin, and inspire with the strongest detestation against it. Here is a display of love and mercy sufficient to melt the soul and stir up every grateful feeling. Holiness, justice, and mercy are sweetly blended. Sin is punished and the sinner saved. Pardon is free and unbounded, and yet sin discountenanced; nay, effectually destroyed, expires on the cross. Every view the believer takes of his bleeding Saviour, sin receives a wound. He looks upon him whom he has pierced and mourns. He suffers real agony, in that his sins were the occasion of his bitter death; his sins, the nails and spear

that pierced his sacred body, and opened those wounds which streamed salvation to the children of men. Thus is the believer crucified with Christ; and the death of sin in him, resembles a crucifixion. It was a painful, shameful, lingering, and accursed death; and so is the death of sin.

It is painful. The first entrance upon a religious course is difficult; and the more so, where sin has long had the dominion. Conversion is a straight gate through which we must pass, and holiness a narrow way, in which we must walk to eternal life. The sinner's return to God is likened by our Saviour to a second birth, and, among other reasons, because it is painful. The Christian life is compared to a race, to a fight, and such things in which vigorous exertions are required. There are many lusts dear as a right eye and a right hand which must be plucked out and cut off. *If any man will come after me, says Christ, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.* We must be denied to ourselves and to the world; difficulties are to be surmounted, temptations resisted, injuries forgiven, and reproaches endured. This is a painful work, often like to be overcome, and still renewing the combat. The Apostle, groaning under the weight of corruption, cried, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!*

Again, It is shameful. When iniquities prevail, the believer is covered with shame and confusion of face. This may rise to such a degree,

that he will be tempted to cease from seeking God. After a base and ungrateful conduct, he is afraid to appear in the divine presence; when he does, he *abhors himself and repents in dust and ashes*. The Psalmist, convinced of his error, made this acknowledgment—*So foolish was I and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee*. When the Saviour, after an unkind and untender walk, condescends to give us tokens of his love, and shew us, as he did unbelieving Thomas, his hands and his side, how is sin crucified with shame!

Again, The death of sin is very lingering. It is dying from the moment Christ is formed in the soul, till glory commences. To what end are the means of grace? To what end the numerous afflictions and temptations which befall the Christian, as he passes through life, but to destroy sin? And yet it still lives. It withdraws but to return; it sleeps but to awake again. Like a monster of many heads, though deprived of one, it has another; nay, one shoots out from the place another was lopped off.

Moreover, the death of the cross was an accursed death; inflicted on none but those guilty of the blackest crimes; such as were accursed of men, and held to be accursed of God too. Sin is that which has introduced death into the world and all our wo; is that abominable thing which the Lord hates; and, therefore, is the object of the greatest hatred with the believer. He seeks the destruction of it without mercy.

From these considerations we may see the propriety and force of this expression, *crucified with Christ*, and all of the like kind in scripture.

In the *last* place, There is implied a self-denied temper towards this present world. Though this may be included in the former particulars, yet it may be considered as something distinct, and is of importance in the present subject. *God forbid*, says the Apostle, *that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.* We cannot argue from hence, that we should cast off all care and concern about the world; nor that every degree of desire after, and delight in the things of the world is sinful; nor yet that we are to withdraw ourselves from the company and conversation of the men of the world: but that, from a sense of the vanity and emptiness of the world, our hopes and expectations of happiness ought not to be placed upon it, and that we ought to cheerfully part with every earthly thing, and go to death for Christ, if he calls us to it. Hear his own words: *He, that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me: and he, that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he, that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he, that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.* He hath likewise, in this respect, left us an example that we should follow his steps. He was denied to the riches and honors of this world;

and for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame.

In the early days of the church, the profession of the Religion of Jesus exposed persons to the hazard of their lives and estates, and particularly the publishers of the Gospel could expect nothing else but a constant scene of difficulties and persecution. The Apostle has recorded many trials and distresses which he encountered; and, it is said, that he suffered a violent death at last: so that there is a peculiar emphasis in his saying, that he was crucified with Christ. Every believer, indeed, ought to be a martyr in his temper, and hang so loose to this world and its enjoyments; nay, to life itself, that he may readily part with all to win Christ.

These things are implied in the crucifixion of the believer. I proceed now,

II. To consider his life. *Christ liveth in him; and the life which he now lives in the flesh, is by the faith of the Son of God.*

This is the divine or spiritual life, which he lives in consequence of sin being mortified, and the heart renewed. As he dies to sin, so he rises to holiness. So we are taught in these words—*That ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness.* Here is the corrupt nature, called the old man, which is put off, or

crucified with Christ ; and the spiritual life called the new man, because a new principle is infused ; and this new man is the image of God, consisting in righteousness and true holiness. It is the conformity of our natures to the holy nature of God, and the conformity of our lives to the will of God.

The manner in which Christ lives in the believer, is by his holy spirit, who begins and carries on the divine life. We cannot make ourselves alive to God. That Almighty power which called, *Lazarus come forth*, must call us from the death of sin. That divine spirit, who quickened the dead body of the Saviour, when it lay in the tomb, must quicken our souls to a life of grace.—Having begun the work, he carries it on to perfection ; and, for this purpose, he dwells and lives in believers ; incites holy desires ; directs the meditations of the heart ; enables them to overcome and subdue their lusts ; strengthens them under afflictions ; and quickens them in the way of duty. Christ thus living in them, they are actuated by the same temper, and seek the same things. They imitate his example, and endeavor to resemble him, as far as their nature and circumstances will admit.

The great instrument of this spiritual life is faith. By this they are united to the Son of God ; depend upon his merits for pardon, and derive influences for sanctification. It is called *the faith of the Son of God*, because he is the great object of it, and because it is of his bestowing. Perhaps there

is something in this phrase more peculiar to the time in which the apostle lived. The faith of the Son of God; that is, a firm belief that Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified on Calvary, was the true and expected Messiah; that he was no impostor, but really the Son of God; that he rose again and ascended up into Heaven; and that there is forgiveness of sins through his blood. These were the great truths upon which the apostle insisted in his discourses, and proposed for the belief of his hearers. When he preached at Athens, we find that some said, *He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange Gods; because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.* To have a proper notion how the doctrine of a crucified Saviour appeared at its first publication, we must imagine ourselves in their place, with all their prejudices in favor of a false religion. Among us we are early initiated in the Christian system, and taught from childhood, that Jesus is the Son of God, the true and only Saviour; and, therefore, we are in danger of contenting ourselves with a belief *merely speculative.* There was not so much danger at the first publication of the gospel; because it can hardly be admitted, that any would embrace a religion so contrary to human wisdom—attended with such ignominy and reproach—and, withal, exposing its friends to so much hazard and difficulty, unless they felt the power of it, and were sincere in their profession. What multitudes profess it now, whose lives loudly testify against them! If they believe him to be

the Son of God, where is the efficacy of his death upon them? Where that transformation into the divine image, which always accompanies a view of divine glory, shining in the sufferings of this wonderful person?

Faith in Christ, as being the Son of God, is that by which every believer lives. Allow me, in a few particulars, to point out its influence.

First, Faith is that act of the soul, which receives and rests upon the righteousness of Christ for pardon and acceptance with God. The believer, convinced of his guilt, unworthiness, and utter inability, accepts the free offer of salvation, made in the gospel, as his only ground of hope. This exercise he has occasion often to repeat; not that his justification before God is incomplete, or that he needs to be often justified; but that a manifestation of his interest in the fulness of Christ, is necessary to his encouragement and comfort.

Secondly, By faith, influences are derived, for the mortification of sin and the promotion of holiness. *He that abideth in me, saith Christ, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me, ye can do nothing.* The substance of these things having been already said, all that may be necessary to add is, that although the righteousness of Christ be the meritorious cause of justification, and the spirit of Christ the efficacious cause of sanctification, yet faith is that which interests us in these blessings, and is the mean of their conveyance.

Once more, Faith influences the believer to live with regard to another world. It is described in the epistle to the Hebrews, to be, *the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*. It is a confident expectation of the things which God hath promised. It realizes the invisible glories of a future state, and causes us to believe them as strongly as what we see with the bodily eyes. The men of the world live by sense. External objects engage the whole of their attention and affections. The things of another world are future and invisible; and, therefore, they do not strike and affect them. It is faith which makes them present and visible.

The believer seeks *a better country, that is an heavenly*. He knows that if the *earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, he has a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*.—What though difficulties beset him on every side? It is the promise of a gracious God, that *all things shall work together for his good*. The present afflictions are light and momentary, compared to an *exceeding and eternal weight of glory*. What though he is now immured in frail flesh and blood? Before long this *mortal shall put on immortality*, and he shall be made inconceivably happy in the pure mansions of heavenly glory. He may be stripped of every earthly comfort, but there is a joy which no man can take from him. Amidst the vain and shifting scenes of life, he has an immoveable rock to lean upon; *Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to*

day, and for ever. Persecutors may kill the body, but the soul is incapable of injury. This heavenly spark shall survive the rage of men, and the malice of devils; ascend to the God of all consolation; be re-united to the body, fashioned like unto the glorious body of Christ, and be ever with him.

Faith presenting these things, and affording a sure expectation of them, influences the Christian to live above this world; and to raise his views *to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for him.*

Let us now turn our attention to some improvement of this subject.

First, Learn, my brethren, that the Religion of Jesus, leads to strict holiness of heart and life. If any tell you, that the doctrine of salvation, through the imputed righteousness of Christ, encourages sin, believe them not; for scripture and experience contradict it. Who live the best?—Those who contend for free grace, or those who rest upon their works? It too often happens, that those who boast of their works, have the least to show; and there is reason to believe, that they have never, sufficiently, seen the depravity of their own hearts, and the spirituality and extent of the divine law.

While we are justified freely through the redemption that is in Christ, including both his active and passive obedience, there is the powerful

operation of grace to form the heart. Shall it be said, if Christ obeyed the preceptive part of the law in our room, what obedience is left for us? This very objection, in substance, has been answered long ago, by an inspired pen. *Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid: how shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?* A dependance upon the active obedience of Christ, for a title to eternal life, and obedience in our own persons are not inconsistent either in sentiment or practice. *For he that is dead, is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.* It is impossible that believers should live in sin; because it is weakened on their first union with Christ, and afterwards gradually destroyed. Grace is communicated for this purpose, and their obligations to obedience are infinite. The love of Christ constrains them. It certainly affords a most encouraging reflection, that in the Lord, is not only righteousness but strength. This is a source of joy and comfort. This quickens and animates in the ways of holiness.

Secondly, This subject ought to be faithfully improved for the trial of ourselves. As far as we hear with application, so far we hear properly. When we hear the state of a believer described, ought we not to ask ourselves, have we experienced any thing like it? Or, is it new, strange, and unintelligible to us?—These things concern us all, and require our attention now, as much as when they were first written; for it ever will remain

true, that the believer is crucified with Christ; that Christ lives in him; and that he lives by faith, in the manner which has been explained. Know ye, then, what these mean? Have you reason to believe that you are interested in the merits of Christ? Is the power of sin broken in your souls? Do you desire the death of it, root and branch? Do you know what it is to live by faith? Have you ever had such an affecting view of the Son of God suffering in the room of sinners, that your hearts were melted to genuine sorrow for sin, and you made willing to surrender yourselves without reserve to him? And have you been frequently used to such exercises?

Perhaps, some are saying, "We have never been able to answer these questions satisfactorily to ourselves. At times, we have had ground of hope, but presently we were in darkness again. We find the principle of sin so strong within us, that we fear it has never been crucified. Evil thoughts, in multitudes, break in upon us; our affections are so earthly; we feel such coldness and wandering in duty; nay, sometimes sin appears to have the entire sway; and therefore, we are ready to conclude, that we are not the children of God." If you are sensible of these things; if you strive against them; and if you spread them as matter of complaint before God, they do not make against you. It is not expected that sin should be fully dead. Live and stir it will; else there would be no occasion of a warfare. If there were no pain

and struggle, and groaning, where would be the propriety of calling it a crucifixion? The question is, Do you truly hate all sin, and desire deliverance from it more than from any thing besides? Is the way of salvation precious to you on this very account, because it has provided for the death of sin? Have you often an affecting sense of the holy nature of God, and your great disconformity to him? Can you adopt the language of the Psalmist, *I have seen an end of all perfection; but thy commandment is exceeding broad?* The more you have of this exercise, the more it evinces the truth of your Religion. It is a bad sign, when we find, in ourselves, no cause of complaint.

Some, it may be, have blasphemous thoughts suggested to their minds; are tempted to doubt the very existence of a God, and the reality of all Religion. Neither is this an evidence of the want of grace; but that Satan desires to *sift them as wheat*. A person is not accountable for these thoughts, unless they are harbored and encouraged in his breast.

Examine, then, and try yourselves.—Beware of presumption on the one hand, and of tempting God on the other, by despising the day of small things. If you desire, above all, the favor of God; if you would not willingly indulge yourselves in any known sin; if you are endeavoring to have your hearts right with God, and are sincerely engaged in the way of duty: though iniquities pre-

vail against you, and though you walk in darkness and have no light, yet there is reason to expect that God will, in due time, lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and put gladness in your hearts. *Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait I say on the Lord.*

But do not some of you, my hearers, know, upon reflection, that you are strangers to the exercises which have been described? *The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* Crucified and yet live! Not live, but Christ lives in them! Live a natural life, and yet by faith, a spiritual one! On earth, and yet the affections and conversation in Heaven! What paradoxes are these! How mysterious and difficult a thing to be a Christian!—O bestir yourselves and set about the great work. Dream not of happiness while you are secure and unconcerned. While sin reigns in you, and while you neglect the means of grace, on what foundation can you hope for eternal life? By nature, you are opposed to good, and wholly inclined to evil; and unless changed by grace, you can never inherit the kingdom of God. You must be crucified to your own righteousness, to your lusts, and to the world, if ever you arrive there. It is no matter what any man professes, that is, it will not avail for his salvation, unless it influence the practice; unless the Son of God cover the soul with his perfect righteousness, and impress on it the divine

image. To this I would bring you, my hearers, and unless you are brought to this, though your souls were worth ten thousand worlds, they must fall under the justice of the great and terrible God.

Suffer the word of exhortation, to turn and live. Those sins you so dearly love will be your ruin. Be persuaded to part with them. Your carnal joys and pleasures will lead you down to the region of sorrow. Be entreated to dismiss them. You walk on a dreadful slippery precipice, and beneath you are everlasting burnings. Proceed not a step further. While there is hope, turn. Betake you to the duties of Religion. Call upon the Lord, that you perish not. Lay hold on the righteousness of Christ. He is able and willing to save you. You ought not to hesitate a moment, when your all is at stake. Receive an offered Saviour, and you shall be happy in soul and body for ever. Neglect him, and you must be eternally wretched. There is salvation in no other; and there is a complete one in him. There is the pardon of sin, by his blood, and the death of sin by his spirit. There is peace of conscience, guidance through life, comfort in trouble, joy more than can be expressed, with every necessary grace; and a happiness after death, rising to the very height of your wishes and lasting as God himself. Why then should you continue in the love and practice of sin? Why in the neglect of known duty? Why should Religion be deferred for a single day or hour? Have not some of you deferred it so often already, as to con-

vince you that this is the most gross delusion? Think not of a time to come. We trust in vain to futurity. Before the setting sun, your eyes and mine may be closed in the sleep of death. *Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.* This day, and not the next; this hour, and not the next; this moment, and not the next. *Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest.*

To conclude, those of you, my brethren, whose consciences testify, that you are not strangers to these spiritual exercises, strive to grow more and more in conformity to God. This is the best evidence of your sincerity. You have not *already attained, neither are already perfect.*—Learn that your only help is laid on the righteousness and strength of your exalted Redeemer. Live by faith in him. *Of his fulness receive, and grace for grace.* Be not discouraged under any difficulties; *being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation.*





S E R M O N XIV.*

THE CHARACTER AND MISERY OF
THE WICKED.

B Y

W I L L I A M L I N N, D. D.

One of the Ministers of the Reformed Dutch Church, New-York.

I S A I A H lvii. 21.

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

YOU will easily remember, my brethren, that some time ago, I had the happiness of addressing you on the prospect of a safe and honorable peace being restored to our distressed land.-- You were then pleased to hear me with attention; and your patriotifm kindly approved what was sincerely aimed to express our joy, and excite our gratitude to the munificent Donor of all things. It is hoped that we and succeeding generations, will continue to enjoy temporal peace and prosperity.

N O T E.

* The two following Sermons were written and preached in Pennsylvania, soon after the establishment of peace, in the year 1783. Several reasons have induced the author to retain nearly the original form.

But, while we rejoice in the goodness of the Lord, we ought to remember, that our duration in this world is short—that only they can be happy who enjoy the divine favor—nay, that without this, present advantages will make our condemnation, at last, the more terrible. Let none, therefore, say to their souls, “Take your ease—the desolation of war is now over—our difficulties are removed—and peace and plenty have once more taken up their habitation with us;”—for the Lord declares, in the words of the text, *There is no peace to the wicked.* Though the long and bloody conflict is at an end, yet if we have not a proper temper towards God, we are still in the utmost danger; if not in this world, yet in that which is to come; when he will render to every one according to his works, and pour out his wrath on the wicked without any mixture of mercy.

To alarm our fears, and excite us to seek the Lord while he may be found, I shall, with plainness and freedom, show, *First*, Who come under the description of the wicked; and, *Secondly*, In what respects there is no peace to such.

I. In general, all they are properly denominated wicked who have never undergone a change of heart. Mankind, by nature, have no inclination to the service of God. They are represented in scripture, as *without strength and ungodly*—as *dead in trespasses and sins*—as *enemies in their minds by wicked works*, and even as *enmity* itself against God.

Hence arises the necessity of a great and supernatural change; which our Saviour compares to a *second birth*; and it is set forth by other similitudes in the writings of the apostles. It is likened to a *resurrection*—to a *new creation*—to a *translation from darkness to light*; all which teach us; that before we can be accepted of God, and entitled to his favor, some extraordinary work must take place upon us. To deny this; we must reject both reason and revelation; for both conspire in declaring that man is degenerate, and that while he continues in this state, he cannot have communion with a holy God. As soon might we reconcile light and darkness, or bring the most opposite extremes together.

Whatever kinds, and whatever degrees of wickedness there are, they all proceed from an innate depravity of mind. Hear the words of Christ; *For from within, out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness; all these evil things come from within.* Every unrenewed person has, in his nature, the seeds of all evil; and which appear more or less in his life, according as opportunities are afforded to nourish and strengthen them. To assist us in judging the better of our own characters, let us attend to the different ways in which this root of bitterness discovers itself.

First, Some are grossly ignorant of the plain and essential doctrines of the Christian Religion,

amidst the best means to gain an acquaintance with them. Though the scriptures are in their possession, together with excellent helps by the writings of pious men, and instructions from the pulpit, yet they are unable to give any satisfactory account of those truths, on which their eternal salvation depends. This is not occasioned by want of capacity, but by utter neglect of divine things, and argues their spiritual death. The holy oracles, which contain the words of eternal life, neglected, gather dust; while books of amusement and earthly pursuits employ the whole of their time. These swallow up their thoughts through the day, and recline with them on their pillow at night. These will not allow them to remember the sabbath-day to keep it holy.

We find many of this character who are wise in their own conceit, for pride and ignorance mostly dwell together. "We have," say they, "a sufficient knowledge of our duty, and we need not be informed of it. If we act wrong, the blame is our own, and we know not, why any one should intermeddle with our business." Well might Solomon say, *There is more hope of a fool than of such persons.* Their minds are dark, and they have closed every avenue by which light might enter. *Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.* Be assured there can be no true Religion without a good measure of knowledge, and a desire of growing in

it. We cannot love and worship an unknown God. Whoever among you are ignorant of the great truths of revelation, are in darkness even until now.

Secondly, Some break out into open acts of wickedness. Such are drunkards, swearers, unclean persons, extortioners, sabbath breakers and mockers at Religion. These are they whose *sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment*. Were we to rank no others, under the gospel, in the class of the wicked, but these, how great a number would be found! Reckon even common swearers; those audacious men, who call for the vengeance of a God upon themselves and others, as well as use the names of Lord and Christ, and sacred things with irreverent lips: and we must reckon—how dreadful to tell it! multitudes, who have been baptized and educated among professing Christians. When to these we add, lascivious talkers and actors, insatiable lovers of strong drink, those who spend the sabbath in sleep, in visiting, in worldly thoughts and conversation, or in worse; those who suppose that *gain is godliness*; who cheat and over-reach their neighbor; and those whose wit never shines but in making a jest of the Bible, and serious persons, how does the dismal catalogue swell! surely it will be agreed that all such characters are wicked; and that none of these *shall inherit the kingdom of God*.

Thirdly, Others, though free from gross immoralities, are yet wicked, because they neglect the

duties of Religion. There are sins of commission and there are sins of omission. We are guilty before God, when we do not perform what he hath enjoined, as well as when we commit what he hath forbidden. All, therefore, who live in the habitual omission of what is required, come short of, and will be condemned by that law which is holy, just and good. Not only is the unjust man a sinner, but the uncharitable also; not only he that curseth his father and mother, but he that honoreth them not; not only the profane but the prayerless. We must not divide the law in our practice. One part must be done, and the other not left undone. *Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.* "Some sins in themselves, and by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others, but every sin deserveth God's wrath and curse both in this life and that which is to come." The impious wretch, whose mouth is full of blasphemy and deceit, may deserve a more dreadful punishment; and yet the prayerless person will go down to misery as surely as he.

Having mentioned the important duty of prayer, allow me to say, that it is with an ill face that any, who profess themselves to be Christians, neglect it in their families. Social, as well as secret worship, is indispensably necessary. Those who omit it, do not distinguish themselves from the ungodly world, and are unworthy of the privileges

of the church. Such ought to think seriously of these words of Christ—*Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in Heaven. But whosoever shall deny me, before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in Heaven.* What shall be said of some, so destitute of any form of Religion, that they omit, what is called, saying grace before meat, or asking the blessing of God on their food? It is not the sneer of fools, nor the raillery of the profane, should put us out of the practice of what is warranted in scripture; consonant to reason, and customary among all denominations of Christians whatsoever. The person who does not often realize his dependance upon God; who does not in every thing give thanks; and who does not, on proper occasions, openly acknowledge God, by calling on his name, has no title to be thought religious; else, there is no criterion, by which to judge at all.

In former days, many confessed Christ at the hazard, and even the loss of their lives. Have we found an easier way to Heaven? Can we go there, without any confession? Is religion of such a nature that we may mould it as we please? The fashion of this world passeth away, but be assured, God and religion are *ever the same*. The divine precepts will not bend to you. They are fixed and immutable. On no other terms can you, be a disciple of Christ, than by *taking up your cross and following after him*. If the world deride you as stiff and un-

fashionable, it is a persecution you must suffer for his name's sake. He hath said, *He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.*

Fourthly, There are some, who adopt loose and dangerous principles; who alledge, either that the scripture is not true, or that the great doctrines, as generally taught, are not contained in it. These are wicked, and they are corrupters of others. Too commonly they are licentious in their practice, and swelled with a conceit of their own abilities.

It is not easy to persist in a course of iniquity, without something to quiet the conscience; and, therefore, have some endeavored to overturn revelation, or at least to adapt it to their own depraved inclination. The infidel or deist is a person of such great strength of reason, that he sees no need of the scripture, his own reason teaching him all that is necessary; he is of such prodigious modesty, that he views all the world around him, even those of superior talents, as a number of superstitious fools; his genius is so piercing as to discover that the Christian Religion is the device of rulers and cunning priests, to keep the world in awe; and he wishes to perform the mighty service of setting mankind free from the shackles wherewith they have been bound for so many ages. To treat him with ridicule is no more than just retaliation. It is the best weapon the Deist has, and of which he

is extremely fond ; so much so, that one writer has made it the only proper test of truth.* The secret motive however, which leads many of this character to a rejection of scripture, is the desire of being free from its restraints. They are wedded to their lusts, and these and the scripture are irreconcilable. Unhappy men ! engaged in an undertaking desperate and impossible ; like one who attempts to stop the sun, or remove a mountain. The words which are storied of the apostate Julian, when mortally wounded in fighting against Christians, will be the doleful, dying song, of every determined infidel ; “ Thou hast conquered me, O Galilean.” *Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken ; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.*

Though revelation be not altogether denied by others, yet it is wrested to suit the depraved taste of mankind. They set up corrupt reason in opposition to faith, and adopt principles which lead to licentiousness. Not to be particular here, suffice it to say, that the doctrines of man’s depravity, inability, and salvation by grace, through faith in the imputed righteousness of Christ, as they are taught in the divine word, so they have been always successful for the conversion of sinners, and the edification of saints. They who oppose these set themselves in opposition to God, and seek to lay other foundation than what he hath laid. In-

* Shaftsbury.

deed it is to be expected, that infidelity and dangerous opinions, will have a more rapid growth in this country than heretofore. In every age, have they sprung up to trouble the church. They will be imported from abroad, with other things injurious to our interest and happiness; as well as, that they naturally increase with population and luxury.

Fifthly, Among the wicked, we must also rank the formalist and the hypocrite. Though these are mentioned together, yet they are of very different description. The formalist is one, who has the form of religion; submits to the drudgery of performing duty, which he has no spiritual life or strength; he deceives himself; whereas the express design of the hypocrite, is to deceive others. Of the first the apostle speaks, when he says, *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.* However exact he may be in his cold and even round of duties, yet his heart is not right with God; and perhaps he indulges himself in sin, trusting to his form to save him. Of hypocrisy our Saviour gives a description, when he says, *When thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do, in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. We have a remarkable instance of it in the Pharisees of old. They devoured widows' houses, and for a pretence made*

long prayers. Who would have thought that so excellent a thing as religion would be so basely abused? That men with this cloak, would cover their villainies? Their conduct is extremely foolish and desperately wicked.

Once more, I may mention, as descriptive of the wicked, that they are impatient of restraint and reproof. They cannot bear to be checked in their mad career of sin and folly; and the faithful reprover, if such be found, is hated and avoided. The very sight and example of the godly is a secret reproof to the wicked; it is a contrast to their own conduct; gives them disagreeable feelings; and, therefore, they strive to be out of the way. Sometimes they are so bold as to expose, in a ludicrous manner, every appearance of sincerity; and laugh and jest merely to keep themselves in countenance.

The preacher who seeks to save himself and them that hear him, by telling them plainly of their sins, and denouncing the judgments of God, is thought rigid and severe. Ahab, the king of Israel, said of Micaiah, the son of Imla, *I hate him, for he never prophesieth good unto me, but always evil.* The discourse which flows smooth and even, dwelling on generals, not directed to the conscience, nor sinners pursued in it by the terrors of the Lord, is most applauded. It is related as fact of a preacher, who had arrived at so great perfection in adapting himself to delicate ears, that he once told his hearers, "If they did not vouchsafe to give a new

turn to their lives, they would go to a place he did not choose to name in so courtly an audience." It is no breach of charity to say, that such preachers and their hearers are in danger of going down to hell, and enduring never-ceasing torments, of which, we should now often hear and think, that so we may be excited to lay hold upon the hope set before us. If danger is not known, how shall it be shunned? We do not preach you *to*, but *from* these everlasting burnings. If our own hearts do not condemn us, why should we fear? If they do, O! what madness to shut our eyes, and wander heedlessly on! Will this make the danger less? What fearfulness must seize such, when they come to stand on the brink of the awful pit!

That there is an improper method of reproofing sinners, is certain; a method, tending more to disgust than edify even pious ears. *The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.* There are many descriptions of Heaven and Hell to no purpose, or worse. *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man,* the one or the other. The joys of the one, and the terrors of the other, are best represented in the language of sacred writ. Besides, *the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword;* and is that instrument by which, in his dispensation of grace, he wounds and he heals.

S E R M O N XV.

THE CHARACTER AND MISERY OF
THE WICKED.

B Y

W I L L I A M L I N N, D. D.

One of the Ministers of the Reformed Dutch Church, New-York.

I S A I A H lvii. 21.

There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked:

HAVING endeavored, in a former discourse, so to describe the wicked, as that we might be assisted in forming a judgment of ourselves, I proceed now to show,

II. In what respects there is no peace to such.

First, There is no peace to them with God. By their wickedness they wage war with Heaven; and the Almighty King is angry with them every day. Man, hearkening to the suggestions of Satan, has thrown off allegiance to his rightful owner, transgressed his holy law, refused that tribute of praise which is due, and engaged in open rebellion. Whatever we may think of the claims of fellow-mortals, surely the great God hath an unquestion-

able right to us and all our service. He hath made, and continually upholds us. Of him we cannot be independent; and our happiness lies in his favor. Having ruined ourselves, he found out a help. He sent his Son to fulfil the demands of the law in our room, and in his gospel he proclaims pardon and peace to all who will return. Only they have reconciliation with him, who have submitted to his terms; who, forsaking their sins, have believed in the name of his Son. The impenitent and unbelieving must fall under the stroke of his justice. To their rebellion they add ingratitude, by making light of the offers of grace.

Having no peace with God, of what advantage are the most flattering circumstances in this world? Of what advantage that we are the citizens of a free state, and the nations around in league with us? These indeed are inestimable blessings, and which we must not tamely surrender to every proud and ambitious spirit; but can they make us happy hereafter? We may not enjoy them a day, or an hour. While we continue under the power of sin, we are the most abject slaves. We do the works of the devil, who delights in the ruin and misery of our race.—Is not the displeasure of our Maker enough to embitter every comfort, or render us joyless in the midst of every earthly good thing? How dreadful to think, that his curse is upon us when we lie down and rise up; and in all our ways! How fearful to know, that we must fall, at last into the hands of the living God! This is

the pitiable condition of the wicked, to whom,

In the second place, There is no peace in their own consciences. The thoughts of what their crimes have exposed them to, often tear them with the most bitter reflections. Some of them have been afraid to be left alone; and dismal spectres, which guilt formed, have haunted them in the midnight hours. It is said of the infidel Hobbes, “that though he would speak very strange and unbecoming things of God, yet in his study, in the dark, and in his retired thoughts, he trembled before him. If his candle happened to go out in the night, he awoke in terror and amazement. He was unable to bear the dismal reflections of his dark and desolate mind; and knew not how to extinguish, nor how to bear the light of *the candle of the Lord* within him.”

See the man of pleasure, how gaily he walks abroad! What cheerfulness in his looks! He affects to esteem the more sober part of mankind as precise and supercilious! Talk to him of conscience, and he hardly restrains a burst of laughter! Did you see him in some hour of sickness, gloom and solitude, you might find distress pictured in his face, arising from remorse within. Though repeated acts of sin sear the conscience, and render it less sensible, yet there are few but have their severe twinges and repenting seasons. It is easier to prostitute conscience than to silence it.—
“Whatever there be in the air, there is certainly

an elastic power in conscience that will bear itself up, notwithstanding the weight that is laid upon it to stifle and kill its clamors." Dr. Doddridge, in his life of that memorable convert, Col. Gardiner, informs us, "That still the checks of conscience, and some remaining principles of so good an education as he had received, would break in upon his most licentious hours; and that he told him, when some of his dissolute companions were once congratulating him on his distinguished felicity, a dog happening at that time to come into the room, he could not forbear groaning inwardly, and saying to himself, "Oh, that I were that dog!" Such was then his happiness; and such perhaps is that of hundreds more, who bear themselves highest in the contempt of religion, and glory in that infamous servitude which they call liberty.

If the conscience of the wicked be easy, it must be in one or more of these ways; either by a long course of iniquity; or by adopting false principles; or by a comparison with others who are thought worse; or by resolving to amend in future; or by performing part of the duties of religion. Wo to those who are able to quiet it by any of them. It will some time or other awake to their sorrow. Like a frozen viper laid to the fire, it will recover strength, and sting them to the heart. Take them in their most composed frame, how far are they from that serenity of soul which religion gives. This is a *peace which passeth all understanding*. The minds of the wicked are restless, and hurried by

their lusts and passions. In the verse preceding the text, it is said, *The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt*: But in the godly soul there is a calm. The contemplation of heavenly things affords complacency; and in God, the soul can hope and rest for time and eternity. *Peace*, said Christ to his disciples, *I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you*. With this peace, what earthly blessing can be compared? Could we command every thing our hearts would wish, where is the enjoyment, if the mind be disquieted? This, like an aching tooth, or a bone out of joint, will disturb us, will break our sleep, and render us unhappy.

Perhaps some may think, that only atrocious sinners are subject to such severe lashes. Generally it is so; but every person estranged from God is destitute of solid and lasting peace. It is owing to ignorance and mistake, that he has any at all. There are no sins small, considered with respect to God. It is found so in a thorough conviction; and their being committed against the light and grace of the gospel, highly aggravates them, and is a bitter ingredient to all true penitents. Our hearts condemn us for secret as well as for open sins; for omissions as well as transgressions. Unless then, conscience is unduly hushed, it cannot otherwise than molest all who are not reconciled to God.

Again, There is no peace to the wicked in a dying hour. By this is not meant that they shall undergo more pain of body than others. The pangs of dissolution are the same to all. Those indeed, of whom the world was not worthy, have often suffered the most cruel and violent deaths. Nor is it meant, that the wicked have never any composure in death, or hope of well-being hereafter:— For though the scripture tells us, *The wicked is driven away in his wickedness; but the righteous bath hope in his death;* yet we are not to understand, that none of them ever entertain, in that solemn hour, expectations of mercy, or that they all anticipate their misery. Some of them die as they had lived, stupid and thoughtless as beasts. Besides, I know not that death shakes every false hope. It is thought that some good men may have fears and perplexities to the very last; and that some bad men, may remain unshaken, and die with more apparent confidence than the others. There are instances of infidels maintaining cheerfulness and resolution in their last moments. With some it has been otherwise, and they have betrayed dreadful forebodings of a wrath to come. Now and then they have retracted their principles, and sought relief in a profession of Christianity. It is said, that the poet Dryden, not being able to fortify himself in infidelity, embraced the Popish religion. Some years ago it was confidently asserted, that Voltaire, at the age of eighty, and being, as he thought, about to die, had felt some strange

qualms of conscience, in consequence of which, he had made a long and goodly confession of the truths of revelation. His followers deem this a slander, and cannot believe that their mighty champion would ever retreat. Having so long edified them by his writings, perhaps there is no sufficient authority to deprive them of their comfort in his death.

The fears of the good man cannot render his state less safe, nor the confidence of the bad, render his less dangerous. . . Whatever their own sentiments are, *it shall be well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked.* We are, however, compassed about with a cloud of witnesses, who bear testimony that the end of the perfect and upright man, is peace; who have died, not only with calmness and resignation, but have been filled with a joy unspeakable and full of glory; who have met death, not only on a bed surrounded by friends, but in its most horrid form, on a gibbet, or at a stake; not only those of strong and fearless make, but those of a timorous nature, and from among the weaker sex; not only those who had no attachment on earth why to wish for life, but those who had estates, families and friends. It is an observation made, to show the efficacy of grace, that, in suffering times, none went more cheerfully to martyrdom, than those who had numerous families dependant on them. Let the decriers of religion produce us any principle so powerful to bear one up, under the distresses of life, and support

through the valley of the shadow of death; any thing that will so revive and embolden the soul, as a view of God reconciled in Christ, and the hopes of a blessed immortality. No; it is only this will disarm death of his sting. It is this will make death not only tolerable, but desirable; will give not only composure, but triumph; not only free us from pain, but make heaven beam all around us.

Dr. Young, in his tract on original composition, has given us a precious anecdote of the amiable Mr. Addison. "After he had dismissed his physicians, and all hopes of life, he sent for a youth nearly related to him, and finely accomplished, yet not above being the better for good instructions from a dying friend. He came—but life now glimmering in the socket, the dying friend was silent. After a decent and proper pause, the youth said, "Dear sir, you sent for me; I believe and I hope that you have some commands; I shall hold them most sacred." May distant ages not only hear, but feel the reply! Forcibly grasping the young gentleman's hand, he softly said, "See in what peace a Christian can die!"—He spoke with difficulty, and soon expired." I the rather adduce this instance, because he was a man of genius, of great literary fame, and in high station, with which empty smatterers and conceited fools, are ready to think religion inconsistent. Indeed, the men of greatest talents, who ever adorned our world, were not ashamed of the gospel of Christ;

among whom we may rank a Locke, a Boyle, a Newton, and a Bacon. Perhaps it might be asserted, without extravagance, that these, for strength of mind, and deep research, as far exceeded many of the retailers of infidelity as an angel did them; or as an untutored savage exceeds the beasts below him. They were the glory of Britain, and one half her fame.

What awful spectacles have some of the wicked exhibited on a death bed! How contrary to the example just now adduced! Hell seemed already to have been kindled in their souls. Under the scourges of a guilty conscience, and a fearful sense of impending wrath, they could not contain, but vented their dismal outcry enough to rend the stoutest heart. One, of whom mention is made in a practical writer, "a monument of justice, worn to skin and bone, blasphemed the God of Heaven, cursed himself, and continually cried, O torture! torture! torture! O torture, torture!" Another is said to have cried out, "I have had a little pleasure, but now I must have Hell for ever more. To whatever was spoken, to afford him comfort, he replied, I must to Hell; I must to the furnaces of Hell for millions of millions of ages." The repetition of these expressions is frightful; how much more to have seen the sad objects! Suffer me to say, with the greatest seriousness and affection, that no sinner who goes on against his conscience can expect to die in another manner. Let not the

fright of these examples freeze the blood and make the hair stand an end only, but so impress our minds as to deter us from all the paths of known sin. Should we fall blindfold into destruction, it will not be less terrible in the issue. It must be grievous and distracting to think of appearing before God without some sure and firm hope. To have our peace to make when the body is racked with sore pain, when refreshing sleep has departed, and we know not when the pulse may cease, and we stiffen into cold clay—how affecting, and alas, what prospect that the mighty work shall be done, when years of health and strength have been sinned away! I leave this mournful theme; but for one more mournful still; there is,

In the last place, No peace to the wicked after death. Then their sorrows begin, which admit of no alleviation. In this world they had their good things: They enjoyed with others the common bounties of Providence, and were sensible of pleasure. In these they placed their only happiness; but now all is gone, and they are tormented. Conscience can be quieted no more. It is the worm that never dies. Instead of hope, eternal despair covers them round, and they are pressed under the wrath of a just and sovereign judge. Before the body is conveyed to its cold lodging by surviving friends, the immortal spirit is sentenced and confined to that dismal dungeon which justice hath prepared for all the rebellious; where are,

“Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
And rest can never dwell, hope never comes
That comes to all; but torture without end
Still urges, and a fiery deluge, fed
With ever-burning sulphur unconsumed.

— Here their prison ordained,
In utter darkness, and their portion set,
As far removed from God and light of Heav'n
As from the centre thrice to th' utmost pole.”†

Who is able to describe their misery? Who knows the power and vengeance of Almighty God? Future punishment is represented in scripture by the *worm that never dies*, by *everlasting fire*, by a *lake of fire and brimstone*, and by every thing terrible in nature.

That there will be degrees of misery our Saviour has taught us, when he says, that it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, for Sodom and Gomorrah than for Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum, in the day of judgment, because these enjoyed superior advantages to the others. These words also teach the same: *This is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light*. It shall be more tolerable for the heathen world, than for those under the gospel. Wickedness indeed grows to a greater height among the latter. Would you find the most daring and abandoned sinner? Look not for him among the Indian tribes, but among profes-

† Milton's Paradise Lost. Book I.

sing Christians.—Nothing can exceed the anguish arising from the reflection of having slighted offered mercy. This is a misery from which the devils themselves will be exempted. To them no Saviour has been revealed, nor pardon offered. Skilled in the art of torment, they will increase the anguish of our race by insulting their folly. The body having been a partner in guilt, will be raised, reunited to the soul, and both made unspeakably miserable. Our Saviour concludes his awful representation of the day of judgment, by saying, *These shall go away into everlasting punishment.*

The character and misery of the wicked having been now set before us, surely it becomes us to make careful and serious application of these truths.

We see the unhappy condition of such, notwithstanding our political war is turned into peace. To rejoice in it, most certainly they ought, but by no means to view it as an evidence that God is pleased with them. Without repentance, they are only reserved for severer judgments. The dispensations of Providence towards mankind in this world are various, and all designed to bring them to a sense of themselves, and an acknowledgment of the living and true God. He tries us now with affliction, and then with mercy, or he mixes the cup. *They who harden their necks shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.* They who have felt the distresses of the war, and have not wept for

their sins; those who have lost their estates, and have not made peace with God, have reason more than ever to fear. There is yet no peace to them. They are not immediately threatened, it is true, with an invading army, or called to change domestic bliss for the hurry of a camp, and jeopard their lives in the high places of the field. They no longer tremble for dear relatives, and sigh for life, liberty and property at stake, but they lie under the displeasure of that Almighty Being, who disposes of them and all their concerns. He hath other ways to punish them even in this world; and they shall not escape his righteous judgment in the world to come. What are all the scenes of terror and confusion we can witness here, compared to that place, where shall be continual *weeping and gnashing of teeth*.

Is it not then of the utmost importance, that we examine whether or not we are numbered with the wicked? If ever we would obtain mercy of God in Christ, we must first be acquainted with our own condition. As some disorders are of the most deadly nature, in which the patients are stupid and insensible of pain, so a sinner not knowing himself to be such, and unconcerned affords but little ground of hope.—Are any of you living in ignorance of divine truths, seldom thinking or caring about them? Are you guilty of great immoralities, secret or open? Do you live in the omission of positive and known duty? How then can you hope that your state is good and safe? Your

state is, beyond all doubt, bad and dangerous.— Believe it to be so, and labor after repentance and amendment.—Neither will a life faultless in the eyes of men, and a regular attendance on outward duties, prove you the subjects of supernatural grace. He is a Christian who is one inwardly. The seat of piety is the heart. If you believe the doctrine of man's depravity and inability, you must, in connection, believe the necessity of being created anew, in Christ Jesus. As is the tree, so is the fruit: As is the fountain, so are the streams. Have you then passed from death to life? There is no medium. Either you have been changed, or you are, at this day, *in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity*. Hear the words of him who came down from Heaven to teach us the way of life: *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*. Alas, that too many, like Nicodemus, think this a strange and unintelligible doctrine. They alledge that nothing more is necessary than those endeavors and desires which are in their own power. They feel no need of the influences of the holy spirit. O Religion, mysterious in thy nature, giving glory to God and debasing the creature, may we never mistake thee, our eternal concern! Blessed God, dispel the darkness of our minds; give us to know thee; and what we ourselves are, and lead us in the way everlasting!

Our deceitful hearts are too apt to impose upon us, and our adversary the devil, is ever seeking

whom he may devour. The most wicked person flatters himself that he will some time or other mend, or presume on the mercy of God.—Let us try to make a thorough work of religion. Many, who were *not far from the kingdom of Heaven*, will never arrive there. The formalist must lose his soul after all his pains. He needs the new heart, to turn his drudgery into a willing service, and make him happy for ever. The hypocrite, if renewed in the spirit of his mind, will not act the player, or assume a borrowed character; but he will really be, what he appears to be. How vain are all pretences! It is easy to deceive fellow-men; but God, with whom we have to do, searches the heart and tries the reins. What we are in secret, when none but his eye sees us, will determine our true character.

Sinners, of whatever description, open your eyes on your wretchedness! Flattery in your case, would be poison. To hide your danger, or smooth it over, would be monstrous cruelty. Do you ask, is there no hope concerning us? None, while you continue in sin. There is no such salvation in all the scriptures. If you are resolved and permitted to go on in a course of iniquity till the end of life, you are condemned already. *The wages of sin is death.* Nothing but the slight union of soul and body, prevents the flames of hell from kindling all around you. On this precarious tenure you hold any ease and peace you have. A few days sickness may end all your joy for ever; a sickness

in which you may be insensible, and can no more attend to the salvation of the soul, than one already in the grave; nay, an accident may precipitate you into everlasting burnings. You now live, and have health and reason. If you will leave your sins, there is an ample remedy provided for you in the gospel. There is salvation for the worst of you; for all of you. O delay not, but break off your sins by righteousness. Be importunate in prayer to God. Bring your polluted soul and body to the blood of Christ, which *cleanseth from all sin*.—Now is your day of grace; sin it not away. The moments are on the wing.—Improve them before they are fled, and you go down to the dust.

You, my brethren, who have your peace made with God, are happy indeed. I congratulate you on the peace restored to our land; but I congratulate you much more on this. By the one, the calamities of war are removed, and days of ease and rest are come; by the other, you have escaped calamities without end, and have found ease and rest to your souls. By the one, you are freed from the oppressive yoke of men; by the other, from the vilest slavery of sin and Satan. By the one, you have prospects of a growing and extensive empire; by the other, assurance of reigning for ever and ever. You are doubly blest. Peace without, and peace within. Peace here, and peace hereafter. You must not, however, put off the harness. In your spiritual concerns, much remains yet to be done. This warfare is not over. Sin and Satan,

though wounded, are not dead; though sorely beaten, they keep the field. Hostilities may cease, but they will be renewed. It is your duty, therefore, to watch, and to put on the whole armour of God. You have the greatest encouragement to stand your ground. You will prove successful, through the strength of your leader. Jesus Christ will make you, at last, more than conquerors.

Exert all your talents, and use all your influence, to promote the declarative glory of God, and the salvation of men. Discountenance, and, as far as in your power, prevent idleness of every kind, excess and profanity, so displeasing to God, and destructive to free and popular governments. We have been brave, and if virtuous, we will be a happy people.

I conclude this discourse with addressing, once more, those of my audience, who may be sensible that they have no peace with God. It were easy to multiply arguments, why you should return to God; but none will prevail unless he make them effectual. I have endeavored to deal plainly and faithfully with you, as knowing that I must give an account. It would be improper to preach my soul away in a smooth and moral harangue. Your own good sense would condemn me for it now, and rise up in judgment against me in the day of the Lord. Have you formed any resolutions, that you will try to be religious? Begin and persevere. You have the greatest encouragement. Let neither the number; nor the aggravation of your

crimes, deter you from an application to the Saviour. On the contrary, if sin be your choice, there is no encouragement. How do you know that God will not leave you to yourselves, to fill up the measure of your iniquity? How do you know that he will not speedily require your souls? Let not a moment then pass without resolving to serve God. Why halt you between two opinions? Reason and conscience say, that you ought to be religious. Follow their wise and sovereign dictate. What pretences does sin bring? She puts on a specious appearance to deceive and ruin. Harken not to her song, for she would entice you to your own destruction. In the end, she will bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder. She rewards all her votaries with unutterable wo and pain. But religion holds out to you every thing good and great. She will perfect and make happy your nature. Through Jesus Christ you may obtain peace with God, and with your own consciences; peace in death and throughout eternity. Why will you not, this day, accept and sign the peace through this Mediator? This would give you a true relish for all the gifts of Providence. Then might you *sit every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree, and none make you afraid.* May God teach us all our true interest; long continue our national peace; and above all, give us peace with himself, and make us happy, when thrones shall be cast down; through Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father, and the blessed Spirit, one God, be glory now and for ever more.

S E R M O N X V I .

O N D I S O B E D I E N C E .

B Y

B E N J A M I N M O O R E , D . D .

One of the Ministers of the Episcopal Church, New-York.

G E N E S I S iii. 6.

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise ; she took of the fruit thereof and did eat ; and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat.

HOWEVER insignificant this transaction may, at first view, appear, its consequences have been very deplorable to all mankind. Man was originally created in the image of God, and the habitation assigned him by his Creator, was abundantly supplied with all the means of felicity. He possessed, in Paradise, whatever was necessary to render his *present* existence happy ; and, in the midst of the garden was placed the *tree of life*, as a symbol and pledge of his immortality, if he continued obedient to the commands of his God. He was indulged in the free enjoyment of all the blessings that surrounded him, excepting only that he

was laid under one particular restriction, not to taste of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. But, seduced by the temptation of Satan, our first parents violated the divine command. Walking by *sight*, and not by *faith*; trusting more to the suggestions of their own appetites, than to the declarations of their Creator; grasping at what appeared a present good, though apprized of the dangerous consequence; when they saw that the tree was pleasant to the eyes, and vainly imagined that it was good for food; they stretched forth their hands and took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, to their own wretchedness and that of their posterity. For by this violation of the divine law, the covenant between God and man was broken; the right to the tree of life, the pledge of immortality was forfeited, sin gained admission into the world, and misery and death followed his footsteps. In that evil hour, nature, from her seat, sighing through all her works, gave signs of wo, that all was lost.

This very interesting event well deserves the serious consideration of every Christian; for in its consequences are involved all the posterity of Adam. Upon this event is founded the whole scheme of the redemption of the world by the Son of God, in the voluntary sacrifice of himself upon the cross. Had not man fallen from his original rectitude, there would have been no necessity for a Redeemer. To remedy the sad effects of this original transgression, the promise was immediately

given, that *the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head*. Let us then consider what inferences may be drawn from this passage of sacred scripture, which may tend either to confirm our *faith*, or to direct our *practice*.

And, in the *first place*, hence we may learn, that God has a right to try our obedience in any manner which may seem best to his infinite wisdom, notwithstanding the difficulties and seeming inconsistencies which may be suggested by our imperfect apprehension of things. Is it enquired? Indeed, the question has been often put by scoffing infidelity—"Why should a divine command be given with respect to so trifling a circumstance, as that of tasting the fruit of a particular tree?" The sole intention of the Almighty Creator was to prove the fidelity and submission of his rational creatures; and why not in this circumstance, as well as in any other? Such was the situation of our first parents in their primitive state, that the laws which were enjoined them must necessarily have been few and simple. Most of those injunctions would have been totally inapplicable to *their* condition, which were afterwards laid upon mankind, when the human race was multiplied; when a division of property had taken place; and extensive civil societies were formed. If the command was plain and simple, transgression was the more easily to be avoided. Although the prohibition related to a matter, which would otherwise have been altogether indifferent; it was entirely adequate to

the intended purpose, which was to prove the faith and humility of the rational creatures whom God had formed. *Their* trial, like that of every other person, was, to see whether they would seek for happiness only in compliance with the divine command, or whether they would endeavor to obtain it, in some other way. And upon this principle, that particular tree which was the subject of the prohibition, is with propriety denominated *the tree of knowledge of good and evil*; as it was intended to signify to those who tasted the fruit thereof, the *good* of entire submission, and the *evil* of wilful disobedience to the command of God. From these considerations, let not us presume to dispense with any of the injunctions of the Almighty, however insignificant they may appear to our limited understandings. Some duties arise from the natural and necessary relations of things; and some also, from the immediate appointment of the great Creator and Lord of the Universe. From this latter source, the ceremonial laws of the Mosaic dispensation derived all their authority; and, on the same account, *we Christians* are obligated to submit to the *positive institutions* of the gospel. The will of God, in whatever manner it may be signified to mankind, is the unerring and indispensable rule of human conduct.

Secondly, Hence we may be led to observe the distinct offices of *reason* and *faith*, in the great concerns of religion. Let enthusiasts endeavor to depreciate reason, because it must ever prove un-

friendly to their extravagant pretensions—let unbelievers excessively extol its powers, because they are desirous entirely to discard revelation—the discreet Christian will never attempt to separate what God has indissolubly united. He will make his reason and his faith mutually assist each other. The beautiful edifice of his religion will be founded in *reason*, and the superstructure will be reared on high by *faith*; and all the sacred duties performed in this glorious temple of the Lord, may be justly denominated a *reasonable service*. *Reason* is the distinguishing glory of man. From this heavenly ingredient in his composition, it is said, that he was created in the *image of God*. This is the candle of the Lord shining before us to direct our progress. This is the celestial light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. But let us ever remember, that the rays of this glorious luminary are circumscribed within certain limits. This heavenly guide can conduct us only through a part of our journey; and then, she voluntarily gives us up to the guidance of faith. It is, therefore, a matter of infinite importance to us, when reason stops, to be satisfied and willing that faith should take us by the hand. Happy would it have been for our first parents, had they acted from a stedfast conviction of this momentous truth. God had vouchsafed to converse with them under some visible form; and his command was communicated in such a manner, that they entertained not the least doubt of its divine authority.

Reason herself, therefore, ought to have taught them, not to cavil, but implicitly to obey. Has God expressly declared, *Thou shalt not eat?* Every contradictory assertion is, therefore, not to be attended to. Impertinent and presumptuous are all thy imaginations, “that thou mayest taste the forbidden fruit, not only without danger, but even with pleasure and advantage—that its beautiful appearance indicates some salutary quality within; that surely it is good for food, and much to be desired to make one wise.” The event proved, that the highest wisdom of man is to submit to the directions of Almighty God—that misery is the natural consequence of transgressing the law.

These observations are altogether applicable to the present situation of Christians. Our religion requires the exercise of both reason and faith. She comes with high pretensions—she shrinks not from the closest inspection—she demands the attention which is due to a divine revelation. Let reason examine these pretensions, and weigh the arguments which are adduced to establish such high authority; for, in so doing, reason acts within her proper sphere. And if she at length determine, that our religion comes from God, then let us receive it with cordial affection, and resign ourselves, without reserve, to its Heavenly direction. Does reason indeed conclude that Christianity is of celestial origin? Does reason declare that God is wiser than man? Let us then call in the aid of *faith*. Let us believe the assertions of

God, though we cannot always perfectly comprehend them. Let us be obedient to his injunctions, though we cannot always explain the mode of their operation in producing the intended effect. Upon this principle let us stedfastly maintain the doctrines of the existence of *three persons* in the unity of the divine nature; of the *incarnation* of the Son of God; and of the *atonement* which he offered for the sins of the world. Let us heartily believe and act upon that persuasion, that the due reception of the sacraments, though they are but mere *matter*, will, nevertheless, (by the efficacy of the divine appointment) have a *spiritual* effect in promoting the purity, and thus securing the salvation, of our immortal souls. Let us walk by *faith*, and not by *sight*; and this divine principle will be unto us *the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen*.

Thirdly, From this passage of sacred scripture we may observe, that since the *will of God* is the indispensable rule of human conduct; whenever *his* commands are clearly notified, we are not presumptuously to distinguish them, as if some were trifling, while others are important; as if some of them deserved regard, while others may be transgressed with impunity. So far as the infirmity of our nature will permit, we must endeavor to yield a perfect obedience to *all* the laws of God. *These*, no doubt, with respect to their influence upon human happiness, are of more or less importance; but still, in regard to the authority from which

they are derived, they all deserve the same respect. Hence, the declaration of the apostle is undoubtedly just; *that whosoever keepeth the whole law, and offendeth, (that is, wilfully offendeth) only in one point, he is guilty of all.*—He despises that authority upon which the whole law is founded. In their treatment of each other, our first parents violated no duty, they lived in mutual affection, and, in the task that was assigned them, yielded reciprocal assistance. And, with respect to their devotional temper of mind, it is probable the language of the poet is as true, as it is beautiful—

- Their orisons were each morning duly paid
 In various style; for neither various style
 Nor holy rapture wanted they, to praise
 Their Maker,
 Whose *goodness* is beyond tho't and *power* divine.

Constant as they were in the discharge of these *important* duties, it were well if they had attended to the *lesser* matters of the law. Satan did not dare to insinuate, that God was not to be adored, or that they were not to love each other. But he artfully suggested, that the tasting of the fruit of a particular tree, could not be a transgression of such frightful magnitude; could not possibly be attended with such dreadful consequences. That he is a liar from the beginning, the fatal event sufficiently proved; and it now concerns us to be cautious, lest we should be seduced into transgression by similar false suggestions. Say not, that

because you injure no man by direct injustice, you may venture to indulge in rioting and drunkenness, which are supposed to be injurious to no one but yourself; for God has commanded us to be temperate in all things, and has introduced *drunkenness* into the same dreadful catalogue of vices, with adultery and murder. Say not, that because you observe all the weightier matters of the law, duties which are of everlasting obligation, you may, without hazard, neglect the positive institutions of the gospel—that *baptism* is of no avail to salvation—and that the *Lord's supper* is a ceremony of little significance. The proper inquiry is, “Has God commanded the observance of them?” If this be the case, it is our duty with humility to submit, and not arrogantly pretend to assign reasons to justify our disobedience. He that would avoid the great offence, must resolutely withstand the first beginnings of evil. He that would yield an acceptable obedience, must present his tithes of mint, and anise, and cummin, as well as observe the more weighty precepts of the law. An apparently trifling transgression, may be productive of very serious consequences; a seeming unimportant duty may be highly acceptable in the sight of *him* who enjoined it. Let us implicitly *obey*, and then we may safely trust the event to God, who is supremely wise, and powerful, and good.

Fourthly, In discoursing upon this subject, it may be farther observed, that the very foundation and groundwork of all true religion must be laid

in an humble and docile disposition of heart. It was pride that thrust down the revolting Angels from their first abodes in the mansions of glory. It was a vain confidence in their own powers which expelled Adam and Eve from all the joys of Paradise. *Except ye be converted, says our Lord, and become like little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* Now the prevailing disposition of children is docility of mind; and a readiness to give themselves up to the guidance of those, whose goodness they have experienced; and who, they know, are wiser than themselves. Destitute of this disposition, the Pharisees blasphemed the Son of God, and despised his doctrines; and, on the same account, the reasoning Philosophers of the present day vilify the gospel of Christ, because they cannot comprehend all its mysteries. But, is the human understanding a perfect standard of all wisdom; an adequate judge of all truth? Is there nothing true which lies beyond the limits of our comprehension? We cannot presume to assert it; for, in the strong language of scripture, it may be justly affirmed, *the weakness of God is stronger than man, and the foolishness of God is wiser than man.* All nature is full of inexplicable mysteries; and before vain philosophy rejects the gospel, because some mysterious doctrines are therein inculcated, it ought to explain the secret process by which fluid water is converted into solid ice; or how every blade of grass is induced to spring *upwards*, contrary to a general law of nature. Ignorance and

arrogance frequently go together: but the tendency of true wisdom is ever to make us humble. With God, nothing, that does not imply direct absurdity or wickedness, is impossible. When Samaria was closely besieged, and reduced to the last extremity by famine, Elisha, the man of God, came forth and proclaimed in the audience of all the people, *thus saith the Lord, to-morrow about this time, shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a sheckel, and two measures of barley for a sheckel, in the gates of Samaria.* But a Lord, on whose hand the king leaned, in the true spirit of captious infidelity, answered the man of God, and said, *behold, if the Lord would make windows in Heaven, might this thing be?* And yet, the event showed, that the man of God was right, and that the objections of the impious caviller were frivolous and vain. *Let imaginations be cast down, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God; and let every thought be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ;* and we shall find, in due time, that in believing the doctrines of the gospel, *we have not followed cunningly devised fables;* that what God hath promised, he is also able to perform.

For, to our great consolation, it may be observed, in the *last place*, that in the redemption which was wrought out by the Son of God, sufficient provision is made to remedy all the sad effects of this *original transgression.* In the fulness of time, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, to accomplish the promise given to our first parents in Paradise.

The great work of redemption is now completed; and we are continually invited, nay, even commanded, to come and partake of its benefits. Through hearty *faith*, and sincere though imperfect *obedience*, compensation may be amply obtained for the loss of the *tree of life*; for death has been vanquished, and immortality is again brought to light in the gospel. Let me conclude with exhorting you, to acquiesce in the wisdom of divine Providence, in whatever manner God may think it proper to try and prove you, in this mortal life—to cultivate assiduously the powers of reason, as the distinguishing gift of God, and the greatest glory of man; and reason, under proper management, will become the affectionate handmaid of faith—to take without reluctance, the *will of God* for the guide of your lives, and it will undoubtedly lead you to happiness and glory—to walk before him with all lowliness and meekness of heart, for he who thus humbleth himself will be gloriously exalted—to let the blessed hope of everlasting life animate your obedience and enliven all your prospects. Passing, in this manner, through things temporal, you will finally lose not the things eternal; for there remaineth a never-ceasing rest for the people of God.



S E R M O N XVII.

ON THE FORGETFULNESS OF OUR SINS.

B Y

B R Y A N F A I R F A X.

Minister of the Episcopal Church, Alexandria, Virginia.

H O S E A vii. 2.

*And they consider not in their hearts, that I remember
all their wickedness.*

IT is a melancholy thought that there are some people, perhaps a great many, who are without the consideration mentioned in the text; that do not consider that the Lord remembers all their wickedness.

If a man does a known injury to his neighbor, he is very apt to think *he* remembers it. But he may offend God from time to time, and not consider that *he* can remember too. This is an affecting thought, both with respect to ourselves and others. When we observe this carelessness in others about offending God, and an indifferency, whether he takes notice of it or not; we may wonder and pity their inattention, as we do when

we see a great carelessness in people, who squander away their estate without thought, or run greatly in debt, or are negligent of their health, exposing it by intemperance or other folly. But when we bring the case home to ourselves, and reflect how often *we* have offended God, without considering that *he* remembers it; it is enough to affect us with remorse and shame. There is no part of a man's conduct that more surprizes him, when he comes to reflexion, than that he did not consider in his heart, that the Lord remembered his wickedness, although *he* did not. How could it be, might he say to himself, that I should have sinned in this particular, and in that, and yet not advert to the Lord's seeing it?—Not consider, that he, whose eyes run to and fro through the earth, must behold an offender against his laws? How strange is it that I should be thus thoughtless, to wound my soul by frequent acts of sin, to grow daily worse, by daily going farther from God; that God, who is as able to punish, as he was able to create me. Surely I must be like the ungodly, described in the Psalms. *The ungodly is so proud that he careth not for God: neither is God in all his thoughts. He hath said in his heart, tush, God hath forgotten: he hideth away his face, and he will never see it.* Thus he might reason with himself, and reason truly. For such as are thus careless are like the ungodly; nay, they are the ungodly themselves, whom the spirit of wisdom hath so justly described. They say, God hath forgotten—that is, doth not remem-

ber. But the same spirit contradicts these bold assertions—*Wherefore should the wicked blaspheme God: while he doth say in his heart, tush, thou God carest not for it? Surely thou hast seen it, for thou beholdest ungodliness and wrong.* We have no difficulty in believing this: for whatever the ungodly may say, it will be no hard matter for those who fear God, to believe that he really does behold ungodliness and wrong. And, indeed, it is not improbable that many of the ungodly cannot help believing it themselves; for though they may say, *God careth not for it,* yet it is much to be questioned, whether they really think so. It is true, they do not consider in their hearts, that is, they have not a deep and settled consideration, that God sees them: yet if they would turn their thoughts inward and ask the question seriously, whether God sees them or not? they would not so readily say, that he cared not. But it is through want of due thought upon the subject, that they do not consider in their hearts, that the Lord remembers their wickedness—and therefore venture to say within themselves, he doth not regard. It would seem as if it was done to put off some disturbing thought just beginning to arise; and that it might not disturb them, they banish it by a sudden effort—saying, what signifies it to have any uneasiness about it? God careth not for these things.—There are some to be sure who do not believe in God's all-seeing eye, and his universal presence; but yet, I suppose, there are more who cannot help believing

it, when they take the time to consider it; and yet, notwithstanding, for want of attention, flatter themselves with the hopes of his not beholding, or at least, not remembering, to their utter confusion, at a future day.

To such, then, it may be useful to have a warning. It may do them good to be reminded of their inattention—to be brought to consider that which they do not. And may we not suppose that the words of the text were written for this purpose. Why are the threatenings in scripture, but to alarm the minds of those whose conduct exposes them to those evils which are threatened? Not only the danger of a sinful course is mentioned, but the danger of being careless and off our guard is also mentioned; that we may avoid the temptation we are exposed to from carelessness. The benefit of watchfulness is described, that we may become watchful—The benefit of prayer is mentioned that we may pray—The help which the Lord is ready to afford is written, that we may apply for it—His mercy is spoken of in high terms, that we may not despair; and his judgments are recorded, that we may not presume too much upon his goodness; but rather be driven from sin to the arms of mercy. So the want of consideration is written, that such as need it, may be roused to consider. Of this inconsiderateness there are many kinds. Men do not consider enough that they are to die—they are not apt to consider whether they are prepared to die—they

do not often consider that they are really finners—they do not consider that sin must be punished, either in themselves, or in another for them—they do not often consider whether their sins have been ever pardoned; and so in many ways, men neglect a due consideration. I appeal to you, my brethren, whether you do not suppose that among the many sorts of inconsiderate people, there are some that consider not that the Lord remembers their wickedness? If so, the words of the text were written for their benefit; that they may perhaps apply the doctrine to themselves, and say it is too true: For when men are brought to see their error, it is a good beginning. And if a man hath often, or even ever said to himself, “God hath forgotten my sins, or hideth away his face and will never see them,” and should cast his eyes upon this place of scripture, or hear it spoken of, where he discovers his thoughts are unveiled by the word of truth; and that he is just such a man, as is there described, he may be struck with a fear of that God, who, he was weak enough to suppose, had forgotten him. And then the case will be reversed. He had said that God had forgotten; but now he is afraid that God never will forget his sins: He before said, that the Lord had done what he now believes he never will do. This is a common case of the ungodly, when they first see their sins in full view; they are so dreadful, so heinous, that they think God never will forgive them. If they are supported by a small hope, it is but a

small one; their general state, being almost a despair of mercy.

This leads me to the *second thing*, to wit, That there is another sense in which the Lord remembers our sins no more, and very different from that of which I have been discoursing. In this, an ungodly man says, God does not mind his sins, and flatters himself, or rather tries to flatter himself, that his sins will be forgotten though they have been never pardoned—that is, that God will pass them by, though he has never repented, or sued properly for a pardon. In the other sense, God forgets or remembers our sins no more, when after humiliation and amendment, he hath pardoned and blotted them out. Now for a man to be able to say this, That the Lord hath blotted out his sins and will remember them no more, is as desirable a state, as the other before-mentioned is deplorable. That the Lord does pardon true penitents, is a comfortable truth, and one of the great points of the gospel. When remission of sins, as well as repentance, was ordered, by Christ, to be preached, how do some doubt whether it is to be had in this world? The apostles speak of it as a thing actually done, and not as a matter only to be expected in the next life. St. John says, *I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you, for his name's sake, or through his name.* And does he not say, *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* St. James—*That the prayer of*

faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up, and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. And St. Peter—*That all the prophets give witness to Christ, that the believers in him receive remission of sins through his name?* And we have no reason to suppose that this remission is to be had *only* hereafter, when we compare the expressions together, and consider also the testimony of experience about it. If our Lord had power on earth to forgive sins, and did actually do so, why should we doubt either his power or willingness to do it now?

The apostle to the Hebrews mentions it as a part of the new covenant, in his quotation from the prophet Jeremiah.—*This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people; and they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest: for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.* So that remission of sins is part of the new covenant; and we may look for its accomplishment in performing the conditions of it, by confession, prayer, humiliation, and amendment.

Thus, then, to have the Lord forget our sins is very desirable, and quite different from supposing

he does not notice them. And remission of sins is preached that men may arrive to this state, by first having a hope of pardon, and then by actually obtaining it. I do not mean that the ungodly, living in sin, are first driven from it by the hope of pardon: No; they are driven from sin by the fear of judgment. The hope of pardon, however small, at first, keeps them from despair; so that whilst the fear of judgment humbles them, they are gradually led on by hope, to the throne of mercy. And this remission of sins is preached that sinners, in their deepest distress from the fear of wrath, may yet have some hope left; that they may not cast off all thoughts of salvation; and also that the prospect of reconciliation may be still plainer, as they return towards God.

And now shall we reflect a moment on the difference between these two extremes—that of not considering that the Lord remembers our wickedness, and will call us to an account for it—and that of considering that he hath done away our sins, and will remember them no more? The former sort are apt to dread the day of reckoning, and the latter to hope for it—I say, are apt to do so; because neither of them always do it. The ungodly are apt to dread that day, though they do not always fear it: for they try to put it by, and that is the reason of their saying, God doth not regard. However, they are apt to fear, and it is this aptitude to fear that makes them try to shift it off, in the best manner they are able. They endeavor to

lessen their sins in their own eyes, instead of confessing them. If their sins are too great for them to get ease in this manner, they try some other, either to disbelieve, (for men may help forward their unbelief as well as their belief) or resolve to repent hereafter, or else to say the Lord careth not for it, not considering in their hearts that he does remember. The text mentions, considering in the heart, and not without reason. For such people have thoughts about these things, but they are but flight—they drive them off to prevent their impression; and that is the cause why they consider it not in their hearts.

On the other hand, the goodly have a disposition or aptitude to hope for the same day, though they do not always or constantly wish for it. They hope for it, not as a day of punishment, but as a day of happiness—they hope for it, because they consider their sins as done away and forgotten, and look for that glory from the Lord, which is reserved for them that hope in his holy name. They trust in the Lord for salvation, and according to his word, hope for it, as he hath promised. The stronger their hope, the more they try to please him, because their love is so much the greater; and the more they try to please him, the stronger will their hope be.

And now I shall conclude, by observing to you, how proper it would be for every one, here present, to ask his own heart, whether he is one, that is apt

to shift off the evil day or not? Whether he ever aims to get peace by supposing that God doth not remember his wickedness: or, whether he in any other manner endeavors after a false peace; just a present lull to the risings of a troubled mind? If there are any such here, then take this sermon as a warning, perhaps from the Lord, to awaken you to better thoughts; to a deeper consideration that you must one day give an account of your conduct, and that to the Judge of all men—to the great Judge of the whole earth, who knoweth the secrets of your hearts, as well as the words of your mouth. There is not a word in your tongue, but he knoweth it altogether. If you have sworn falsely, or sworn vainly, he knoweth it. If you have slandered your neighbor, or harbored malice in your heart against him, he knoweth it. If you have defrauded or otherwise wronged your neighbor, either in his person, or estate, or good name, the Lord knoweth it as well as you; for he beholdeth ungodliness and wrong. And if he knoweth these things, and every other sin, and you must be brought to judgment for them, or obtain a pardon; should you not with all your might strive to obtain this pardon? and should you not strive to obtain it now; or can you think it better to delay it till it is too late?

But if, upon examination, there be others here present, who do not see that they have been quite so inconsiderate, as to suppose they are hidden from the eyes of the Lord, or that he doth not mind

them; and yet can see that they have been too disobedient to laws; and having sinned against them, are guilty, and subject to punishment also, though not in the same degree as the more ungodly—then if there be such here, you may need counsel too; and the counsel I give, is to confess your sins also, one by one, and beg for mercy daily; and be watchful in future against them, and all other sins whatever. Pray earnestly, constantly, to him who is the only Saviour. It is, indeed, easy to advise men to confess their sins; and it appears easy to follow such advice. But experience is against it; for though it seems such an easy matter, perhaps not one in twenty, when they return from church, will confess them, either in general or particular. Though we are told from the Bible, that if we will confess our sins, we shall have forgiveness, yet one would think from the event, that it is almost as easy to persuade a sinner to leave his sins, as to confess them by a particular confession. And this is mentioned just to stir you up to confession.

But there may be others also here, besides the two sorts above-mentioned, and they are the godly, who walk in all the commandments, with an earnest desire to be found diligent in the work of the Lord. Let me advise you to be watchful, and exceedingly careful of your behaviour; not with an eye of pleasing men, but God, who trieth the hearts. This you will find necessary, to guard against the designs of the enemy, who may overcome such as he finds off their guard. Confess *your*

kins too, knowing that you need mercy. And look to the Lord for help, knowing that you need help. Be humble in all your deportment, as followers of the Lamb of God. Put your trust in him, who is able to save. And may we all obtain the crown of glory, that fadeth not away. Now to God, &c.



S E R M O N XVIII.

THE NATURE AND ADVANTAGES OF
THE FEAR OF THE LORD.

B Y

J O H N R O D G E R S, D. D.

One of the Ministers of the United Presbyterian Churches, in
New-York.

P R O V. xxiii. 17.

Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.

THERE is scarce any thing that has a more immediate influence upon our duty or our comfort, than the due government of the passions. When they are properly directed, they serve as powerful springs of right action; but unguided by reason, and revelation, they are the fruitful sources of vice, guilt and ruin.

Hence the wise and virtuous, in all ages, have employed themselves in forming rules for their regulation. But it has been found more easy to prescribe, than to reduce these rules to practice.

Herein, then, the religion of Jesus has the advantage over every other system of morality, in that

it not only prescribes the most just and proper rules for this end ; but provides the assistance that is requisite to enable us to comply with them.

This is the special business of the spirit of grace, in the œconomy of man's salvation ; and directed and assisted by him, we are enabled to *be, and walk, in the fear of the Lord all the day long*, agreeably to the precept in our text.

To enable you to understand and improve this important precept, in a proper manner, I shall endeavor, by the aids of this spirit,

I. To shew you what it is to be in the fear of the Lord all the day long.

II. Enquire why we should study thus to be in the fear of the Lord.

I. I am briefly to shew you what it is to be in the fear of the Lord all the day long.

Fear is a passion of the human mind, and stands opposed to hope. It is that passion, by which the author of nature guards us against danger ; and in this view, when properly directed, is of singular use in the conduct of life. It always has for its object some evil, real or supposed ; and, in the words of our text, with many other places in sacred scripture, its immediate object is *the evil and danger of sinning against God ; and the just displeasure of God, in consequence of offending him*. To fear these, is to fear the Lord in the best sense of the

phrase. This is the sense in which the churches are said, to *walk in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost*. And in the same sense, *the fear of the Lord, is said to be the beginning of wisdom*.

But, to give you a fuller view of this grace, I beg your attention while I briefly observe ;

1. That it implies a *humble reverence for God*.—A sense of his being, perfections and character ; *that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him*. That he is a God of *purser eyes than to behold evil*. There is no view of God that contributes more to form the human heart to a true fear of him, and a devout reverence for him, than a believing view of the holiness of his nature. This is the case of the Angels themselves, as we learn from Isaiah vi. 1—3. *I saw also, the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims ; each one had six wings ; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts ; the whole earth is full of his glory !*

There cannot be a more lively description of reverence and godly fear, than that given us in the conduct of the seraphim, verse 2. You will please to observe, each one of these adoring spirits had six wings. *With twain they covered their faces—* struck with the majesty of God, and unable to be-

hold his glory; *and with twain they covered their feet*—as unworthy to stand in his sacred presence, though immaculate, and the highest order of rational creatures known to us; *and with twain they did fly*—importing the alacrity, cheerfulness and expedition, with which they execute the divine commands. And the source of this reverence, humility and obedience, we have, verse 3. It was the view they had of the holiness of the divine nature. *For one cried unto another, and said, holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!*

A like effect of the like view of this same attribute, we have in the conduct of the four living creatures, and the four and twenty elders; of whom we read in the 4th chapter of the Revelation of St. John, from the 8th to the 11th verse.—

A knowledge of the greatness and majesty of God, has also no small instrumentality in promoting this temper. This appears in the case of the prophet Jeremiah, x. 6, 7. *Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Lord; thou art great, and thy name is great in might. Who would not fear thee, O king of nations? To the same purpose are the words of the Psalmist; For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods.*

He is also a God of strict and invariable justice. A God *who will punish iniquity, transgression and sin; and who will by no means clear the guilty, without an interest in the atonement of the Mediator.*

If you add to all this, that Jehovah is an all-seeing and a heart-searching God, you will easily perceive, that this reverence, this godly fear justly becomes us. And few of the divine attributes have a more powerful influence on this temper, than his omniscience, when properly understood and realized. That *the eyes of the Lord run to and fro, throughout the whole earth—discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart; and, that there is not any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.* That no darkness can hide from him. That the shades of midnight, and the blaze of noon, are the same thing to him. A sense of our being always under the immediate eye of this God, from whom nothing can be hid, naturally tends to beget and cherish this fear of the Lord in our hearts; to fill us with that reverence for his majesty, that enters so deeply into the duty enjoined in our text. On the other hand—ignorance of God, and inattention to these perfections of his nature, especially to his omniscience and omnipresence, are among the most fruitful sources of that irreverence for him, which stands opposed to the grace I describe. The language of the sinner's heart and life is—*How doth God know? Can he judge through the dark cloud? Thick clouds are a covering to him, that he seeth not, and he walketh in the circuit of Heaven.* He may not, indeed, venture to say it with his lips, but he daily saith by his practice, *the Lord shall not see, neither shall the God*

of *Jacob regard it*. And, by the by, this irreverence for God, is the true source of that rude and unworthy practice of profane swearing. A practice that insults all the laws of politeness, and renders the man unfit for genteel society, while it violates the most sacred obligations of piety and morality.

2. The fear of the Lord implies, *an habitual care lest we offend him*. This is the genuine effect of that reverence for God, of which you have just heard. The more it prevails in the heart, the more will it govern and influence the life.—The true source of this care is, a sincere love to God, and a desire to please him. The man who does not love God, and desire to please him, will not be careful, on just principles, to guard against giving him offence. Why does the dutiful child fear to offend a kind and tender parent? Is it not because he loves him? Because his honor lies near his heart? Thus in the case before us, the more we love God and his law, the more cautious and tender shall we be, lest we sin against him.—And this circumspection serves, not only as a guard against the commission of sin; but it has a powerful influence also upon the performance of duty. It stimulates the man who fears the Lord, to a conscientious and faithful discharge of the whole of his duty, to the utmost of his power. It guards him against omitting it in the season thereof; and engages him to attend, not only to the matter, but to the manner of his performing it.

In a word, this habitual care, this circumspection of conduct, that we do not omit our duty to God, our neighbor, or ourselves; that we perform it in the proper time and manner; and that we do not knowingly and wilfully sin against God, is literally to *be in the fear of the Lord all the day long*; and is one principal thing the Holy Spirit intends by the precept in our text.

3. This fear of the Lord has for its object, *the just displeasure of God, as due to us for sin.*

That we have sinned against God, and hereby merited his highest displeasure, are melancholy truths, that we do not, cannot admit of a doubt. And hence those numerous evils that have so universally overspread this world of ours; such as sickness and pain, war and famine, poverty, disgrace, and death itself; and together with these, our being justly liable to be *punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.* Moral and natural evil are inseparably connected, and the latter never fails to follow the former, in a greater or less degree. And since we are sinners, and conscious to ourselves that we are so, we justly fear the divine displeasure due to us therefor. Thus the Psalmist—*My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments.* Not to fear the judgments of God in this situation, would be unpardonable stupidity, or a profane contempt of God. And this fear has its influence too on the purity of the life, as it tends to guard us against sin, and is, therefore, one thing

implied in the text—*Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.*

But it is necessary to distinguish here, between that slavish fear of God's judgments, that destroys our peace of mind, and hereby incapacitates us for the duties and enjoyments of life; and that which only serves to guard us against sin. The former is that of which we read, 1 John iv. 18. *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.* It is a slavish fear of God's wrath, a despairing horror of his judgments, of which the apostle there speaks. This is that, which persons under the power of a melancholy habit of body and mind, sometimes have; and which also is the fear of those who despair of the mercy of God in Christ. But this is not the fear which I at present describe. It is only that fear of the divine displeasure against sin, that serves to awaken our attention to its evil nature, and, thereby, guard us against committing it.

Thus much for the nature of that fear of the Lord of which we here read.

It only remains under this head that we enquire, what it is to be in the fear of the Lord *all the day long.*

And this in general means, that we should live under the habitual influence of this holy temper. That we should carry it with us into all the duties of the religious and social life, whether of a more

private or public nature; that we carry it with us into all the busineses and amusements of common life; into all companies and circumstances. We are hereby taught that there is no situation, in which we can be; no employment in which we may be engaged, but what we should constantly act under the influence of this fear of the Lord. It should rise with us in the morning, go forth with us, attend us through all the various scenes of the day, and lie down with us at night. And this should be the case with us, through all the days and nights of our appointed time. Thus, *be thou in the fear of the Lord, all the day long*; the whole day of life; for the night of death will shortly come, and put a final period to it. This, is the sense in which, *happy is the man that feareth alway; but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.*

This leads us to enquire—

II. Why should we study to be in the fear of the Lord all the day long?

My business, under this head, is to mention some of the many reasons, why we should be particularly attentive to this duty. And let it suffice, briefly, to touch upon the four following at present.

1. *It is an excellent guard against the commission of sin*; that sin which constitutes our depravity, and which is the fruitful source of all our misery. This appears, at first sight, from what has been said of its nature. Can the man, knowingly and delibe-

rately, sin against God, who has a suitable sense of his being, his perfections, his character and his government upon his spirit? No, the very idea of his being under the immediate eye of that God, who serves as a solemn witness to all his transactions; a holy and a just God, to whom he must shortly give an account of all the deeds done in the body; would check his career and deter him from sin. Think you, my brethren, that the debauchee who gives himself up to idleness and profane company; who wastes whole days, and it may be nights, in the tavern, at the gaming table, or in places of a still more infamous character, that he can have the fear of God before his eyes? Verily no. It is because he is destitute of this principle, that the sinner restrains prayer before God; that he dares to take his sacred name, in a profane manner, in his unhallowed lips; that he dares to get drunk; commit uncleanness; lie; profane the sabbath of the Lord; steal, or otherwise defraud his neighbor. The fear of the Lord would effectually engage him to forsake these and every other vicious course. It would strip temptation of its charms, and disarm it of its force.

Hence the fear of the Lord, and departing from evil, are used as phrases of the same import. *Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.* And we read, *The fear of the Lord is to hate evil.* And, *by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil.* This is the sense in which *the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever.*

It not only deters us from sin, and guards us against it; but, as has been already suggested, it excites and stimulates us to study a thorough conformity in heart and life, to the approving will of God. Hence the apostle exhorts us to *cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.*

2. It greatly assists us in the right performance of duty. I mean here the duties we owe, more immediately, to the most high God. These, my brethren, are numerous and important. They are secret, private and public. They are to be performed in the closet, the family and the sanctuary; nor is it possible for us to be the true disciples of Christ, without a conscientious attendance upon them. And you will further please to observe, God justly requires they should be performed in a humble and devout, a spiritual and sincere manner. This our Lord teaches us with great care. *God is a spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.* But to all this, the fear of the Lord, as already described, greatly contributes. For in proportion as this fear, or reverence towards God, prevails in us, will the heart be fixed upon him, the glorious object of our worship, in every duty. In proportion hereto, we shall be guarded against those vain and wandering thoughts that eat out the very soul of our duties, and degrade them into empty formality. God requires with great solemnity, *my son, give me thine heart.* A precept that particularly

binds us in this case of duty ; for our God looketh at the heart principally, in all our approaches to him ; and, indeed, he has a special respect to it, in all our conduct.

Again. It greatly tends to invigorate the graces of the spirit in the soul, and to call them forth into lively exercise. The more this fear of God governs the man, the more active and vigorous will his graces be. For the same views of the perfections, character and Christ of God, that are the source of the one, will promote the other. Our time does not admit of shewing you, here, how this is to be effected. It must suffice, at present, to observe, that so it is ; and you will easily perceive, how a spirit of devotion is hereby promoted. For the proper exercise of faith, hope, love to God, and delight in him in duty, is that in which this spirit consists. But, the more this is in exercise, the more easy, delightful and spiritual will our duties be.

3. This fear of the Lord *excites us to the important duty of watchfulness, and greatly assists therein.* There is no duty of the Christian life more frequently and strongly enjoined in the sacred oracles, than this. You hear our Lord say, Matt. xxvi. 41. *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.* And again—*And what I say unto you, I say unto all, watch.* To this purpose are the words of the apostle—*Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.—Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.* To

which accords his exhortation to Timothy—*But watch thou in all things.* And did our time admit of considering, here, the many snares to which God's own people are exposed in this life; snares that arise from the temptations of Satan, the allurements of the world, and the depraved tempers and passions of the human heart, you would easily perceive the utility, importance and necessity of this duty. There are none of all the duties of the Christian life, that have a more immediate and powerful influence on the peace of our own minds, or our conformity to God. It must, therefore, be a singular favor to be properly excited to it, and assisted in the exercise of it. But this is the office of that fear of the Lord, which our text enjoins, as appears from what has been said of its nature. For the man, who fears the Lord in the manner explained, will not only watch against every kind of sin, but also those circumstances of temptation that lead to it.

4. *God recommends this duty to our study and practice, by his divine authority.*—This he does by the high encomiums he bestows upon it, and that with this express view. It is *wisdom*, it is *understanding*. Thus in Job—*Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil, is understanding.* And in Proverbs—*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge*; or, as the Hebrew word will well admit of being rendered, it is the *principal, or grand constituent part of true knowledge.* And again—*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of*

wisdom ; and the knowledge of the holy, is understanding. The fear of the Lord is strong confidence ; and his children shall have a place of refuge. The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death. Add to all this, the duty before us is matter of exprefs command, as in our text. *Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.*

Need I say more to recommend it to your study and practice? Would you wish to enjoy the comforts that flow from the purity of heart, and innocence of manners, which it promotes?— Would you wish to live a life of holy and delightful intercourse with Heaven, and be useful in your day and generation? Would you wish to grow daily into a greater meetness *for the inheritance of the saints in light*? In a word, would you wish to die in peace, and go to be ever with the Lord? *Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.* And for this purpose I beseech you,

1. Study to acquire more and more of the knowledge of God ; the knowledge of his perfections, character and government ; especially as they are manifested in and through his son Jesus Christ. What has been already said shews the influence this knowledge has on this fear of the Lord. It is its true source. Thus it becomes *life eternal to know God, as the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent.*

2. Be much and frequent in meditating upon the divine perfections. Call up their various and

numerous displays to your daily recollection, and dwell in familiar contemplation upon them. Thus your souls will be assimilated to them; acquire correspondent tempers and dispositions; the tempers and dispositions to which these displays of the attributes of God, are designed and calculated to form the human heart. This is one thing imported in having *our conversation in Heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.* And the so general neglect of this great duty of meditation, is one of the fruitful sources of that little improvement in the divine life, of which so many of God's people daily and justly complain; why they live and act so much beneath the dignity of their character, as the disciples of a holy Jesus; and often act so unworthy the just expectations of both their God and the world respecting them.

3. Be much in the great duty of prayer; especially be conscientious in observing the returning seasons thereof, private and social—This has a natural tendency to impress our spirits with that reverence for the divine perfections and character, that enters so deeply into the duty before us. And not only so, but in this way we are to seek, and in this way we may hope to obtain those influences of the spirit of grace, by which this fear of the Lord is most effectually maintained and promoted in the hearts and lives of men. My brethren, if you do not make conscience of this duty, in your closets and families, such of you as have families, you cannot live in the fear of the Lord. Therefore I

befeech you, *continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.*

Lastly, To the duty of prayer, add that of watchfulness. You have just heard the influence this duty has on our personal conformity to God; I need not repeat it. Watch, therefore, your own hearts; attend to what passes there.

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. Watch your lips, that you speak not unadvisedly therewith; watch your lives, that you do not offend against God's pure and holy law; *watch thou in all things, and thus be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.*

May the Lord graciously enable each of us, thus to *cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord;* through riches of free grace in Christ our Lord. Amen.



S E R M O N X I X .

THE PLEASANTNESS OF TRUE RELIGION.

B Y

NATHAN PERKINS, A.M.

Minister of a Congregational Church, at Hartford, West Division,
Connecticut.

M A T T. xi. 30.

For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

WHEN we view the state of religion in particular, and of mankind in general, few things will appear more important than to convince them, that the system of piety and virtue, to which they are called by the voice of inspiration and of reason, is at once full of the richest consolations, and adorns every station and condition of human life. Upon a careful investigation of its discriminating principles, and a critical examination of its native tendency, it will be clearly seen to be wisely calculated by its heavenly author, to make us act like rational beings, to open for us treasures of real happiness in the present, and to crown us with endless honors in the future world.

When cordially embraced, and its duties conscientiously performed, then, and then only, notwithstanding the corrupt opinions of false Philosophy, do we begin to live to any good and noble purposes: and then only do we begin to be truly happy. For no pleasures can equal, in refinement and sublimity, those of pure and undefiled religion.

No mistake, consequently, can be more gross and hurtful, and few more common than to suppose, that in order to be Christians indeed, we must resign all the innocent enjoyments of life, and bid adieu to many of the blessings of society, and practise upon a total sequestration from the world. For certain it is, that glooms and superstition, sadness and austerities constitute no part of that religion, which our blessed Saviour came from Heaven to proclaim to perishing mortals.

He particularly informs us, that his *yoke is easy and his burden light*. He had just before invited, in a most tender and condescending manner, all who saw their guilt, and felt their lost, self-ruined condition by nature, to repair to him for help and salvation. *Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart and ye shall find rest unto your souls.* Ye shall be put in possession of that peace and happiness which the whole human race seek with incessant ardor, but which the great plurality seek too, in a wrong way, and, therefore, never find. To persuade us to re-

pair to him, to embrace his offers, and follow his example, he uses, as a most powerful argument, the easiness and pleasures of his religion—*For my yoke is easy and my burden light.*

What is proposed in the subsequent discourse, in dependance on divine aid, is to make it appear that the religion required of us is an easy and pleasant religion, full of peace and happiness.

That the religion of the gospel is an easy pleasant religion, full of peace, and most friendly to our interest, in a large view, is an important truth, worthy the attention of all of every station and character, and may be illustrated and proved by a great number of arguments from reason and scripture.

In general, virtue has charms sufficient to recommend it to the love and pursuit of all orders of men. Its beauties are such as to have found advocates in every age; who have lavished upon it the pomp of description, and spread around it the flowers of Rhetoric. Most certainly its excellencies are such, as ought to call up the attention and attract the notice of the world:—Its effects in this life are peace, and its rewards in the next surpass all conception. There is a dignity and majesty in it, which ought to create in the mind an awe, and command a reverential respect. A character formed upon the model of the gospel is the most exalted any can wear, far more exalted than the highest worldly honors can give. If any thing can recom-

mend the christian religion to the best and worthiest of the human kind, it must be a consideration of its internal excellence, and tendency to render all, who receive and practice it, both good and happy. What could have a more direct influence to make a thoughtless race consider and attend to the Christian religion, than to hear its author say—*My yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

I. In this metaphorical language, reference is undoubtedly had to the heavy burdens and hard yoke of Jewish rites and ceremonies. The Christian religion in its doctrines, duties, and institutions, is easy, therefore, compared with the dispensation under the law. *The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.* The covenant of the Jews bound them to many servile, expensive and laborious offices. Their rites and ceremonies, their sacrifices and stated journies to Jerusalem, which their males were to perform three times in the year, were, for the most part, of this kind. And those particular and positive laws, which related to their civil state, and were interwoven with their religion, were grievous and encumbering. And, indeed, the whole frame of the Jewish ritual, was as the apostle calls it, *a yoke of bondage, which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear.* In the religion of the gospel, all this load of ceremonies is no more. We have no such yoke of bondage, no such burden of rites laid upon our neck. We have no such lengthy journies to go, in order to attend upon, and enjoy the solemnities of public

worship. We have no victims to bring to the altar; no beasts are to bleed; no costly sacrifices have we to offer; no laborious and fatiguing offices to perform. We are not to come before the Lord with burnt-offerings—with calves of a year old—with thousands of rams, or rivers of oil—easily may we attend upon the service of the sanctuary; and, in every place where the people of God convene for his worship, from upright motives, they have grounds to hope for his favorable presence, divine assistance and approbation. Two ritual institutions only, baptism and the eucharist, are enjoined in the gospel, both of which, instead of having any thing in them dark and burdensome, are so plain, spiritual and significant, as to be very subservient to the power of real religion, and purposes of fervent piety. How different the Christian from the Jewish dispensation! The one is dark and enigmatical, and the other simple and plain. The one abounds with various rites, the nature and design of which are not always readily seen or investigated; the other is all light and liberty. As the splendor of the meridian sun exceeds the feeble and reflected light of the moon, so does the religion of the gospel that of the law, the yoke of Christ that of Moses. It is not only more plain in its principles, and spiritual in its duties, but more rational. The religion of nature hath received its last improvements, and moral obligations are carried to their utmost extent, under the gospel dispensation. Whatever it bids us do, or

requires us not to do, is adapted to our reason and conscience. There is no need of a long train of reasoning to convince us of the fitness, excellence, and tendency of the precepts of our Lord, or the importance of cordially obeying them: Mankind, at large, can immediately discern all this. Every sinner, of course, who will not be reclaimed from his vices, and seek pardon through a Redeemer's atoning blood, is under a double condemnation, that of his own conscience and of God's word; and every pious and upright Christian, under all the wounds of adversity, has these two sources always open for his consolation, the approbation of his conscience, and the promised blessings of the gospel; both of which he enjoys with a fuller satisfaction and to a greater extent, than they could ever be enjoyed under the mystical and ceremonial dispensation of the Jews. That dispensation had no merit in it, but as typical: it was designed in its very frame and make, to be temporary, and for a small part of the human race, and to prefigure and prepare the way for the gospel. It was a shadow of good things to come. A new and living way is consecrated for us.

What a beauty, fitness and order are there through the whole of the religion of Jesus; through all its duties—its doctrines—its precepts—its institutions—its joys, and its promises! What a reasonableness and fitness in our duly attending its offers, and conforming our hearts and lives to its laws! How fit and suitable that we should worship,

fear, love and obey HIM, who is the fountain of glory and goodness! How infinitely right that we should receive, admire and trust in the grace of a Mediator! How fit that we should regard our fellow men with the sincerest benevolence; that our hearts should be open to, and feel the principles of justice, compassion and charity; that our transgressions, in all their number and aggravations, should be mourned over, with tears, the flowing tears of pious grief; and that all our evil courses should be utterly relinquished! These, it will be conceded, are some of the most necessary and essential duties of the gospel; and the appeal concerning their reasonableness, may be made to every candid mind. Is there not a most evident fitness in them? Do they not, at first view, recommend themselves to our consciences? Must it not be prejudice or unreasonable opposition to the gospel, that shall object against them? He who turns away from the religion of Christ, acts then most unreasonably, and is guilty of the highest incongruity. Because there is nothing which the Supreme Being requires of us, as duty, or to which the Saviour calls us, but, in its own nature, is fit and reasonable.

II. Further, Christ's yoke may be considered as easy and his burden light, as the system of piety and virtue, to which he invites mankind, is the most heavenly and spiritual.

If ever a gracious God should vouchsafe to favor the world with a revelation of his will, it is na-

tural to suppose, it would inculcate what only is heavenly and divine in its tendency. And we must have the candor to acknowledge, that the supreme aim of Christianity, is to make us, in all respects, such as we should be, pious and holy, benevolent and kind, just and sincere. It hath no other design but to make us happy—to wipe off the flowing tear from the wet cheek—to ease the anguished heart—to pour the oil of consolation into its wounds—to mitigate our woes—to remove our fears—to reconcile us to our fate—to fit us for, and finally receive us to Heaven. The very nature of Christ's religion is to illuminate the darkened mind, purify the disordered affections, raise us above a vain world, and to destroy our worst enemy, our own sinfulness. For he was revealed to destroy the works of the Devil, to subvert the empire of sin and delusion. Such a system as that of the gospel must recommend itself, by its own internal excellence; like the king's daughter, it is all glorious within, beautiful as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, fair as the moon, clear as the sun. Whose heart but must be charmed with its beauties and glories. Its worship, for example, is sublime, pure and heavenly: the heart is the altar, whence sacrifices are stately to be offered to the divine Majesty. The spirituality of gospel worship is particularly foretold by our Lord, in his conference with the Samaritan woman. *But the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father seeketh such to*

worship him. God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth. The holy prayers and pure oblations of the heart, in which the essence of gospel worship doth consist, were prefigured by the incense and unblemished sacrifices under the law.

III. The plainness of the most essential doctrines of Christ is justly to be considered, as a further evidence, that his *yoke is easy*. His religion is a plain, as well as reasonable and heavenly religion. In order to be generally useful, it must be easy to be understood. The bulk of mankind have neither leisure nor abilities to attend to a dark and abstruse system of Theology. The gospel is designed for the MANY, not for the learned FEW—for all orders of people; not for men of science and speculation only. And, though some points in it be allowed to be mysterious and hard to be comprehended, yet all the doctrines necessary to our salvation, are plain and level to the weakest capacities. An honest heart is the principal requisite to a right understanding of the most necessary truths. He who sincerely wishes to know and do his duty, is in no hazard of missing the way to eternal life, while he diligently consults the sacred pages, and to an upright enquiry after truth and duty, joins constant prayer. *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.—He that is of God, heareth God's words: ye, therefore, bear them not, because ye are not of God.—* Who among us but knows the great out-lines of

duty? Even children, that are well educated, know that they ought to love, fear, and pray to their father, who is in Heaven, to receive and acknowledge the Redeemer—to do good to others—and to rule their own evil passions. In short, the practical part of religion is so plain, that none can mistake it, but they who resolve to pervert it. If we take into the account, the discoveries which Christ made concerning a future world, we shall be still more convinced that his *yoke is easy*. He has opened to us the ruin of our nature by the apostacy—the method of our recovery—the way in which we are to be sanctified and pardoned, viz. by the influences of his spirit, and atonement of his blood: He has brought life and immortality to light; the wisest of the Pagan Philosophers but faintly hoped and guessed after another state of being, but to Christians, their Lord has made the most particular discoveries of a future state; given the most affecting descriptions of the happiness of the righteous, and the miseries of the wicked, after death. The rewards and punishments of the other world are exhibited to us, under the most strong and lively images, and the way how to obtain the one, and avoid the other, pointed out to us, in the clearest manner. Let the candid and unbiassed mind, for a moment, impartially survey the very genius and make of the religion of Jesus. It is a most mild and humane, a most benevolent and gentle system, free from fanaticism and superstition, unnatural rigors and useles ceremonies. *The wisdom*

that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and hypocrisy. It is the very genius of this divine Philosophy, to diffuse over the world tenderness and humility, love and peace, harmony and good order, to soften and humanize the soul, to create within us sublime hopes, and to qualify us for perfect felicity. Every social, every friendly, every noble sentiment is encouraged, all surliness, wrath, bitterness, evil-speaking, and evil passions are absolutely prohibited. There is no one law, there is no one precept, or one restriction, in the peaceful system of the gospel, but tends to universal goodness, the highest and best interest of society. What is the spirit of Christ, but a spirit of meekness, of kindness, of candor, of sympathy, of generosity, benevolence and philanthropy? *Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.* All pride, vain-glory, cruelty, revenge, and evil passions are expelled from the human breast, so far as the gospel takes place in it. A merciful and lenient, a forgiving and beneficent religion, is that which we are required to embrace. A benevolent and good, a gracious and forgiving God, would not impose upon men, any other than a religion of good-will, that should raise in us the finest feelings, expand the mind with the brightest hopes, and render us in the end happy. Accordingly, there are in Christianity, no unnecessary austerities or rigorous impositions, no cruel and bloody tenets, no harsh and severe commands. We are only required to be holy and hap-

py. God is not an austere master, as sinners are apt to think him, neither is he pleased with melancholy glooms, or superstitious horrors. Every thing that can contribute to our real good, or is friendly to our best interest, or promotive of the dignity of man, is allowed us. Supremely happy himself, and in the full enjoyment of eternity, God only-requires that we should be, in our measure, like himself, holy and happy. And if we would comply with his offers of mercy and pardon, we should have consolations here neither few nor small; and glory, honor and beatitude hereafter. What one doctrine of Christ is cruel and hard? What one duty, which he enjoins, severe and unfriendly to our best good? All he requires of us is perfectly fit and reasonable; and all things considered, more than any thing else could be, for our happiness. He is, therefore, a good master, his yoke is easy, his religion is made up of goodness and benevolence, and leads to joys inconceivable, and to rivers of immortal pleasure. And did it take place perfectly in our hearts, and in the hearts of all men, we should not need to depart from this world, for Heaven, we should find it here. Indeed all the joys of the celestial paradise, are but the product of the religion of the divine Jesus. This idea will not now be enlarged upon, for I shall soon have occasion to resume it.

IV. Those consolations which Christ hath provided for his followers, in their greatest extremity, the hour of dissolution, must not be passed over.

This is a very common argument, I am sensible, to prove *his yoke is easy and his burden light*, and it is likewise a very convincing one. Death is the scene in which we must all be actors, the great and honorable, as well as the low and unworthy. At that solemn and awful hour, the comforts of the good man may overflow, and he lift up his head with joy, because his redemption draweth nigh. Nothing is more likely to impress the mind with a sense of the worth and glory of religion, than looking forward to the moments of dissolution; and seeing how the Christian may bid adieu to terrestrial things; his peace; his joy; his composure; or his triumph. At the awful solemnities of a dying hour, the review of a life devoted to the best of all Beings, will fill the soul with rational, calm, and satisfying delight. The things of another world appear more solid and real to a dying saint, as he draws near to them, and his faith begins to turn into vision, and his hope into fruition. He now, at the point in which we view him, stands upon the confines of both worlds, in the possession of reason, and discerns, with more clearness, the vanity and emptiness of that from which he is going, and the substantial and durable happiness of that into which he is just about to enter. So that when he walks through the shady valley of death he fears no evil; and his desires are then most lively and vigorous, when he is ready to give up the ghost. The voice of nature, the voice of reason, and the voice of conscience concur, in

saying to the righteous, *that it shall be well with him.* In his last moments, he reviews his past life with pleasure, bids farewell to the world in peace, receives the awful summons with calmness, launches forth into a boundless eternity with triumphant hopes, looks upward to his God with delight, and forward to Heaven with rapture. And, when all is closed upon his view, and the curtains of death are drawn, he enters on a state of perfect rest.

V. It will only be subjoined, that Christ's *yoke is easy and his burden light*, as his religion will terminate in immortal honor. The consequence of receiving and practising his religion, in another world, will be all the bliss of Paradise, joys inconceivable, and raptures on earth unknown. On such a subject, language loses its energy. Pomp of words only debases it. I shall only ask, will then the happiness of Heaven be the result of piety and virtue here? Shall all the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus, at last, sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of God, when all shall come from the east and west, from the north and south, when all the good shall be received to glory, and the wicked burned with unquenchable fire? Will they be welcomed to those realms of eternal day, where they shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever—Where all the soul shall feel, shall be perfect bliss, and all it shall express shall be perfect praise—where all tears shall be wiped away—where perfect love shall fill every heart—and exalt-

ed Hofannas employ every tongue?—Will all this be our portion, if we take Christ's yoke upon us? Doth religion end so gloriously? Certainly then it is our highest interest, it is happiness itself. Well might our Lord say, *my yoke is easy—my burden light.*

A few passages of holy writ will now be added, to finish the argument. From one end of the sacred volume to the other, the idea of the pleasures of a virtuous temper and life is exhibited. The happiness of religion is foretold by the Prophets, promised by Christ, and recorded by the Apostles. By the Prophets it is foretold with as much clearness, and in as strong terms, as either the holiness of Christians, or the glory of their Redeemer.

Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted: for thou art the glory of their strength, and in thy favor shall their horn be exalted. For the Lord is our defence, and the holy one of Israel is our king.

In what stronger colors than these, could any person be represented, whose whole life was one continued scene of pleasure?

Again, *O how great is thy goodness, O God, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men. Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of men, thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues. Light is sown*

for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace; length of days is in her right hand, riches and honor in her left. Great peace have all they that keep thy holy law and nothing shall offend them. His commands are not grievous, and in keeping of them there is great reward. What a beautiful description of the value and worth of religion, under the name of wisdom, have we in the following passage! But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith it is not in me and the sea saith it is not in me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it neither shall it be valued with pure gold. What the Prophets foretold, with one voice, the Redeemer hath confirmed by his declarations and promises. Blessed, says he, are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of God. Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. And he said unto them, verily I say unto you, there is no man

that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake; who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life eternal. And in the text, *my yoke is easy and my burden light.* If you call his religion a yoke, it is an easy one. If you call it a burden, it is a light one.

To prove that religion is the source of the most refined happiness, many testimonies may be collected from the apostles. St. Luke, in the history of the acts of the apostles, once and again speaks of joy in the Holy-Ghost; of the peace and pleasing wonder of those who embraced the gospel.-- Thus the gaoler, we are told, *rejoiced.* The same account we find of the Ethiopian eunuch. As soon as Philip preached Jesus to him, he was baptized, and though his heaven-appointed guide was snatched from him, yet the doctrine taking place in his heart, he went on his way, it is not said, reasoning only, or deeply meditating, or the like, but *rejoicing.* Indeed we have reason to suppose that all, who heard the gospel to purpose, heard it with the same sentiments of joy. They behaved, at first, like persons quite amazed and surprized with the grace of God. And where nothing of habit or improvement could have time as yet to manifest itself, they were raised by the pure joys of the gospel, above this world, and were ready to undergo, for its defence, the greatest of all sufferings. We read also, of *rejoicing always, and of joy unspeakable and full of glory.* St. Paul comparing the Christian

life to the military, calls it *the good fight of faith*. It is, indeed, GOOD, will be found so at death, and in a future state. So much evidence is there from reason and scripture, to prove that Christ's *yoke is easy and his burden light*. If we examine either the principles or the duties—the doctrines or the virtues—the hopes, or the institutions of Christianity, we shall find it to be full of happiness. Did it reign in all hearts, there would be nothing to destroy in all God's holy mountain. Nations would beat their *swords into plough-shears, and their spears into pruning-hooks, and would learn war no more*. The world would be full of the glory of the Lord: earth a state of peace, order and universal good. Such is the nature and tendency of the benevolence of the gospel. O benevolence! thou brightest ray of the Creator's glory! thou heavenly principle! thou sweet bond of union in all holy souls!—May our hearts feel thy divine power, thy sweet consolations!

What remains but to urge all that hear me, to embrace a religion so benevolent and mild, so glorious and full of sacred pleasures? You, in this, are only urged to what is your best good, and highest honor, to what is reasonable and fit in itself. Religion, believe me, doth not consist in wild impulses upon the soul; not in dreams and visions—not in cold and heartless observances—not in mere external conformity to the laws of God—not in rites and names—not in professions and forms, but in righteousness and truth—in meekness and good-

ness—in charity and faith—in purity of heart and piety of life—in a holy principle of action and the purest moral virtue. Against a religion of this kind, who can object? Him, who would wish to banish such a religion from the world, we are obliged to look upon as hostile to human happiness, as a foe to the highest ornament and dignity of society. By a melodious voice doth this religion call upon us all, to yield ourselves up to its government and laws. *Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men. O ye simple understand wisdom, and ye fools be ye of an understanding heart. Hear for I will speak of excellent things, and the opening of my lips shall be right things.* Where the happiness of people, their present peace and future felicity is concerned, warmth of address is allowable, is necessary. I would ask to be indulged in a short exhortation to sinners, to repair to the son of God, *whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light*, for help and hope. Be persuaded, then, to embrace the offer of pardoning goodness—taste that the Lord is gracious—give up all your objections against piety and virtue, and all your excuses for continuing any longer in unbelief and impenitence. Let not the remembrance of your sins prevent your, immediately, seeking for mercy. What! though your crimes be of the deepest dye and enormous magnitude: though innumerable as the sand on the sea shore, and aggravated by the most uncommon and horrid circumstances, yet there is no room for despair—a fountain is opened for Judah and Jerusalem to

wash in, from sin and uncleanness. Christ's blood cleanseth from all sin. He is a Redeemer most eminently fitted—a Saviour most perfectly qualified to save guilty man, the vilest not excepted.

Behold him suffering—bleeding—expiring on the cross. Pardon for lost sinners is written with pointed steel and streaming blood on his pierced hands and feet. The double flood issuing from his wounded side more than seals the dear-bought blessing. The handwriting against us is nailed to his cross, and blotted out with his precious blood. His open arms invite sinners to accept of salvation; and incircled in them, they will find a safe and delightful retreat—a real and present happiness. O sinner! on the wings of pleasing hope, fly thither. By all that is near—that is dear—that is sacred to thee, fly from eternal death—lay hold on eternal life. *Take, says Christ, my yoke upon you and learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. Amen.*



S E R M O N X X .

DEATH THE CHRISTIAN'S GAIN.

B Y

T H O M A S R E E S E . A . M .

Minister of a Presbyterian Congregation, Salem, South-Carolina.

P H I L I P . i . 21 .

To die is gain.

IT is not a very uncommon thing for pious people, and especially pious ministers who are useful in the church, to be sometimes in such a situation, that, were it left to themselves, they would be much at a loss whether to choose life or death. This appears to have been the case with the apostle Paul, when he penned the words of the text. When he considered of what great importance his presence was to the church, he desired to continue in the body: On the other hand, when he looked forward and took a view of that glory and immortality to which he was fully persuaded death would open him a passage, he was seized with an ardent desire to depart, and to be with Christ. This conflict he

expresses in the 23d and 24th verses. *For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better; nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.* Under these impressions, he comforts himself with a full assurance that, whether he lived or died, Christ would be glorified in him. *Christ, says he, in the close of verse 20th, shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or death. For to me to live, is Christ, and to die is gain.* My motive to live, is the service of Christ; he is the supreme end of my life; for his honor only, I desire to live; and to die for him, I count my greatest gain.

The single point I have in view, in discoursing from these words, is, to shew in what respects death is gain to the true Christian: And,

I. In the first place, death is gain to the Christian, because it delivers him from the remains of sin.

It is not the design of God, that the Christian should be absolutely perfect in the present life.— He hath reserved this happiness for the state beyond the grave. The relics of a corrupt nature continue in the best of men, while they sojourn here in this world. Scripture and experience both conspire to evince the truth of this. *There is no man who liveth and sinneth not. In many things we all offend. He, who saith he hath no sin, is a liar.* That man must be blind indeed, a great stranger to his own heart, and to the purity, extent, and

spirituality of God's law, who thinks himself perfectly free from all sin. Such persons plainly discover that they are imposed upon by the deceitfulness of their own hearts; and are so far from full perfection, that they have not reached even the lowest degree of it. Every good man is actuated by two different and opposite principles; a principle of sin, and a principle of grace. *The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these two are contrary the one to the other.* And though the principle of holiness predominates in every good man, he is, notwithstanding, liable to fall into sin, through the remains of the old man, which are never wholly eradicated in the present state. These two warring principles produce a continual conflict in the Christian, which lasts during life. Hence the Christian life is, in scripture, frequently compared to a fight, and a race; things which require the most strenuous efforts. *I have fought the good fight, saith the apostle Paul, I have finished my course, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of life.* Now, there is nothing which gives the true Christian such real and deep concern, such continual sorrow, as the remains of sin which dwell within him. There is nothing from which he so ardently, and uniformly desires to be delivered. These are the great burden and sorrow of his life. How does it pierce a good man to the heart, when he reflects upon his folly and ingratitude, in provoking his heavenly father, in yielding to the temptations of satan,

wounding his own conscience, and grieving the holy spirit! He deeply feels the obligations he is under to his Redeemer, and bitterly laments that he so often falls into sin, and violates the most tender and endearing ties. Hear how passionately the apostle Paul cries out under the burden of in-dwelling sin.—*O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!* Death is, therefore, great gain to the Christian, because it delivers him from that burden, of which the apostle so eminent in holiness, here complains.—After death the Christian's conflict is at an end; all his dangers are over; all his toils past. He is then freed, fully and completely freed, from all the remains of sin, which gave him so much pain and sorrow while he continued in the body. All his lusts are subdued, all his enemies conquered. He has no longer any need to toil and labor, to run and fight. Satan can no longer tempt; the world can no longer allure, nor his unruly passions hurry him into sin. His victory is decisive, his triumph complete. That the Christian will be made completely holy after death, is a plain doctrine of scripture. The apostle Paul, speaking of the saints in Heaven, calls them the *spirits of just men made perfect*. The word of God teaches us to believe, that the righteous after death will be completely happy. But this would be impossible, were they not delivered from all the remains of sin. As it is natural for them, above all other things, to desire such deliverance, should they not

obtain it, there would be a strong desire unsatisfied, which is inconsistent with perfect happiness. Besides, it is inconsistent with the perfections of God to admit creatures into Heaven who are polluted with sin. *Nothing unclean can enter there.* It is plain, then, that the Christian, at death, will be delivered from all the relics of sin, which remain in him while he sojourns here below. And, as these are the source of his greatest trouble and uneasiness in the present life, and the principal burden of his soul, death must be to him unspeakable gain.

II. Death is gain to the Christian, because it delivers him from all those natural evils and calamities, which are the consequence of sin, in the present life.

That the righteous are not exempted from the common miseries and calamities of human life, is too plain to need any proof. The righteous governor of the world, seems generally to distribute these with a promiscuous hand. *All things come alike to all, and there is no knowing good or evil by any thing that is seen under the sun.* In this world the righteous are blended with the wicked, and suffer with them. Indeed if we carefully attend to the scripture-history, and diligently observe the dispensations of providence, we shall, perhaps, find sufficient reason to conclude, that the greatest portion of suffering is commonly thrown into the cup of the righteous. Be this as it may, certain it is, that the best men in the world are sub-

ject to many evils, and often in such a situation, that they may truly say with the apostle—*If in this life only, we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.* Whilst Christians sojourn in this valley of tears, they are subject to many distressing and painful diseases. *Their bones are chastised with pain, and the multitude of their bones with strong pain. They are made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed unto them.*— Their strength and their beauty are consumed by sickness; and they are frequently brought to the gates of death. They suffer not only pain of body, but much trouble and anxiety of mind. Many are the losses and disappointments, many the afflictive and bereaving strokes to which they are liable: And they must be something more than human, and divested of the common feelings of men, not to suffer under them. They suffer in themselves, and they suffer in others by sympathy. As they have, generally, tender and compassionate hearts, they cannot but be greatly affected with the miseries and distresses of their fellow-men. The husband suffers in the wife, and the wife in the husband; the parent in the child, and the child in the parent; friend suffers in friend, and one relation in another. Add to all these evils, the grief and sorrow which arise from seeing and hearing the abominable deeds and filthy conversation of the wicked. The apostle Peter tells us, that righteous Lot vexed his soul from day to day, with the unlawful deeds and filthy conversation of the

wicked in Sodom. It cannot but give a good man great concern to see vice abounding, iniquity prevailing, impiety triumphing, and like a mighty torrent, ready to bear down all before them. The honor of the Redeemer is dear to every Christian; his kingdom and interest in the world, lie near his heart; he loves the souls of his fellow-immortals, and wishes to promote their eternal salvation. This being the temper of every true Christian, it must affect him deeply, and fill him with unspeakable sorrow, to see God provoked, his holy name blasphemed, the Redeemer dishonored, his grace despised, his mercy abused, and all religion turned into contempt and ridicule. For these things his tears flow, and his *soul weeps in secret places*. He sees thousands of precious, immortal souls, running on in the broad way which leads unerring to the abodes of death. He is fully sensible of their danger, and foresees the misery which awaits them, if they persist in their impiety and rebellion. This excites the most painful sensations, and fills him with the deepest regret.

But why should I attempt a catalogue of the various evils and calamities, to which the Christian is subject, in the present life? They are innumerable, and many of them terrible beyond all description. From all these, death will deliver him; and therefore to die, must be his gain. It puts a final period to all his afflictions and miseries, to all his sorrows and sufferings. In those blessed mansions

to which he shall be admitted after death, there will be nothing to give him any trouble or uneasiness, nothing to disturb his peace, or break his eternal repose. There he shall rest from his labors, and be freed from all distress and tribulation. In that blessed state, he shall no longer be subject to pain, sickness or disease: for there, *the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick; and the people shall be forgiven their iniquity.* The bodies of the righteous shall, at their resurrection, be purged from all the seeds of disease and dissolution, and made spiritual, incorruptible, and immortal. *This corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality, and death shall be swallowed up in victory.* These vile bodies will then be glorious bodies, and flourish in eternal health, immortal vigor, and undecaying beauty. Death makes a complete separation between the righteous and the wicked. *There the wicked cease from troubling.* They cease to persecute and oppress the righteous, to vex and grieve them by their profane conversation and impious deeds. In a word, the Christian, by death, is perfectly freed from all those evils and calamities which were introduced into the world by sin, and, therefore, to him it must be immense gain. O what a happy exchange does the poor, afflicted, persecuted Christian make, when released from his house of clay! from sickness to health, from pain to pleasure, from trouble to rest, from war to peace, from grief and sorrow to endless joy and ineffable delight! from bondage to freedom, from an earth-

ly cottage to a heavenly palace, from a howling wilderness to a blooming paradise, from a prison to a kingdom, from a cross to a crown! Welcome, thrice welcome death, the end of sorrows, and the beginning of joys!

III. Death introduces the Christian into a much more noble, excellent and happy society, than he can possibly enjoy here in this world; and on this account, is to him unspeakable gain.

After death, the Christian shall dwell with God and Christ, and be the companion of Angels, and the *spirits of just men made perfect*. In the present life, the righteous are frequently obliged to associate with the wicked, and their company and conversation cannot but be disagreeable to them. They can have no true pleasure or satisfaction in the society of loose, profane, and irreligious men. But it is their duty, and their necessary business sometimes requires them, to mingle in the assemblies of the wicked. This cannot be avoided while they are connected with them in a state of civil society. And though they always prefer the society of sober and godly men, *the excellent ones of the earth in whom is all their delight*; yet even among these, they often find such a mixture of sin or infirmity, of passion or prejudice, as renders their conversation not only imperfect, but sometimes very disagreeable. It is as true as it is lamentable, that even good men, in this world, do not always live in that peace and harmony which religion requires,

and which is necessary to their own comfort and happiness. How indeed can it be otherwise in this state of imperfection, ignorance and error? In such a state, men will always be liable to differ in their sentiments. This seldom fails to produce opposition and contradiction, which naturally tend to inflame the passions and excite animosities among weak, imperfect and sinful men. The Apostles Paul and Peter were both excellent and holy men, yet we find they did not always agree; and the contention was once so sharp between Paul and Barnabas, that they parted not on very friendly terms. And this is too often the case with great and good men; and greatly diminishes the happiness which they might otherwise enjoy from the company and conversation of each other in this world. But death will put an end to all those things which deprive us of that full satisfaction and inexpressible delight, which society is capable of affording to such creatures as we are. After death, the righteous shall be for ever separated from the wicked, and no longer obliged to associate with them; consequently, they shall be completely delivered from all that grief and vexation of spirit, of which their wickedness was the occasion. In the state beyond the grave, Christians shall be purged from all sin and imperfection of every kind; and consequently fitted both to receive and communicate the most sublime and exquisite social pleasures. Death will introduce them to the most intimate communion and *fellowship with the Father,*

and with his Son Jesus Christ. In this world, their communion with God is imperfect and interrupted; but in the world of spirits, it will be perfect and uninterrupted. There they *will no longer see through a glass darkly, but face to face.* God will no more hide his face from them, and suffer them to walk in darkness: they shall for ever dwell in his presence where *there is fulness of joy and pleasures for ever more.* All those dark clouds, which interrupted their view in the present imperfect state, shall be dissipated; and they shall behold the Deity in full unclouded splendor. There they shall converse familiarly with the Father of Spirits, the fountain of life and light, the source of perfection and felicity. *In thy light shall we see light.* Their vision is complete, their fruition full. There too they shall see, and for ever dwell with the Lord Jesus Christ, whom having not seen they loved. They shall be admitted to the most intimate communion with him who died for them, and washed them in his own precious blood. They shall sit down with him on the right hand of his Father, where he shines encircled with ineffable glory, for ever behold his mild majestic countenance, beaming with divine love and compassion, and drink in "beatitude past utterance," from his presence. They shall see him as he is, be eternally transported with his love, and *changed into the same image from glory to glory.* Then will that prayer of our Saviour be answered: *Father I will that they also whom thou hast given me be where I am, that they may behold my glory.*

But further, The Christian, after death, shall be admitted into the blessed society of Angels. Those glorious and happy spirits will be his companions. They will welcome him to the realms of light and glory; and without envy admit him to partake of their honors, and share in their felicity. The righteous shall mingle with those morning stars, shine with them, and with them shout aloud for joy. They shall hold high converse with those sons of God; and with them contemplate the wonders of redeeming love. With them they shall rejoice, and with them adore.

The spirits of just men made perfect, will also be the companions of the Christian in a future state. When he dies, he shall be taken *to the general assembly of the first-born, whose names are written in Heaven.* There, my brethren, if you *die the death of the righteous and your last end be like his,* you will not only see and converse with all those, who are now your companions in tribulation; but with all the good men, who have lived in the different ages of the world. There, in that happy country to which you will be translated by death, you shall converse with all the Patriarchs and holy men of old. There you shall be the companions of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and all the holy Prophets, of whom this world was not worthy. There you shall see the harbinger of your Redeemer, who was a burning and a shining light in this world; but who glows with an intenser flame, and shines with a brighter light in the world above. There you shall form

one society with the twelve Apostles, who shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. There you shall see Peter who denied his master, but afterwards suffered for him, raised from an ignominious cross to a bright eternal crown. There you shall behold the beloved Disciple feasting his eyes with the vision of his much loved and loving Lord. He burns with the ardor of a Seraph, and is swallowed up in the heavenly flame. There too, you shall see the apostle Paul, who of a persecutor became a preacher, enjoying the full reward of all his labors and sufferings, and confirming the truth of his assertion in the text—*To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.* He fought the good fight, he finished his course, and now a never-fading crown of glory flourishes upon his head. In those bright regions, you shall see the glorious army of martyrs, who were slain for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus, clothed in white robes, with crowns of gold upon their heads, and palms of victory in their hands. *These are they who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.* O my brethren, what unspeakable happiness must it be, to be admitted into such a society! What exquisite happiness do good and wise men enjoy, from the society of each other, even here upon earth, when they are united in the bands of friendship, and have only an imperfect similarity of tempers, dispositions, and sentiments! With what ardor do they embrace each other! How do their features lighten up, when

they meet, and their souls spring forward, as it were, to salute each other! What a feast of love and joy do their presence and discourses afford! How much happiness do they give, how much receive! How do they entertain, how do they please and instruct each other! What sweet counsel do they take together! Now, if the company and conversation of pious friends, upon earth, can afford so much delight and mutual satisfaction, how great beyond all expression must be the felicity of the blessed company above! In that happy society, an entire oneness of heart reigns. They are all united in the most perfect concord, the sweetest love and harmony. Their sentiments are all one, their affections one, their joys one. There is a perfect similarity of tempers, dispositions and inclination. That celestial flame, in which they all glow, melts and mixes their souls into an entire union. Every one shares in the felicity, and adds to it. The happiness of all is the happiness of every one, and the happiness of every one the happiness of all. This seems to be the import of our Saviour's prayer, *That they may be all one as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they may be one in us.* It is said of the primitive Christians at Jerusalem, that they were all of one heart and of one soul. But how much more close and intimate is the union of the saints in the heavenly Jerusalem, where every one loves another as himself! Historians relate, that as Alexander entered the pavilion of the mother of Darius, with Hephest-

tion his friend and favorite, she kneeled to the latter, as being the more majestic of the two; but being informed of her error, she humbly asked pardon. To whom Alexander replied, "You did not mistake mother, for this too, is Alexander." This is but a faint image of that endearing friendship and transcendent love which reigns in the hearts of the blessed in Heaven. How ravishing must be the conversation of such friends! how sweet their intercourse! With what rapture do they pour out their hearts to each other, and converse of the works and ways of God! With what delightful admiration do they recount the inestimable blessings they mutually enjoy! With what transport do they adore, with what extacy do they join, in celebrating the wonders of redeeming love! O happy company! O blessed society! may the Christian say, when shall I mingle in your assembly? When shall I be delivered from this prison of clay, burn in your flames, and join in your songs?

If Socrates, a heathen, could comfort himself before his death, with the hope that he was going to converse with Homer, Hesiod, and other heroes and sages of antiquity; should not the Christian much more rejoice at the approach of death, which translates him to the society and conversation of the blessed in Heaven? What abundant consolation should it afford, that in the state beyond the grave he will be *brought to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly of the church of the first-born, whose names are written in Heaven, and to God*

the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant?

With such bright and glorious prospects before him, how can he not reckon death immense and unspeakable gain? And how truly may he adopt the language of the apostle in the text, *To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain?*

IV. The employments of the Christian after death will be much more noble and excellent, than they are in the present life; and therefore, to die, is to him gain.

While the Christian is in his state of pilgrimage here upon earth, a great part of his time is commonly employed about things of a temporal nature. While he is in the body, it is his duty to provide for the body; and this engrosses much of his time and thoughts. This obliges him often to be engaged in matters which are very disagreeable to him, though necessary in his present circumstances. Care and anxiety about the things of the present life, too frequently break in upon him and disturb his peace. Even the small portion of his time which he devotes to the performance of religious duties, is but seldom spent in a manner entirely to his satisfaction. His best religious performances are very imperfect, and mingled with sin. The world often intrudes; sensible objects press upon him, and draw off his mind from the work in which he is engaged. His heart often wanders, and his thoughts start aside from those

important spiritual objects on which they ought to be fixed. He finds great reason to lament his coldness, deadness and formality in the worship of God. It is but seldom he feels that flow of affection, that fire of love, that life, that vigor, in the service of his God which he so earnestly desires. The praises of his redeemer often dwell upon his tongue, when he has no deep penetrating sense of his love, and feels but little of the heavenly flame in his heart. And when he looks back and reflects upon the time spent in the worship of God, he finds many deficiencies, and sees abundant cause of sorrow and regret, of shame and confusion of face. But after death, it will not be so. The whole of his time will then be employed in the immediate worship and service of God. This will be his sole work; and it will be performed in such a manner as to yield him the highest satisfaction, the most sublime pleasure. He shall no longer experience the least sin or imperfection in his duty. He shall be like a flame of fire, all activity, life and love, in the service of God. There will then be nothing to call off his mind from the divine work in which he shall be employed.—No earthly thoughts—no worldly cares—no carnal objects. He will then have all those dispositions and affections in their highest perfection, which God requires, and which are necessary for performing his work in the most perfect and acceptable manner. In Heaven the saints suffer no interruption in their sweet employment. *They stand before the throne of*

God, and worship him day and night in his temple. They cease not day nor night, crying holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty! The glorious perfections of God displayed in his works of nature and of grace, are the subject of their unceasing contemplation, and most profound admiration. They continually celebrate, and continually adore the stupendous plan of redemption, where all the divine attributes so beautifully harmonize, and shine with such unparalleled lustre. The wonders of rich, free, and sovereign grace in the salvation of sinners, the immense, unfathomable love, of a bleeding, dying, Saviour, are their eternal theme. *The angels desire to look into these things.—The rapt Seraph adores and burns;* and the glorious company of there deemed above, shall with rapture celebrate them through eternal ages. The entire union, and perfect concord of those blessed spirits, in the work of praise, greatly enhance their pleasure. Among the countless millions who compose this vast, this happy assembly, there is not one cold heart, one dissenting voice, one discordant note.

“Ten thousand thousand are their tongues,
But all their joys are one.”

The celestial flame of love, like ethereal fire, is communicated from heart to heart; the heavenly harmony catches from tongue to tongue; every heart joins with every tongue, and glory to God and the Lamb, is the united, repeated acclamation. Angelic harps and voices join the heaven-

ly concert, swell the bold and solemn note, and complete the full music of Heaven. Loud Hallelujahs crowd every song, and anthems of ceaseless praise *to him who loved us and gave himself for us*, resound through all the heavenly palaces.

O my hearers, could we only hear some faint touches of this celestial harmony, some imperfect echos of those songs which saints and angels sing, how would it inflame our desires to join in that blessed work! *Blessed are they, O Lord, who dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee.* If such are the employments of the Christian after death, so noble, so excellent, surely death must be to him exceeding gain.

We shall now conclude with a few brief inferences from the subject.

I. From what hath been said, we may see how little reason the sincere Christian has to be afraid of death. Death is indeed dreadful to the wicked. To them it is the king of terrors; it is the end of all their joys, and the beginning of sorrows. No wonder then if they recoil, and horror and amazement seize upon them at the approach of the grim tyrant. But to the righteous, this king of terrors, is transformed into a messenger of peace. He comes as a kind angel to strike off his fetters, unlock the doors of his prison, and conduct him home to his father's house. The day of his death is the day of his deliverance; the day of his birth, into a glorious, an immortal and blessed life. It

is his great pay-day, his rich harvest, when he reaps the fruit of all his labors, and is put into possession of a crown which fadeth not away, a kingdom which shall never have an end. Why then O Christians! should you shrink back at the thoughts of death, which to you is such unspeakable gain? The stroke may be rough which dashes into pieces your vessels of clay; the valley may be dark and gloomy through which you must pass; but it will soon open to you a bright and glorious prospect, and usher you into the regions of light, and life, and liberty. Why then should we linger about these mortal shores, and dread to cross the cold stream which separates us from the promised land? We have had a view of the heavenly Canaan; the blooming prospect lies before us; and shall we be backward to launch away and take possession?

“ Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood,
Stand dress'd in living green;
So to the Jews old Canaan stood,
While Jordan roll'd between.”

2. Let the Christian learn patiently to submit to the will of God, as to the time of his departure from the body.

There are Christians who sometimes appear impatient of life, and discover too much anxiety to leave this mortal stage. Tired of their confinement in a prison of clay, sinking under a load of years, and pressed with various calamities, they long for deliverance. Having, as they apprehend,

ceased to be useful here, and pointing the eye of faith to that *exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, which awaits them beyond the grave, they are solicitous to quit their present station, to depart and be with Christ. But let all such remember how much it is their duty to submit to the divine disposal, and with patience and entire resignation, wait their appointed time. God's time is the most proper time. He has wise and gracious designs, in continuing his servants here in this valley of tears; though they may not be always able to comprehend them. The reward which he has promised is free and unmerited; and the time of conferring it ought to be wholly submitted to himself. And remember for your consolation, the period is not far distant which will crown all your wishes. The days of your tribulation will soon have an end; the conflict cannot last long. You will soon rest from your labors, in the fair mansions on high, far above those storms which tossed you here on the troubled ocean of life; where your sun shall no more go down, nor your moon withdraw its light; and the days of your conflict and mourning shall for ever have an end.

3. Let us all endeavor so to live, that to die may be *our gain*. *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his*, is the language of all who believe in a future retribution. All wish to die comfortably. If then you would die the death of the righteous, you must live his life. There is nothing more absurd, more repugnant to reason

and scripture, than for men to imagine, that they may live all their days under the power and dominion of sin, serving divers lusts and passions; and at last receive the reward of the righteous. *Shall not the judge of all the earth do right, and discriminate between his friends and his enemies, between his loyal subjects and disaffected rebels? Be not deceived, my beloved brethren; God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth that shall he reap. It is the unalterable decree of the great eternal; it is the voice of reason and revelation, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord.* Let these words be deeply engraven on each of our hearts; and as we desire to be happy hereafter, let us consecrate ourselves to the service of God whilst here. Christ came into the world not to save his people in their sins; but to save them from their sins. Let us then, *denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.*

THE END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

