

DISCOURSES

J. Kellard Bruce
ON

VARIOUS POINTS

OF

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

AND

PRACTICE.

By ROBERT BRUCE, D. D.

Principal of the Western University of Pennsylvania.

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“Discourses on various points of Christian Doctrine and Practice. By Robert Bruce, D. D., Principal of the Western University of Pennsylvania.”

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INTRODUCTION.

THE object which the Author had in view in publishing these discourses, was to present, under as condensed a form as possible, several articles of divine truth, and the principal arguments by which they are supported. The present method of prosecuting an inquiry after truth being essentially different from that which was pursued in any age previously, it was supposed that the results in which our forefathers rested would not be altered by the most particular appeals which could be made to the principles of human nature, and to the voice of scripture as addressing itself to the common sense of mankind. Hence the reader will not find many minute criticisms on particular passages of scripture in these discourses; but rather an attempt to catch the impression which an intelligent reader would, in resting upon the authority of the word of God, necessarily receive on the particular subject in question. This principle it will be necessary to keep in mind, to understand the method of reasoning which on the most of the doctrinal subjects has been adopted.

In the discourses on Heb. 13:12, the view of salvation by Christ, and particularly that of faith, is the same with that which, about two hundred years ago, divines generally expressed after the following manner. "The grace of God is manifested in the second covenant, in that he freely provideth and offereth to sinners a Mediator, and life and salvation by him; and, requiring faith as the condition to interest them in him, promiseth and giveth his holy Spirit to all his elect, to work in them that faith with all other graces."—In these discourses, the definite nature of Christ's satisfaction is attempted to be placed on the pure relations of justice; and though God could not appoint a Mediator for man till man needed him, and the grace of God might be sovereignly manifested in delivering to death the just for the unjust; yet it is attempted to demonstrate, that faith is a moral duty, presupposing the original moral law concreated with man, and arising out of this moral law absolutely and necessarily whenever God set up his Son in the offer of the gospel as our Mediator. Faith is considered under two aspects, as a duty appointed, and as a grace received; and while the duty by the authority of the moral law is indispensably required, the grace

which comes from the spirit of Christ enables to perform that duty; and thus our faith, as all the celebrated reformers stated, precedes the actual pardon of our sins. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

In the discourse on John 5:18, mysterious as is the doctrine of regeneration, yet an attempt is made to penetrate as deeply as possible into the subject, on this general principle, that when scripture deviates from the common language of mankind, it is intended to present to their common sense something that has a peculiarity in it. In the most of divines which the author of these discourses has had an opportunity of consulting, beautiful metaphors and expressions are often used respecting regeneration; but while they are professing logically to discuss the subject, he could not ascertain that they communicated any very determinate views in relation to it.—I have attempted to show, that as God breathed into man the breath of life, so there is a supernatural principle of life and action breathed into the soul in the day of its creation anew.

It struck me, that by leaving out some of the applications to the doctrinal discourses, the arguments would appear more a naked whole to operate on the understanding; and especially that this would be proper with those argumentative discourses which succeed one another on the same subject. Several of these discourses are therefore presented without any particular application. It seemed not to be a practice recommended by the habits of mankind, to make every thing of one form; and therefore, though some may think that the want of an application in some of these discourses is a great deficiency, yet with many judicious people it is hoped that this will not be the case.

The Author had another reason: he was desirous to give to his subscribers, and to the public, a more extensive range of subjects than, in the volume proposed, could be done, unless the plan pursued had been adopted. Consequently there is to be found, in addition to those mentioned in the prospectus, in this volume, a discourse on the Signs of the Times, on the Holy Sabbath, on the Creation of Light, on the Training up of Children, and on the Conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch. These discourses, it is hoped, will, by the generality of readers, be considered a great addition of important subjects—executed, indeed, as the rest are, with many imperfections.

Part of this volume consists of discourses which were composed when the author was a student in divinity, and when he had much time to devote to the study of the most celebrated authors. That on the evidences of the resurrection of Christ, those on Heb. 13:12, and that on 1st John 5:18, were composed then nearly as now presented. It was shortly after he entered on the ministry that he composed the last in the volume, and that on the

Training up of Children. That on the Signs of the Times was delivered before the Associate Synod a good many years ago; and that on Brotherly Love about 1818, when there were some serious disturbances in the Associate Presbyterian Congregation of Pittsburgh. That on the Divinity of Christ was principally composed to complete the contemplated arrangement of this volume. Those on the Sabbath and on Light are newly composed.—In respect to this last, (on Light,) I am sensible many will not be much pleased with it; but others, it is hoped, will be of a different opinion; for the author thought that those immense discoveries which are made in modern science could not be supposed absolutely all incapable of being applied to the religious character of man; and he has attempted to make a slender experiment on some of the properties of light.

If there be any thing erroneous in these discourses, the Author most sincerely wishes that God would prevent any injurious consequences from following; and what is truth and just principles of conduct, he hopes God will bless, to some at least, to show that, when there are so many evidences, as in this volume, of the treasure being put in an earthen vessel, the power which enlightens and saves men is from God himself.

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DISCOURSE I.

ON THE DUTIES OF THE PREACHER AND HEARER OF THE GOSPEL.

ACTS 10:29. *I ask, therefore, for what intent ye have sent for me?**

WHEN, my brethren, an important affair occasions the meeting of parties, an explanation of the sense in which the one party understands the other, is of great utility to both. On the rise of a confederacy, from the reciprocal exigencies of those communities whose respective interests cannot be consulted but by measures which promote that of the whole, an explication of the articles of agreement and conjunct interest takes place. All are sensible that they cannot, unless they understand the views from which they are united, act so as to obtemperate the laws of their mutual obligation, and to secure the objects of their general interest. How, says the sacred penman, can two walk together except they be agreed? Every nation, and every society, in every agreement of lasting importance, most solemnly ratify their stipulations, and preserve records which contain the rules of their interchangeable duties.

This right of understanding, in affairs of mutual concern, one another's mind, obtains no less in spiritual than in secular transactions. God, the great administrator of the covenant of grace, graciously displays, on his part, the order of all his

* Preached in Pittsburgh the first Sabbath after being ordained in the Congregation.

councils and procedure, for our salvation; and the duties and exercises which, on ours, must be supported, are equally clearly revealed. In the manifestation of this grand transaction, the whole mind of God, in commands and threatenings, in doctrines and gracious promises, as they compose the dispensation of his will to us, is prominently presented; and every part of the corresponding exercises, faith, love, and obedience, by which we should receive and improve these truths of God for our salvation, is no less pointedly inculcated. Greatly does revelation illustrate the grand and endearing truth which these words sum up, "I will be to you a God, and ye shall be to me a people."

What obtains in the affairs of the world, and between the gracious and almighty God, in his dispensation of mercy, and the saints who are to improve it, the language throughout this passage of holy writ, whence we have extracted the subject of our discourse, instructs us, should obtain between the appointed ministers of the gospel, and those who send for them.

Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian band, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, had a messenger sent from God, expressly to announce to him the joyful news that his prayers and alms had come up for a memorial before God, and that he should now send to Joppa to call Simon the apostle. This apostle, at the same time, had a vision, the interpretation of which revealed to him, that, in the progress of the kingdom of Christ, the Gentiles had actually come to be fellow-heirs of the grace of God with the Jews; and that he should go down with those men whom Cornelius sent to inquire for him, though Cornelius was a Gentile. Following the dictates of the spirit of God, Peter the zealous apostle of our Lord Jesus, goes down with the men who were sent for him, doubting nothing;—and his language to this first fruit of the Gentiles is:—Therefore came I unto thee, without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask, therefore, for what intent ye have sent for me?

The accommodation of these words to our present situation is natural and inviting: and the proposition which the accommodation recommends to our illustration, is, That it is the privilege of a minister to know, from itself, for what particular purposes he has been called to the inspection of a particular part of God's church.

No doubt, my brethren, the reasons of this doctrine are presumed by you; and its illustration may, in a great measure, have been anticipated, both by you, in your solicitations as a branch of God's church for my labors, and by myself, in preferring the sound of his voice as uttered by you, to many other instances in which it was heard with an equally urgent tone, and nearly expressive claim.

With respect to the reasons, let us only apply the introductory idea to our present case, and ask, What would be the disadvantages that would necessarily follow from a misunderstanding of that connexion which is now formed—whose influences will not be bounded by time, but which will reach throughout eternity? Were you, for instance, or any part of you, to suppose that I am to circumscribe the subjects about to be chosen for your instruction, to the purity of moral duties only; that the amiableness of moral virtue, and the motives which encourage it, were to form even the principal part of my instructions, you would entertain a very erroneous notion of my intentions as a minister of the gospel. Were any of you to presume that I would certainly rise above the useful and rational principles of morality, and the enforcement of the practice founded in them; but that I would not go beyond the statement of that doctrine which affixes eternal life to the merits of our own obedience, supported and encouraged by the promises of divine assistance and acceptance, still you would have a misjudged and an imperfect view of my intention. On the other hand, did I think that you intended that I should not be careful for the preservation of all the government and discipline of the church; that I should reprove vice by the delivery of truth from the

place only where I now stand, and not by that authority which ecclesiastical judicatories exercise; would not I have a very different view of your mind from what is the true state of your expectations?

What I intend, then, in the further illustration of this subject is, first, To enumerate and define to you the ends for which I understand you to have sent for me; secondly, To give you some directions upon the view which I have of your invitation, in regard to the exercises which, on your part, originate from the connexion which is now formed; and, thirdly, To apply these respective views.

I do not presume any of you so ignorant of the end of a gospel-ministry, as to suppose that any one, in this assembly, or any whose voice may have co-operated with it, could have wished that solemn connexion, which has now taken place, to be formed, from other motives than what lead to a design of promoting the welfare of the church of Christ, and also the interests of religion in your own hearts. There may be some within the horizon of the visible church whose minds are so woefully beclouded, that they will desire the privileges of God's ordinances, merely that they may have the opportunity of maintaining the appearance of a religious character among men: that on the Sabbath day they may spend an hour in that place and society, that will throw a veil of sanctity over their persons, and give their names, when they stand candidates for the business or offices of mankind, a savor of sweetness in the christian community. And there may be some who will desire these ordinances administered by a particular individual, from motives which are not more estimable. But, my brethren, I am persuaded better things of you. I will not entertain the belief that a part of God's church would have chosen me a minister of the gospel, from such unworthy views: and I hope that if any has done so, the necessity of enlarging upon the unadvised procedure at present, will be superseded, by the the divine blessing on future administrations, which shall be, if Jehovah assist, as

far as possible from countenancing such mean views of religion and of the ordinances of the gospel. Passing over the considerations, then, which, though too prevalent and influential in these hypocritical and infidel times, we are unwilling even for a moment to believe, to form the least part, or to modify in the smallest degree, the least feature of the intentions which you have had in calling me to break the bread of life amongst you; we shall specify a few of the outlines of thought, which some may be apt to misunderstand, but which, however, in our views, distinguish and mark the very intent of the invitation which you have sent me.

I remark, then, first, that I believe I am sent for to reprove and discountenance error. The preservation of truth in the church is a duty of primary obligation, whether we consider its relation to the present's welfare, or its inestimable utility to the generations that are to succeed. Error springs from the limited views of mankind, has no foundation in the general order of the universe, and will never in itself, by the God of perfection and truth, be made subservient to an useful purpose. Truth in the moral, is correspondent to order in the natural arrangement of things: and as the perfection, and indeed character of the material universe, arise from the harmony of its exquisite relations, so in the moral world, truth hath all its foundation in the qualities and relations of moral and intellectual beings: and error must, in the latter case, be analogous to it, and equally pernicious with disorder in the former. As soon may we think to behold the darkness of night serve the purposes of day; as soon may we think to behold our world leaving its orbit, and forgetting its duty of summer and winter, of seed-time and harvest, and thus contributing more than ever to the felicity and comfort of the millions of its inhabitants; as soon may we think to see all the stars of night blotted out to give us, by the void abyss of ether, an amazing idea of the wisdom and glory of their Creator, as we can expect, that error will promote an useful design, or fail to mar the harmony and order of truth.

If error, however, be of this baneful tendency, with what exertions should it be opposed and discountenanced, by the ministers of the gospel, whose office is appointed the shield of immortal souls, and the watchful defence against every arrow of destruction? Even the smallest growth of error should be exposed and broken down, with that zeal, with which the careful householder would endeavor to extinguish the small unfavorable spark of fire, which threatens to break out immediately into a devouring flame. For, says our Saviour, speaking of this subject, a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. Some are of opinion that a teacher of truth may permit, without injury to the cause of religion, veniable mistakes, as they term them, to be professed and maintained at pleasure; but our conceptions are, that whilst the servant of the Lord, as Paul exhorts his son Timothy, is not to strive, but to be gentle to all men, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, he is not to fail, in this meek spirit, to expostulate with every one who, under his care, has embraced and propagates the most plausible, and apparently least hurtful error. This minister of the gospel may be mistaken in many instances himself, and may be hesitating in many more; but whilst he attends to his duty in seeking that the Lord would make darkness light before him, and crooked things straight, he must not neglect to hold fast what he hath already. On the supposition that erroneous tenets were not, in meekness indeed, and in a consistency with the character of the messenger of peace, to be opposed and suppressed, what, considering the noxious tendencies of error and its opposition to the order of truth, would be the consequences to which it might ultimately lead? This destructive pestilence, appearing in its inimical operations to the majesty of truth, like an imperceptible deadly seed of a malignant fever, might first work, according to that unhappy quality of it, which our Saviour hath exemplified by the little leaven which leaveneth the whole lump, till it would destroy the whole soul in which it originated; then spread in the atmosphere of conversation and discourse

among his associates; then widen with their connexions and relations to other men, till the error darkened an extensive region, and the following generation of mankind had the poison of death put into their cup, from their fathers, instead of the waters of life. What father would thus give the stone that hath no nourishment to his children, asking the bread of life? What guardian of the interests of a people would thus bequeath to them a scorpion, as they, in extensive nations and communities, prayed for their rightful provisions.—On the administrators of truth there are, from the honor of the majesty of rectitude itself, from the relation which their office bears to the welfare of the souls of those to whom their instructions are tendered, from the necessity of transmitting to future generations the truths which Providence has entrusted to their protection, and from the consideration of the increasing contaminations of error, obligations to watch against every appearance of it, and to endeavor to eradicate every scion of it, threatening to strike its roots deeper and to gather strength in the erring human mind. I know, times are foretold to arrive, when men will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lust shall heap up to themselves teachers having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables; but as the same inspired writer adds, we must watch in all things; endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of our ministry.

I observe, secondly, That I believe I am sent for to declare to you the doctrine of salvation with plainness and precision. We find, in the perusal of some authors, an indecision of opinion even on the most momentous and prominent topics in the system of religion. A timidity of giving offence to particular persons, or a carelessness about precision in the doctrinal department of godliness, has led some men to blend into one promiscuous confusion the most distinct views in theology. That doctrine which appends eternal life to the terms of our faith, and the merits of our sincere endeavors, has been so pal-

liated with excuses, and mended by favorable constructions, that, using similar accommodating explanations with the doctrine of salvation by free grace, they have concluded, that the one is very nearly allied to the other, and may, according to the choice of different persons, be received for it. But this is that indistinct sound which the apostle supposes may be given, and respecting which he asks, Who can by it prepare himself for the battle? And even things without life, says he, giving sound, whether pipe, or harp, except they give a distinction in the sound, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? for if the trumpet give an uncertain sound who shall prepare himself to the battle? 1 Cor. 16: 7, 8.

We have already remarked that truth springs from the fountain of unalterable rectitude; and it may now be added, that though its light issues in innumerable rays, these are all in straight lines, and they will not, in a single instance, form an accommodating winding throughout the whole region which they illuminate. Sooner may we think to see pure oil mix with water and incorporate with its substance, than we can expect to perceive truth descending to mix for useful purposes with error. That ingenuity which shines so brilliantly in the explanatory and adjusting compositions of those refining geniuses, who trim along between the borders of evangelical and legal doctrine, so artfully, and so pleasingly to many, may be displayed a thousand times more brightly; but still all the exertions which could be made, and all the coloring which ambiguous language could impose to beguile, would not, in the least, really elevate the baseness of the one to the first-born excellence of the other. Truth is like ancient Jerusalem, established on a rock; and all those who would worship acceptably under its sanctuary, and by its light, must, from every quarter, go up to the temple where this shekinah, this divine brightness itself shines. To the law and to the testimony; if ye speak not according to it, it is because there is no light in you.

If truth voluntarily recognizes no accommodating sympathies, the necessity of adhering to it without deviation is more apparent still, from the consideration that it is often involuntarily pressed into relations and services where it loses its character and usefulness. You know two armies may contain many equally choice spirits, dressed in the same uniform, and accoutred with the same weapons; but that one alone is reckoned under complete array, that has its banners displayed, and whose attitude looks to the great object of all their movements and operations. In that view of doctrine, then, which would make two varying systems nearly meet and embrace one another, there may be a great many important truths detailed by the author of such a scheme, and, independently of their present relations, they may be pearls of inestimable value; but as they stand obedient and subservient ministers to his system of disorder and vanity, to which his prejudice or ignorance is bending all the materials which his power can arrange, these bright and lively appearances lose their true character, and receive justly no other designation than what his tyranny and control over them impose.—Yes, not only is plainness and precision in the preaching of the gospel indispensable from the inflexibility of truth; but this is equally necessary, because, where many truths are posted, and while they abstractedly maintain their true character, the assemblage and attitude of them present them as disorder and error. Were, therefore, the practice of the ministry of the word, which is now enlisted into your most solemn service and sworn by the oath of its ordination to faithfulness amongst you, to neglect to lead you to the truth where she stands and ought to be viewed alone in her separate existence; were I not to tear from their unnatural stations the truths that have been artfully blended into systems of error, and exposing their coverings, show you the precious jewels in their native worth and brightness; and moreover endeavor to arrange them according to their respective places in the great casket of heavenly doctrine, would not you declare that I am

breaking engagements with you, and that I could not escape the vengeance of the Lord? You know it is written, He that hath a dream let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word let him speak my word faithfully: for what is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord? It is truth, truth elevated above collusion; truth torn from the bosoms of artifice and false opinions; and presented, as far as can be, in all the grace and majesty of her various members, that the minister of the gospel should endeavor to preach, how disagreeable soever some of its parts to prejudiced and misinformed minds may be. You justly expect, that by patience and study, by prayer and meditation, I am to endeavor to buy the possession of the truth; and then never carelessly to barter it for falsehood, or sell it for the specious appearances of error.

I observe, thirdly, That I believe I am sent for to declare the whole truth unto you. Shun not, saith the apostle, to declare the whole counsel of God. Some men have hesitated about the propriety of preaching many truths that are clearly revealed, and acknowledged to be expressly taught in the volume of inspiration. They doubt the safety of declaring to men, what God himself hath declared, and what he hath made it their duty to know and believe.

Remembering, however, that abstruse and mysterious subjects must be treated with caution, and mysteries themselves handled with that touch of reverence, which will pay a respect to the secrets which they infold, without the impiety of daring to disclose them, we hold, that it is the duty of a gospel ministry to bring every subject, which is contained within the comprehension of revelation, into that series of instructions which may edify the church of Christ. Is there any doctrine taught in inspiration which will not be for the benefit of those who are acquainted with it; either in giving them a knowledge of the glorious character of Jehovah, or in directing their homage, or their practice in the world, or in enabling them to refute the cavils and sophistry of those who may attack the principles

of their belief? A clear, candid, and scriptural statement of the most abstruse points of religion, has, from the consideration that they are, like the inexplicable parts of nature, what contain most of the divinity within them, a tendency to give us the most august view of God's revealed character; and if they are truths, this is the only way by which the minds of those who profess their belief of them, can, in these instances which will be most readily attacked, be qualified to give a reason of the hope that is in them.

If, for instance, the propriety of stating cautiously the doctrine of the divine purposes,—particularly as they respect the actions and fixed condition of God's rational and dependent creatures,—were bitterly denied, what degradation to the divine prescience, which can foresee events as absolutely certain only, would ensue, and what a baseless fabric is the whole building of evangelical truth thus left in the mind of every hearer of the gospel? The doctrines of revelation are, indeed, in many instances, deep waters in which the sacred student will have to wade with great hazard of endangering the stability and steadfastness of his step; yea, in many instances, he must halt in his preparations, and with a hand lifted up to heaven, put forward his foot with the deep caution of review after review amidst the sea of his subject, which is like to overwhelm his thoughts; but still he must not cease to go backward and forward to find out the mind of the Lord, and what of divine knowledge is discovered to himself, is not given unto him only, but to them who hear the word at his mouth. The treasure of truth, you know, it is said, is put into an earthen vessel, that the power thereof may appear not to be of man, but of God; and its ministry, as Paul adds, must say, we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. There may be some precepts, the difficulty to show to the satisfaction of some minds the reasonableness of which, would be no less a dis-

suasive from touching upon the subject, than the groundless offence which, by the thoughtless, may be taken at the attempt to elucidate the subject of their dislike; there may be some threatenings, the harshness of whose denunciation creates the cold sweat of appalement; there may be some truths of the gospel at which the impious will spurn, and to which their opponents will start a thousand plausible and puzzling objections; there may be some promises, which the believer may be anxious to hear presented in their proper connexions, and the hand of the speaker unable to present them, without the utmost pains and solicitous preparation, in such relations; there may be some delicate characters to draw, where a blot even from an unskilful pencil, would wound a saint of the living God; and there may be some nice distinctions to form, where an error on the one side, or the other, would be either bartering the precious truths of Jehovah for the errors and vices of men, or giving the latter a preference to the former:—But still, it must be remembered, that the law and gospel of Christ must be preached; that the character of the saint, and of the sinner, must be drawn, and that not a flattering error, though it should adhere to it, like alloy to the precious metals, but which must be separated from truth. For all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to all good works. 1 Tim. 3: 16, 17.

Behold, my brethren, from the observations already made, what important duties draw daily upon the stock of time, industry, and faithfulness of him, whom you have called to the inspection over you:—and permit it now to be added, as a consideration enhancing the duties of his station, that the suppression of error, the definite declaration of the truth, and the entire presentment of it, must always be gone through, with that genius and spirit, which, whilst it is

hoped that your minds will be daily advancing in the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, will yet create nothing of that uncharitable bigotry and aptitude to separation and schism, which operate so prevalently in our day, and into an excuse for which an unguarded practice on the foregoing principles might be so apt to inflame the unwary. I have enumerated and endeavored to illustrate the upright rules which ought to guide a teacher of immortal souls, and a steward of the mysteries of God; but this has been done as I viewed myself merely as an ambassador, with the messages of Jesus in my ministrations as the blessings of the gospel to be bestowed upon your immortal spirits. And the law of that charity which, in this militant and imperfect state of Zion, must move under some degree of both "mixture and error," with respect to christian fellowship, "even in the purest churches," founds a distinct and arduous branch of duty, which, I own, it will be indispensable in me always to maintain. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling symbol.

But I observe, fourthly, That I believe I am sent for to discourage and reprove sin. The dispensation of the gospel addresses men on the supposition that they are sinners; and the manifestation of the whole mercy of God, in the appointment of his eternal and only begotten Son to be our mediator, and in the erection of a church upon earth, is, that sin might be effectually reproved and destroyed, and the sinner, stripped of his character, eternally saved. "For this purpose," says the apostle John, "was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." Gladly will a great many hear the sweet sound of the gospel, which promises to them life, and the forgiveness of all their trespasses, and will hear, too, with admiration and delight its doctrines explained to them, who, however, feel deeply offended when their sins are smartly reproved, and when it is threatened that, unless they make a sacrifice of their unworthy attachment to this or the

other prevalent lust or passion, they never shall experience the blessings which the gospel bestows. There are, says our Saviour, in the parable of the sower, some who receive the word with joy; but by and by when persecution or tribulation be- cause of the word ariseth, they are offended. But the station, you see, of the gospel minister, is not occupied correspondently to the original design itself of the gospel, nor, let me add, to the example of all the sacred penmen; nor to the very language which defines and points to the end of his office, unless he expose and reprove sin in every distinction of character, and under all the unamiable aspects it may assume. Already having pointed out the primary intention of that dispensation of grace under which we happily live, I direct your attention to the voice of the prophets. They proclaim the sins of the children of Israel under every variety of language, and by every similitude whose pointed reproof may expose the guilty. The iniquity of the heart, the transgression of the thoughts, and the sins of the practice, are all laid open, by the expressive language of prophets crying aloud and sparing not; showing the Lord's people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sin. This people's heart, exclaims Isaiah, is waxed gross and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed: and putting his finger to each of the gray hairs of his reprobation, Hosea awakens us: The Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land; by swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood. Indeed the prophets of the Old Testament apply to themselves and to others the same language of rebuke and exhortation which is applied to the Gentiles expressly on the subject of the gospel. Therefore, says Paul to his beloved sons Timothy, be diligent to show the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing and kingdom, preach the word, constant in season and out of season, re-

reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine. What advantage could the proclaiming of the good news of the gospel, which will instil their blessings into the heart of the penitent only, serve, if we do not prepare the way, by striking conviction into the conscience, and by opening a door of admission into the shut heart, for these momentous concerns? What minister who will permit a single violation of the divine law to entwine itself around the heart of a single member of the church under his care, without reproofing it, and stretching forth his hand to tear it off, whether the person be high or low, rich or poor, friend or foe, is not consulting this man's true interest—is not offering him the great blessing of salvation, along with the inculcation of that holiness, without which no man can see the Lord. As soon may we think to see a beautiful and stable building erected on the tottering and ragged ruins of an ancient foundation, as we can reasonably hope, that the most emphatical display of the doctrines of the gospel, will be of avail to the person whose sins call for reproof and chastisement, but which do not receive them.

Brethren, you have chosen the ministry of holiness, that through its instrumentality, you may, at last, be presented without spot, or blemish, or any such thing, before God. It must not, therefore, be taken amiss, when I state, that this minister of Jesus, if he wishes to discharge his duty, and to escape the divine vengeance, requiring, in awful punishment, the blood of the lost members of his congregation at his hand, must, without respect of persons, or without a more tender regard to feeling than an adherence to truth, reprove, with the meekness, steadfastness, and edge of scripture example, the impiety of the ungodly, the crimes of the vicious, the delinquencies of the backsliding, the rash steps of the unwary,—the follies of the young, yea, even the failures of old age. Oh thou son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore, thou shalt hear the word at my mouth and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou

shalt surely die: if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand: Nevertheless if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it, if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul.

I observe, fifthly, That I believe I am sent for to encourage and promote holiness amongst you. Subserviently to this all the preceding observations have been made. The refutation of error clears the foundation on which the building of holiness may be erected; the precise and definite view of the truth selects the proper materials; the full exhibition of it collects them all together; and the suppression of iniquity corrects every negligent and irregular hand that is engaged in laying them.

This duty of rearing you a holy nation, a peculiar people, requires a review of the truth which has been doctrinally presented, and a gathering of the lines of it into a focus that will form a vivid and living image of him from whom they originally shine. We will not disguise the duty, because of the difficulty which may be experienced in its accomplishment, of arranging revelation into the precepts of its law, the light of its doctrines, the grace of its promises, and the exemplars of its characters, so as to bring it on to your awakened attention a great practical system, which you are to put on as the garment of your salvation. I believe it my duty to announce the law in all its direction, its rewards, and its terrors, that it may erect its throne in the judgment, and sway its sceptre over the conscience;—I believe it my duty to arrange the doctrines of scripture and present them in all their excellence, that your faith may feel its foundation, and your love may be kindled at the torch of divine mercy;—I believe it my duty to proclaim the promises in all their freedom and suitableness, that whilst you live in faith and love, it may not be to yourselves, but to him who loved you and gave himself for you;—and I

believe it my duty to place you along side of the saints of revelation, that you may be excited to perseverance and comforted by their example. Oh! that I could collect these rays of divine truth; and that then the spirit of God, bearing them from the forms of ministration, would pencil them on your understanding, till you be transformed in the renewing of your minds; that he would direct this image of the eternal to look in faith, like the form of the sun from the placid stream, always to himself the primary source; that he would enliven them into that flame of love that might resemble that operating though imperceptible transcript throughout our globe, of the fountain of heat as well as of light; and that he would reflect and diffuse this illuminating and warming principle through all the fields of obedience, that being thus of the new creation of God, you may shine, when they themselves are blotted out, like the stars in the firmament, for ever and ever.

Leading him to bend all his exertions to this great and difficult object of his office, the minister of the gospel has, indeed, many powerful inducements. The momentous concerns which the office itself displays; the everlasting love of God, the atonement of his only begotten Son, the operations of the Holy Spirit, and God's authority binding all these to the duty of our ministry, are instigations which must be felt. The worth, too, of those immortal souls to which our ministrations are directed; their character as the noblest piece of divine formation on earth; the truth that as rational and reflecting agents they are capable of enduring pain or of enjoying happiness, throughout all eternity; the fact that all the dispensations of God's providence take place that circumstances may be arranged that these immortal spirits might be purified and saved; the erection of the grand fabric of the church, purely that they might be accommodated, as spiritual heirs of heaven; and the institution of a gospel ministry in this great house, merely that all the prophets and apostles, and pastors of every age, might own themselves their servants for Jesus' sake—these

all preach the necessity of encouraging and promoting holiness amongst you. And the reward which, whilst we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, is set before us—the declarations of our Saviour whilst not exclusively, yet prominently addressed to the ministers of the word: Blessed are ye when men revile you, and persecute you, and speak all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake; rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven;—they shall shine as the stars in the firmament for ever and ever;—these also clap their hands before us, and cry, go on and prosper.

But whilst all these things are felt, esteemed, and surveyed, yet, as I view my station, and again further view it, I acknowledge my fears increase in relation to the great end of it that is now under consideration. My brethren, must there be any thing more done by the minister of Christ to promote and encourage holiness than a suppression of error, a candid and full statement of truth,—a reproof of transgression, and a concentration of all these principles into a line of promising operation towards holiness? We own that the difficult task of a fair, clear, and full statement of all instructing and improving knowledge might be performed; and yet were the speaker to forget to set the first example of holiness enjoined by his instructions, far, far would this man be from promoting the hallowed end of his office. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? To purity of doctrine, and the edging of it to discern the thoughts and the intents of your hearts, I must afford that pattern which is enjoined in that peculiar precept, not to walk disorderly, but for an example to the flock.—And whilst I rejoice to own that I am called to this honorable and highly accountable station, and hope through that grace which is sufficient for me, to be enabled in some becoming measure, not to disappoint the invitation which this part of God's flock has sent me, I must intimate that you must not be discouraged from pressing forward to perfection, though you may not per-

ceive, in this militant state, in him who should always lead you, that spotless perfection which will be bestowed upon none of us, till a higher state of existence bestow it. Far be it from a minister of holiness to seek to palliate his faults which are so influential, before they take place; but the intimation may be of importance, when I reflect on the mournful fall of a David, of a Noah a preacher of righteousness, of a Job a perfect and an upright man, and of a Peter the most zealous apostle of our Lord, and consider mine own weakness for the singular and distinguished station to which I am now appointed. Oh! that these promises were fulfilled in the experience of him who is to direct you, "I will make darkness light before thee, and crooked things straight; these things will I do unto thee, and not forsake thee. Fear not, for I have called thee by my name, thou art mine; when thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."—I hope that I will be enabled, by an exhibition of the true rules and motives of it, and discrimination from every counterfeit that would imitate it, to present holiness, in its laws and principles, before you, both by an attention to them in the exercises of the pulpit, and in the offices of ecclesiastical jurisdiction:—and my warmest prayer is, that the seed which is sown may take deep root, both in your hearts and in mine own, that the connexion which is now formed in the Lord, may not be in vain, but that we may grow up as trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.

The second head of our method was, To give you some directions upon the view which I have of your invitation, in regard to the exercises, which, on your part, originate from the connexion which is now formed. When Cornelius had heard Peter's question, and told him the reason why he had sent for him, he adds, verse thirty-third, "Now, therefore, we are all here present before God, to hear all things that are command-

ed thee of God." There are no duties to be performed, nor privileges to be enjoyed, on the one hand, but which occasion obligations and correspondent exercises on the other.

On this part of our subject, I observe, first, That you are to be careful to put a proper estimate upon a gospel ministry. Let a man, says the apostle Paul, so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Not a few have formed very degrading notions of the office which clothes the minister of the gospel, and which leads him, correspondently to the expectations of the more reflecting and serious, through a variety of duties, and to a station the most important. He is frequently viewed, even in the most solemn exercises of his office, reduced to the low rank of those that relate their own opinion only, and tell the truths which they utter without the investiture of an authority that may enforce the belief and practice of them. The men who wear this character, may, in many instances, be little deserving indeed either of respect or obedience from others; yea, they may be really the gilded offscourings of all things, daily assuming more of their detested hue, reprobate silver, which, in passing through the furnace of public experience, is to be rejected and forever cast away; but the office itself, and as becomingly supported, is what presents him who bears it in the room of Christ before you, and brings in his own person the Saviour of the world, and administrator of life and death, to teach and instruct you. "Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ," says Paul, "as though Christ did beseech you by us; we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." A minister at a foreign court presents in representation, the majesty of the sovereign who has deputed him; and acts as if the whole sovereignty of that country from which he came were present, pleading and adjusting its own concerns; and the ambassadors of Christ, the great king and head of his church, walk, in all the duties of their office, an example of an equally strict and sacred representation. As an official messenger cannot be

despised without contemning the sovereignty of that power which delegated him, nor can 'ave his claims acknowledged, without doing justice to the desires and wishes of the country which all speak in him; so the messenger of Jesus, while he presents in due form, and with suitable views of his station, the intentions and will of his great sovereign, cannot be either rejected or accepted without in reference to him a choice of this alternative. He, saith our Saviour, that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me, and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.

I make these observations with the intention of preparing you by the duty of just esteem, for the execution of these other duties which, on your part, could not, in relation unto the new connexion in which this day finds us, be performed, without such a view of the character of the ministers of the sanctuary as I have presently set before you. Destitute of this correct conception of the ministerial office, you might always advance to the ordinances of grace and withdraw from them, without ever perceiving that point of authority that sanctifies and solemnizes them; and so might treat the whole ritual of the temple of the most High, with that indifference of mind and ease of conscience, with which you hear and dismiss the opinions of men, whom accident may make your companions, and who in no sense have ties of authority over you. But were the Saviour of mankind, the administrator of all things, and the judge of the world, to descend from his glorious throne in heaven, to command your obedience to that gospel which you have received for his, to lay down your duty before you, to press you forward through its various departments, would not you believe that in his commands and threatenings, his promises and exhortations, it behooved you to hear his voice, and to remember the divine instructions which it distils into your ears? It is not the arrogance of the preacher, it is not ignorance of the charter by which he holds his commission, that makes him assert, that Jesus has devolved this authority, as

his will is exhibited in a ministry of reconciliation, upon the office which this preacher supports. And I will give unto thee, saith Jesus himself, the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.—Not that the ministers of truth have a discretionary power to decide thus upon the states of men; or that they can absolutely make the application of their sentence to distinguish eternally the conditions of immortal souls; for in this sense, none can forgive sins but he who can try the heart and reins. But in their administrations of the law and doctrines of the unerring word of revelation, they can pronounce that sentence on the sinner, whose crimes clearly manifest his impenitence, which, if the grace of God alter not his state, will be an echo to his tremendous award at last, and a formal presage of it—and they can bestow that titled encouragement upon the saint, whose light shines before his conscience and before men, that, on their ministerial right to do so, will be an earnest of his blessed sentence hereafter.

We know that these words of our Saviour, “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven,” have prominently a respect unto the ambassadors of Christ, as they are a divinely selected and qualified jury to sit in courts of ecclesiastical order. Sanctified by the spirit of judgment, and crowned with the authority of the majesty of their great head, the ministers of the gospel do afford us here a most striking view of their own highly responsible, and yet authoritative representation; and show us that along the lines of their relations their upright deeds ascend to heaven and are there ratified and recorded. But these ministers of Christ, separated in their individual capacity among the societies of the faithful, also proceed in the robes of their office proclaiming the message of their great King,—he that believeth shall be saved, and

he that believeth not shall be damned. Were a blasphemer, long noted for his impiety; blackening, too, daily, in all the foul offspring of such a parent, to enter into one of these assemblies; were he to court attention by the smile of contempt, the grin of ridicule, the attitudes of mockery, and all the nameless movements that are most congenial to his heart;—were this unhappy creature ever to appear in our assembly, is there not a power to single him out, to carry to him the messages of heaven, and on the last demonstrations of his obviously hardened impenitence to pronounce “When we are gathered together,” anathema maranatha?

But I observe, secondly, That you are to be careful to meet the minister of the gospel with such suitable preparation as you may have ground to expect that his labors shall be profitable to you. It is an incorrect view of the means by which the spiritual interests of his flock are to be promoted, to hold that all the administrations of the regularly called and qualified servant of the Lord, will be successful, or even of promising influence, without an attention on your part to personal religion. The ministry of the word does not work like the chisel upon the stone, or like the hammer upon the anvil, where external operations only, produce all the desired effects; but it resembles more the labors of the husbandman who commits the seed to the earth which has many co-operating and active principles, that benignly receive and nourish, night and day, what has been entrusted to its improvement. Go view the seed which has wandered from the hand of the sower, upon stony places or the surface of the naked rock, where the powers of vegetation do not operate; and beholding how soon it withers and dies, learn hence the inefficacy of the ministry of the word without principles of operation in your minds inviting to a hopeful reception of it. There may be cast to the station of the ambassador of Jesus, an eye that at once recognizes all the marks of its spiritual authority; and there may

be lent an ear which equally readily attends to the truths which it proclaims; but unless there are the effects of a frame warmed and enlivened by the exercises of private preparation, it is not to be expected that these views and perceptions will identify themselves with our nature, and swell the dimensions of our spiritual stature. On the other hand, that ultimate power and supreme authority, which hath suited the means to the end, demolishes these perceptions, and lets them break away, baseless visions, without a wreck behind.—That seeing they may see, says God, and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand. Mark 4:12. It is highly consistent with the free offer of the gospel, and its invitations to come and buy the wine and milk of salvation without money and without price, thus to describe the christian's path of duty to you: for I am not speaking of the merciful offer of the gospel to sinners; but of the prayers and alms of them whose devotion and charity come up for a memorial before God. My object is to direct you through the secret chambers of preparation, where the christian ought to dress himself every day before he appear in the temple of the great God.

It is suspected that the momentous duties on which we have our eye, are, in general, by far too little thought of by many, when desiring that one may be appointed to break the bread of life amongst them. On you of this congregation is now particularly binding that exercise which, we are permitted to flatter ourselves, has been no less salutary in its performance in time past, than the prospect of it is, we hope, pleasing to you now—of enriching your understandings with a knowledge from themselves of the scriptures. Of the duties in which you will be conjointly engaged with your pastor, none is of simpler complexion, than what partakes of the solemn nature and relations of divine worship. In our supplications and praise, your wishes and desires, your extacies and adora-

rations, are mine, and mine yours; and our prayer and anthem ascend to the throne of him who commands us to ask for things agreeable to his will, and to sing with grace and melody in the heart. And in the preaching of the gospel, whilst I, as the ambassador of Christ, enforce and carry home to your consciences the law, spread out and place before your eye the truths of the gospel itself, and cluster them and pour on your heads the anointing of the promises; you attend to these as the law, and gospel, and promises of Christ; and this not so much with the design of receiving instruction, as of reviewing what truths are already known, of surveying their mighty importance, and of being thus warmed and enlivened by the spirit of truth. Preaching is chiefly a watering of God's vineyard, where the plants are already rooted and need only the influences of heaven, the dews and rain, to nourish and bring them forward, to perfection. Behold, then, the God of perfection accepting of our prayers and praises only when they are directed by the light of his word, and remember that, the instructive part of our exercises, the preaching of the gospel, has more of the intention of cultivating holy dispositions and of solemnizing our minds as worshippers in the temple of God, than of the communication of instruction to the understanding, and the duty of private preparation by deep researches into the word of revelation, must be acknowledged. Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they, says Christ, that testify of me. This habit advantageously cultivated will enable you to correct in your worship an incorrect sentence which at times may drop unwarily from the mouth of him who leads your devotions; for none of us are elevated above imperfections: or it may enable you to perceive what is the scriptural idea which his words would convey, were they arranged precisely in that construction, which, in some instances, he may rather aim at, than accurately form. The Bereans are placed on a high eminence in revelation, because, though immediately instructed by an inspired

apostle, they yet searched the scriptures whether these things were so.

But, my brethren, that the ordinance of a gospel ministry now enjoyed by you may have its full effect, I must direct you to an improvement of your knowledge by bowing the knee in prayer, both for yourselves and your minister, when engaged in the public ordinances of the gospel. God alone can rear the building of Zion either in the church at large, or in the hearts of her members; and our entreaties at the throne of his grace should be, “where two or three are met together in thy name, be thou in the midst of them to do them good.” Is there not a great obligation springing from their authority, and a great encouragement arising from the vast condescension which they display, as, adverting to the connexion instituted by God between means and ends, we read these commanding and authoritative words of his own—“put me in remembrance?” Were the minister of the gospel on the one hand to be left by God shorn of the blessings and assistances which, through the importunities of prayer alone, we have ground to expect, how could he appear copiously furnished with the word of truth—prepared to give each his portion in due season, and this with that perspicuity and promptitude of language which resemble the pen of the ready writer: and how could you yourselves favor the preaching of the gospel with that attentive ear which it so loudly demands, or open for its reception that understanding heart, which it will so amply fill? But recall, my brethren, to mind, the importance of the ministry of the gospel, and also your relation to it; that by this supposition of its being wrong performed, and ill received, I may awaken your consciences to a lively sense of the indispensable need of always bearing both your own case, and also mine, to the throne of him, who saith, Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. Can it be forgot that the preaching of the gospel challenges your attention to consider the choice of eternal life or death, by turning the immediate view

of your minds to the perception of that truth which, on all occasions, but particularly as dispensed from the authority which clothes the ministers of the gospel, provides a refuge for the righteous, and erects an instrument of destruction over the heads of the wicked? See, that I have set before you life and good, and death and evil: in that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply; and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away and worship other gods and serve them; I denounce unto you this day that ye shall surely perish. This consideration that the preaching of the gospel will be either the savor of life unto life, or of death unto death, taken in connexion with the fact that the preparation of the heart is from God alone, conveys to your hearing with the highest emphasis, in regard unto your pastor, the former, and in regard to both him and yourselves, the latter of these inspired exhortations.—Brethren, pray for us, that the word of God may have free course and be glorified,—Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel. Eph. 6:17,18,19.

But I observe, thirdly, That you are to be solemn and attentive in the performance of those duties which are discharged when your minister and you meet, to present yourselves in religious services before God. This observation, one should think, needs no more to prove and enforce it, than a right understanding of the condition to which our public religious ordinances exalt us. What must be the impiety of that man's conduct who either behaves disorderly in the courts of God's

worship; or who incurs the guilt of drawing near to him with the mouth and of honoring him with the lip, whilst the heart is removed far from him? A dependent will not approach his earthly superior without an attitude of respect; the superstitious will not survey the images of his veneration without the emotions of religious awe; the heathen nations cannot enter the temples of their idols without their consciences being aroused into an anticipation of that dread immortality, which their feelings, more than their judgments, predict shall take place; and the angels in heaven bow down veiling their faces with their wings as they behold the throne of the Eternal, and certainly God must be greatly feared, and had in reverence by all his saints. The compliment of visiting the house of God with the design only of countenancing the exercises which his genuine people support, by a mere appearance, and the stupid and wearisome continuance of the body in the consecrated assemblies of the faithful, without the spirit which animates and elevates them by the most joyous energies of life, is equally to be reprobated and abhorred. I hear the voice of the prophet guarding our assemblings, like the angel's flaming sword, the tree of life, in the appalling language of assertion and interrogation: "The sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrite, who among us can dwell with devouring fire, who among us can dwell with everlasting burning?"

Perhaps, indeed, some will plead as an excuse for their inattention, the lifeless and unanimated manner, as well as the flimsy and light matter, which, at times, the minister of the gospel may manifest before you. It would savor of vanity, and mark with utter ignorance of the experience of God's servants, were we, christians, to challenge your attention always, on account of the excellence of our performances. We own that the servant of the Lord often finds his work drag heavily with him in his preparations; and not rarely too, when he thinks that he has reared the fabric of his discourse in perfection, will a stone slip in the foundation, and overthrow his

hopes. The priests, the Lord's ministers mourn, saith the prophet, for their field is wasted, their land mourneth. Joel, 1:3. The Lord has to teach his servants their dependance upon him; and often from them in their ministrations, as well as from the christian in his experiences, he hideth his face and they are troubled. Oh! exclaimed the inspired Job, that it were with me as in months past, in the days when God preserved me, when his candle shone upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness.—The dew does not distil with equal copiousness every night in the season of dew, the rivers do not always flow with the same abundant stream, the fountains do not always pour forth an equal birth of waters, the fields do not bring every season the same plentiful harvest, the sea waxes and subsides again, the moon becomes sickly and black, the sun himself puts on his robes of mourning, the temple of Jehovah has been in ruins, and the Lamb himself that is in the midst of the throne in heaven, was covered by the cold hand of an accursed death, and the ministers of righteousness, in this changeable world, must experience, in some degree or other, this vicissitude of dispensation, to which all nature and the church herself are subjected. But is not the scarcity of articles the very consideration which on that occasion enhances their importance? Consider how attentive the hungry are to collect and preserve in the years of famine the equally coarse and scanty provision; consider how the thirsty soul will exult to quaff the grass-grown stream from the expiring fountain; consider how refreshing is a breath of wind in a sultry day; and consider how joyful is the sickly beam even of the rising moon to the midnight and bewildered traveller, and, we hope, we have convinced you, that it is inconsistent with your duty, to despise the day, in God's providence, of mourning to us, and of small things to you. Moreover, on this subject, I would tell you that often the day of our calamity is the time of God's opportunity, for accomplishing the most unexpected and interest-

ing ends by the small voice of the gospel. Jesus himself, who spake as never man spake, was yet less successful than any of his disciples. God is frequently not in the earthquake of the moving orator's voice, nor in the whirlwind of his discourse, by which he strikes and carries the passions in a thousand directions; but he appears, where he is least expected, in a still small unanimated voice. The treasure is often put into a weak and despised vessel, that its virtue and power may appear to be of God shining upon his ordinances, and not on man, the mere administrator of them. I thought, says Naaman, he will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper; but, says the prophet, by his messenger only, go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.

But I observe, lastly, That you are to meditate on the exercises in which we have been employed when you retire from them, and to implore the divine blessing upon them. Wearied of the burden which has hung heavy upon them during their journey through the public services of Zion, careless professors of religion go, like the ox loosed from his yoke, to feed on the pleasing pastures of amusement and recreation; of idle speculations of honor and wealth; and of aggrandizing pursuits of time; and they never review a thought that has been set before them, nor an expression of adoration in which they have joined, nor ask the divine blessing upon them. He also that received seed among thorns is he that heareth the word, and the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. Look, however, to the tender babe who is abandoned in the desert to all the rigors of winter, to the dangers which then and there walk unmolested around him, death clothed in a thousand forms; and expect to see the helpless infant reared unto the abilities of manhood amidst all these dangers, as soon as you can expect to entertain a hope, that the tender seed of the word will

live many moments, without even a dew of meditation, or of the divine blessing, amidst such worldly pursuits, pleasures, and plans, to destroy it. If you are to improve the administration of ordinances with which you are now favored you must not, immediately on your withdrawing from public worship and duties, bind up the talent that has been entrusted to you, and deposit it in the earth of forgetfulness; but you must lend it out to the improving hands of meditation and prayer. Men are so little acquainted with the great art of meditation to increase their stock of spiritual possessions, that it is difficult to lead them through its operations and to point out the many advantages to which it is subservient. Meditation on knowledge which has once entered the mind, diffuses its influences through the affections, and roots it so in the memory, that all the changes and gusts of time never can thoroughly overturn it. This takes the food which has been immediately administered, digests it, like the bile the nourishment of our animal frame; sends it in the circulations of its own reflections, like the chyle converted into blood into all the parts and cavities of the soul; and thus filling the whole intellectual system of man with enlivened views, extends and increases his stature. We all, says the apostle Paul, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the spirit of the Lord.—And ought any christian to forget that the grace of God which gratifies all that expectation that in prayer animates us, and that carries all our affections to seize upon the throne of the eternal, is the sole principle of our spiritual life. Paul may plant and Apollos water, says the apostle of the Gentiles, but God alone can give the increase. They are the benign influences of the holy spirit descending like rain upon the mown grass, and like the showers that water the earth, that quicken and invigorate the exercises of the people of God. Except the Lord do build the house they labor in vain that build it; except the Lord do keep the city the watchmen watch in vain. As soon may the

christian acquiesce in the atheistical assertion that this universe moves through all its changes and events independently of the will of its creator; as soon may he expect to see all the verdure and enamel of the spring arise, and display their vigor and beauty without light or congenial heat, as he dares plume himself upon the growth and comeliness of his virtue and holiness, without the operative and all powerful influences of God's blessing. Heirs of the grace of life, I do not miscalculate the value of your privileges, any more than I overrate the duty by which you are to open the bosom of desire to receive their invaluable communications, when I thus point out to you, as the herald of divine mercy, the mouth that is to be opened at the throne of Jehovah, and the fulness that is to enter by it. For God says, as the rain cometh down, and snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goeth out of my mouth, it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. Isaiah, 55. I will be as the dew to Israel, he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon; they that dwell under his shadow shall return, they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine, the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. Hos. 14:5—7.

My brethren, I add one remark applicable to all the observations I have made: that whilst this preparation is always to precede, this attention always to accompany, and this meditation and prayer always to follow the common administration of the ordinances of grace; they are to rise with every striking emergency, such as the dispensation of the sacraments, and not to be forgot in any of the duties of discipline, examination, or visitation. These latter will bring you before the minister of God's sanctuary, either, to be immediately in the name of Christ, approved or condemned, or to have your progress in knowledge and practice estimated, that it may be

transmitted through the instrumentality of your minister, to occupy its place in the records of Zion, and to stand there a perpetual remembrance of your character in your generation. And in proportion to the solemnity of bringing Christ under the visible symbols of his death and sacrifice, of laying him before you as wounded and bruised for your transgression, and as expiring under the hands of an accursed death to wash and cleanse you from the stain that omnipotence could not otherwise efface, you are to reflect and pray, to call upon all that is within you to be stirred up in attention; and then to reflect and pray again,—that you may thus worthily partake of the body and blood of the Lord.

Whose eyes, my brethren, are now upon us?—The observation of the wicked will spitefully descry every failure, either on your part or mine, and like an object at a distance in a foggy day, this will be magnified by the malign power of their imagination. The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. These will think that our imperfections and misimprovements afford them a triumph not only over ourselves, but even over that religion which we profess.—The eyes of the saints are likewise, though with a more friendly aspect, turned towards us. Would you wish to hear of their bowels of mercy towards us, to hear them saying, like the apostle of the gentiles, ye are our joy and crown of rejoicing; would you wish to enlist all their prayers and sympathies into your services—you must improve their privileges which will make you their brethren in Christ. Wherefore I also, says Paul, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.—Invisible angels watch over us, and mark the regularity or irregularity, the ardor or indifference, of our religious course. He maketh, it is said, his angels spirits and his ministers a flame of fire. And God who sitteth upon the circle of the

heavens and beholdeth the nations as grasshoppers; who weigheth the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance; who can toss us before the wind of his displeasure like the small dust in the balance, is an awful spectator of our character and conduct. A negligent preparation on your part or mine, a lame and sickly performance of duty by either of us, and a carelessness about what will be the consequences which may follow, may escape the inimical inspection of the wicked, the pitying observation of the righteous, the keen look, it may be, of angels; but throughout the whole exercises, in which, in years of conjunct privileges and duty, you and I may be employed, in every word that is spoken by me, and in every word that is heard by you, God's eye surveys them, and his hand marks the qualities of our exercises. The eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good.

Were your pastor left so destitute of that grace in which he trusts for all his help, as to fail obviously in all the important duties of the station to which he is exalted, what ridicule would exulting enemies throw upon us, what embittering mixture of frowns and condolence would saints pour out; what a look of indignation and compassion would those seraphim that always behold the face of our father who is in heaven, dare to bestow, and what a reproof and severe chastisement from the Lord of all must I expect! Were this supposed sin of mine to be the sin of impenitence, what, though I might escape in a great measure by unworthily purchasing the veil of hypocrisy, all the censure and reproof of men, and displeasure of pure invisible intelligences, would yet be my state, though exempt from temporal chastisements in the divine providence, at last on the great and terrible day of accounts? To an immortal being placed in a station which honors him with the duty of bringing hundreds of his immortal brethren to eternal felicity, but who has betrayed his trust, and hath neither come himself, nor done his utmost to show them the way, the judge of the universe will say, I demand the blood of the souls, whom you have left to

perish, at your hand.—In proportion unto the value of his immortal soul; in proportion unto its honor before an assembled universe at the great day of accounts; in proportion unto the eternal thrillings of joy in the general assembly and church of the first born in heaven, I am constrained, oh! my brethren, to entreat your supplications at a throne of mercy in my behalf.—How happy when carried along through an arduous course in the bosom of the prayers of the righteous which avail much! A conscience void of offence towards God and man, disregards all the persecution of the world, procures the approbation and love of men and angels, and the everlasting friendship of God himself. For they that bring many to righteousness shall shine as the stars in the firmament for ever and ever.

But heirs of God and joint heirs of Jesus Christ, is not the preaching of the gospel as trying a criterion in your ears, as it is in the mouth of him who is an ambassador to you in Christ's stead?—whether there be a respect, to the influence of your lives and behavior amongst men, to the eternal welfare of your immortal spirits among the spirits of the universe, or to your answering, on the last day of this created state of things, to the judge of the quick and of the dead? None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself,—every one of you must have an influence to assist or to deter travellers on the same road to immortality; every man's soul that is saved will be saved yet so as by fire; and that inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, is equally invaluable to both you and me.

Our prayers, my brethren, to the one God in the moments of preparation should continually be, “clothe thy priests with strength, and let thy saints shout aloud for joy:”—Our prayers to the one God in the solemnity of public adoration and worship should continually be, “stay our minds upon thyself:”—Our prayers to the one God on leaving the courts of

his Zion, should continually be, “pour out thy spirit upon thy seed and thy blessing upon thine offspring.”—Oh! God, increase us and we shall not be small, multiply us and we shall not be few.—Feed thy flock like a shepherd, gather thy lambs in thine arms, and carry them in thy bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.—Be as a wall of fire around us and a glory in the midst of us.—Where we go, do thou go, and where we lodge, do thou lodge.—Oh! Eternal Judge, may these people be my joy and crown of rejoicing, in the day when thou makest up thy jewels, and may I be as a signet engraved upon their affections, whilst I minister in thy temple amongst them, and till, we shall all appear in the New Jerusalem where all affections centre upon thyself.—Father—Son Spirit—bless—save—sanctify.—Amen.

DISCOURSE II.

ON CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

MATTH. 28:6. *He is not here, for he is risen.*

THE scriptures, my brethren, inform us that early on the morning of the first day of the week, Christ, by his own power and that of his Father, arose from lying in the sepulchre, and leaving his grave-clothes behind him ascended from the tomb,—the stone which closed its mouth being rolled away by the ministry of an angel sent from heaven. The reason that this angel was sent on such a mission, was not that Christ was unable to accomplish the object of it himself. Though he was newly risen from the cold and stiffened stretch of death; yet his members were not discomposed for any undertaking, nor was his power in the least diminished for any exertion. Yea, let me intimate, that he who said, I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again, in the act of fulfilling these words, must have called into action immediate principles of power that could effectuate any thing which the combined influence of wisdom and omnipotence could achieve. The angel was sent as the messenger of God the Father to welcome Christ from the dead; to begin the glory with which, on his finishing the work of redemption, it was promised, he should be invested; and to announce by his visible appearance from the heavenly throne, that the work of man's salvation was there accepted as fully accomplished.

In describing the manner of the resurrection of Christ, I must lead you to a circumstance meriting a particular attention, though rather a connected than an included circumstance. Whilst all I have now mentioned was carrying on at the tomb thus early in the morning, the disciples of Jesus, these our witnesses, had no knowledge of it; they had not yet arisen to visit the supposed dark and dreary abode of their former Lord and benefactor. None saw the splendid sight of the descending angel whose countenance shone like lightning, and whose raiment was white as snow; none saw the stone that shut up the tomb of the crucified Saviour, but still remaining Lord of the universe, spoiled of its seals, and heaved from its position; none saw the hope of Israel ascending from the bowels of the earth as the first fruits of that resurrection of which all are to partake, but the profligate Roman soldiers, who utterly unaccustomed to such miraculous and marvellous appearances, lost their powers of observation in a swoon of amazement. The angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat upon it; his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment was white as snow, and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.

But though the resurrection of Christ was thus secret, and by the wise providence of heaven secluded from the view and observation of the very men who were to be the witnesses of it to all ages, yet this fact does not in the least impugn the moral certainty of his resurrection. Yea, this very circumstance, no doubt, was wisely contrived, that it might contribute to disentangle our inquiries, and to finish off our belief. Had the disciples been at the tomb, some hesitation might have remained in the mind unable to repose in the full freedom of assent. The prerogatives of reason would ask: if Christ rose by his own power, if he is that mighty one which his historians affirm him to be; if his resurrection is to be the great polar star to guide through all ages the voyage of so many followers into the regions of certainty respecting his character, what

need was there to confirm jealousies that were already aroused, by assembling around it, and looking wishfully towards his tomb? Why were the disciples there at so early, and so suspicious an hour? Did they await to salute Christ from the grave? They believed not that he was to rise. They must have had a plot: it seems that they were characters determined to deceive.

Permit me, my brethren, to make one other remark as I advance in clearing the foundation on which I would lay the positive evidences which construct the fabric of undoubted certainty in the resurrection of your Redeemer. The resurrection of man from the dead, whilst the experience of every generation hears the voice of the grave, saying, it is not enough, is yet in itself an event possible; and the peculiar reasons which his historians assign, sufficiently proclaim the wisdom of early interposing, and making Jesus the first fruits of the resurrection from the dead. Are not the admirable order of the universe, the relative organization of every part, and mechanism of all animated natures, an indubitable evidence that an infinitely intelligent and omnipotent being is the author of our existence? And cannot this supreme Creator restore that connexion which binds into the unity of a person the soul and body of man, though it has been once dissolved?—And will he not do this, when his word is pledged for it; when the work of redemption calls for its reward; when a spiritual society is to be reared under the government of its own head; when the hopes of so many are to be enlivened by the certainty that their mansions in heaven are already taken possession of in their name; and when the fact itself of the resurrection is to diffuse such a light of evidence over all the system of truth to which he is to call the faith of mankind?

Being thus assured that the matter of their testimony is a thing possible, and that it might, by the cause to which it is ascribed, the mighty power of God, which is said to have wrought in Christ mightily, when he raised him from the dead,

be effected,—I must now, my brethren, challenge your attention to the positive evidences of the great doctrine we are establishing,—The credibility of the witnesses of the resurrection of Christ. And on this part of our investigation, there are four things to which I must call your attention. The first is, That we be well assured that the witnesses of Christ's resurrection were men of discernment and penetration enough to ascertain this great fact: Secondly, That we be well assured that they have clearly declared that they had these opportunities of information, and did improve them, which we presume requisite: Thirdly, That there are a sufficient number of witnesses to vouch for this great fact; and that these are all consistent in their testimony: Lastly, That the witnesses of this great fact were men of moral honesty and had no intentions to deceive.

Our first object is to show, That we have satisfactory proofs, that the witnesses of Christ's resurrection were men of discernment and penetration enough to ascertain this great fact. Many are the affairs about the nature and production of which, few men are competent judges. Their nature is too refined or intricate, or their production proceeds from too many co-operating causes, or these act too secretly before their dull curiosity, for the powers of ordinary men's observation to justify us in a reliance upon their testimony. Of this nature are all vegetable and animal bodies, in the principles on which their parts cohere, and in the mechanism by which their vegetation and life are nourished and supported. Many moral and metaphysical truths also, lie far beyond the utmost possible view which can be taken by the eye of an ordinary man. But what I must remark to you, in estimating the qualifications of the witnesses of the resurrection of Christ, is, that the subject of their observation, the point on which the reputation of these unlettered men is to rest, is none of these abstruse and difficult matters of knowledge. The resurrection of Christ was an obvious matter of fact; and the most illiterate and rude of understand-

ing, tax gatherers and fishermen, were equally capable of judging of its certainty, with the most learned and most penetrating of mankind. To be assured of any obvious matter of fact that falls under our observation, requires only that our senses be not disordered, and that we use them to ascertain it. In this way, indeed, we may not comprehend all the concomitant circumstances so well, and their relations as causes or consequences of the event; yet, where such an event takes place, so obvious to our senses, we can no more doubt of the fact itself, than we can doubt of our own existence.

I am not, my brethren, fabricating an excuse for the acknowledged simplicity, and unlettered character of the witnesses of the resurrection of Christ. These men, who, though never classed in the schools of philosophy, nor taught the arts of artificial disputation, are yet proclaimed, by their writings, to be both great and good, to be men of sound understandings, and of hearts deeply interested in the welfare of mankind, had, I aver, a plain and obvious matter of fact to ascertain and propagate. An object of sight, an object of touch, an associate in conversation, describe the palpable and prominent criteria about which the apostles of our holy religion are concerned. They were not at the sepulchre at its eventful period; and if they knew certainly of his resurrection at all, it could be only by seeing him, by conversing with him, and by touching Christ after his resurrection. Besides these, there is no other possible way which can be satisfactory to human nature, and this even after immediate revelations and miracles shall have ceased; and could there be a case in which it would be more impossible for men to be mistaken? Could they, if they used their senses and that common judgment which belongs to all men, not ascertain, beyond the possibility of a doubt, the identity of his person,—from those views their astonished and eager eyes would take of him; from that embracing and handling which an object, that awakened to the last degree the hands of curiosity, would excite; and from that conversation

which winds through all the circles of former interest and particular friendships, and places before them, that delicate field, where art must soon be ineffectual in endeavoring to impose upon genuine and unsophisticated principles of common sense? Was there no peculiarly discriminating mark in his countenance, his gait, his manner of address, his voice, or in a word, in the whole of those personal distinctions, which bring at once acquaintances, even after years of separation and feeble reminiscence, most certainly to the knowledge of their friends, to present before the disciples of Jesus, the real person of that master whose image is yet playing so vividly on every power of their mind? Are there no particular incidents, no private transactions, no pledged promises, in that great and complicated design, which, before his death, both he and they were prosecuting, for their conversation to call up and review, that from the vivid intellect of the leader and author of all their movements, touching, with perfect remembrance, all the lines of his own delicate fabric, his disciples might most certainly learn the identity of his person?—There were to be reviewed, not only the observations made before one another when the disciples were first called to enrol their names in his service; on his discourses and parables delivered generally to the multitudes, and particularly explained to themselves in the intimacies of friendship; but there was, as yet, the secret and most memorable transaction of Christ's transfiguration; and above all, the complicated, affecting, and distressing scene, through which they had all passed, that night in which Christ was apprehended by his enemies;—and could any other have started to the high and distinguished station, which the leader in all these transactions, is now supposed to occupy, and not be detected and abandoned in a few moments? Yes, christians, the particular features and appearance of his person, and the subjects of their necessary conversation with Christ, must have precluded all possibility of an impostor recommending himself to the acceptance of the disciples of Jesus, after his resurrection

is said to have taken place. It was never instanced in another case, nor is it possible to be believed in his, that one should be so like Christ in every personal peculiarity and distinction, and that this one should, in the complicated, affecting, and unfinished scheme which had been carrying on, start up before the sight of the disappointed disciples, should procure their assent to the belief of a miracle in the resurrection from the dead; and should so conduct himself afterwards, that, although he knew nothing of their plans or conversations before, he should, in no instance, deviate into mismanagement or demur in ignorance to create a suspicion; but should, with as much knowledge and discernment of all their connected interests, as their real master and leader himself could do, conduce to the establishment of their belief.

But is it suspected that they were imposed upon by the arts of an apparition. Many of the ancients believed they saw visions, and heard them speak to them. Brutus, the Roman general, believed himself warned in this manner of his fatal end. Philosophy ought to admit of supernatural appearances, if she admit of the possibility of the communication of a supernatural revelation, and particularly, if the object of this revelation be to lay open the invisible world, by bringing life and immortality to light. She cannot, indeed, admit of them if she restrict, with some modern philosophers, the Creator of nature, in all his intercourse with his intelligent creatures, to the expression of his mind by the signatures of his wisdom as they are enstamped upon the phenomena of the visible universe. The people that argue against a stream of testimony in favor of extraordinary facts, because of the perceptible uniformity in their own age of nature, forget that if a supernatural revelation be possible, it must at some time or other take place; that when its visions are descending, and taking root in our world, extraordinary phenomena must in some way or other attend them; and that, therefore, to apply to this particular period, and to the place of the earth where the inspired men reside, the

laws of providence upon other occasions, is quite unphilosophical. If a revelation be to be made by God to man, it must be at some period of his history, and may occupy a greater or a less duration according as infinite wisdom pleases; but it must be effected either by God's miraculous appearance, or voice, or impression, or by some supernatural messenger: a revelation without a miracle or a deviation from the laws of nature, is a contradiction in terms.

But that the re-appearance of our Saviour after his death, though in case of a revelation supernatural appearances must be supposed possible, was not an apparition, is clear, from these simple considerations—Because malign agency must be supposed inconsistent with the whole moral strain of the gospel, whilst benevolent power could never urge and press so upon the senses, the genius of imposture. Because, the tomb of Christ was, on the morning of the alleged resurrection, indubitably found empty, and the body of Jesus was never discovered by the Jewish rulers, nor, as it is asserted, by the disciples themselves, unless in the resuscitated person of him who bore all the personal features of their former master, and who knew all his concerns. And because, Christ was crucified, and had flesh and bones to be examined by the hands and senses of his disciples; and if they felt that he had the tangible properties of a real body, and that too on which were the expressive marks of his crucifixion, the very prints of the nails, and the wound made by the soldier's spear; they could not be mistaken, either respecting the reality, or the identity of his person. An individual might be supposed deceived by the schemes of his own fancy; but that such a number should all bring forth such an unexpected vision of joy at the same time; should see it always in the same manner in which every other one saw it; should all hear the same words pronounced by it, is to suppose such a sisterhood of imaginations as bewildered nature never could create. No, if the disciples be honest men, there is before them no apparition arising from the womb of surrounding elements, or

the disorder of human imagination, but their Saviour, the man Christ Jesus, risen from the dead.

Secondly, Have the disciples of Christ clearly declared that they had the opportunities of information, and did improve them, which we have shown necessary? And here do they not declare that on the morning of the resurrection, the sepulchre was visited by several of themselves and others, and unexpectedly found empty; that it was searched and the grave-clothes only found; and that it contained a deputation recognized as suitable to the magnitude of the occasion, an angel at the head, and another at the feet, of the position which Jesus had occupied; and who uttered the words of our text, He is not here, for he is risen? Do they not assert that Jesus himself appeared to two of them as they journeyed towards Emmaus; and entering into conversation with them revealed himself to them, till they would constrain him to abide with them, and that on this occasion he told them all things which he spake to them whilst he was with them, from the law, the psalms, and the prophets, concerning himself?—a conversation interlacing with former situations and occurrences, which, at this early stage of the report of a resurrection, bestowed the most discriminating opportunity of awakening, by certain criteria, jealousies, or of confirming belief.—Do they not further aver that he appeared to the eleven, as they were in the best condition for recognizing who he was—as they sat at meat, all composed, and in readiness, to make just observations? Do they not assert that to a part of them he showed himself afterwards; and who durst not now ask who he was—knowing, by their familiarity with him, that he was their Lord? Yea, do they not proclaim that they all accompanied him as far as Bethany, where, receiving his best blessing, they witnessed that naturally to be expected consequence of a resurrection, his ascension into heaven, by parting from them, and a cloud receiving him out of their sight?—Do they not tell us that he remained forty days on earth after his resurrection, speaking

too of those things that pertained to that kingdom of God which he had instituted?—And by consequence affording many stages of particular interrogation and of recurrence to former times—points, as already intimated, of observation that could not by men of common understanding be mistaken. I see, on one occasion, for instance, Peter standing surrounded by his companions, and I hear Jesus exciting the curiosity, and trying the faith and fortitude of Peter, by alluding to a circumstance of affecting and intricate remembrance, and repeating it again and again, as he stands an object of the highest veneration before the company,—Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me?

Yes, christians, the witnesses of the resurrection particularly assert, that Christ himself challenged their attention in the highest exercise of its powers in conversation, and also to an examination of those unerring marks, by which they could not fail to ascertain both the reality and identity of his person. He saluted them, it is said, saying peace be unto you, and in this calm and friendly disposition, he stood before them, and showed them, they say, his hands and his side. Yea, they add, that the incredulity of Thomas was overcome, before the eyes of them all, by his compliance with this affecting exhortation,—Thomas reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless but believing. In a word the disciples have clearly declared that they both had it and improved every opportunity of satisfying themselves respecting the fact of the resurrection of their own great teacher and master, who was so recently crucified;—and who, besides the usual wounds of crucifixion, presented a deep wound in his side, which had been pierced to ascertain whether a member and feature of the deceased would writhe from remains of life in the centre of the human frame.

Our third inquiry was, Is there a sufficient number of witnesses to vouch for this great fact, and are these consistent in

their testimony? In an affair of ordinary and frequent occurrence, the testimony of one man of credit and character, about any matter of fact, is sufficient to procure our assent; but where the case is such as falls seldom under observation corroborative evidence becomes necessary. If it be a matter of extraordinary occurrence, and above the course of the common operations of nature, we cannot rely on less than the concurrent testimony of severals. To rest, in such an extraordinary and plainly miraculous instance as that of the resurrection of Jesus, on the testimony of one man, however well his character in every respect for a witness might be established, would evidently, in the view of all considerate men, be to incur the imputation of credulity. In estimating its evidence, then, it is indispensably necessary for our own satisfaction, that we know that there is a sufficient number of vouchers to attest this momentous fact.—But respecting this we cannot hesitate. We have the concurrent testimony of the eleven disciples, with many others. These all saw him after his resurrection, they all conversed with him, and they all examined, or saw examined, the wounds of his crucifixion.—It is in vain to say in attenuation of this evidence, that all these have not left us a record of it. The resurrection is attested by all those who have written, both in their histories and epistolary writings, either in express language or in presupposed and granted principles and allusions; and the other witnesses are often mentioned and their names particularised; and would the writers of the New Testament have done this, had they not stated about them an irrefragable truth? Would not enemies have told them that they were fools and worse than madmen, to particularise associates whom they knew either not to have existence at all, or to be the very opposite of those witnesses they were affirming them to be? Does not this particularly appear to be the case, when we reflect that their names are all mentioned, as for a long time previous to his death attendants of Christ; attendants too, who are all reassembled after his re-

resurrection and asserted to be present at his appearances; attendants who remain associated together till they have converted thousands that are to read and examine the written assertions respecting the primary witnesses of the great fact of the resurrection; attendants, many of whom are alive, long after the writings appear, and can either confirm or refute the assertions respecting themselves? Indeed it is demonstrable that the case of the resurrection of Christ can never be rejected for want of a sufficient number of witnesses to attest it; and whilst all the writers of the New Testament relate the fact of the resurrection expressly, except James and Jude, who presuppose and allude to it, as the ground of all their exertions and writings,—The truth is, that many of these writings of the New Testament are epistles directed to particular societies or individuals; and so most incontrovertibly lead us to the origin of the New Testament scriptures, in the very age in which the facts that are related in them, took place;—and hence, the genuineness of these books, as written by those authors whose names they bear;—a circumstance, which, though not of vital importance, is yet morally certain, and never was even attempted to be denied by infidels in the first age of christianity.

Is it suspected that the historians of Jesus are embarrassed in their testimony? The scriptures, it must be observed, are supposed revealed for the use of man to the end of time; and, to make it obvious that their contents are written by different hands, it is necessary, that they present not merely a variety of style; but also that freedom, which, whilst it moves free of contradiction, manifests a liberty of choice, by each, of materials, so as to mark his production a distinct production, and worthy of a place amongst the rest. This principle must have been particularly kept in view amongst the writers of the life of Christ; since the taste of men in their own day called for all the variety that could assemble with consistency, in order to procure a perusal to contemporary histories of the same

individual; and since the jealousy of distant future ages could not be suppressed, without enlisting all the prudence that could make arrangements to scatter the appearances of contrivance and design. You ought to remember that a liberty of translating into their pages, from the great mass of materials that on the field of events lie before them, the particulars which seem to them most proper, and of dispensing with many others, is a privilege which all historians vindicate as belonging unto them. This is more especially the case with those who professedly give an abridgment only of transactions; and above all, with contemporary abridgers, who all write to be esteemed useful, and to be read. Hence a variety in the narration of the incidents of his life, and of the circumstances attending his death and resurrection, is necessarily to be anticipated in the historians of Jesus: a variety which, whilst it is disentangled, must comport with their respective desires to be perused, and esteemed, and with their obvious design of particular distinct histories, and yet all marked abbreviations. The application of some or all of these principles affords a key to open the most intricate interference among the historical accounts of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

Much has been objected by infidels to the different relations of the evangelists respecting the supernatural appearances or angels, who attended on the occasion of the resurrection, and who addressed the women that went soon after the moment at which it happened to the sepulchre, and informed them of its having taken place. Thus Matthew says, that there was one angel, that descended, and rolling back the stone, sat upon it; Mark says, that there was a young man, clothed in long white raiment, and in the tomb; Luke says, that there were in the tomb two men in shining garments; and John says, that there were two angels in the tomb, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, of the position which Jesus had occupied. But, it is evident, that both Mark and Luke suppose their appearances in human shape to spring from an unexpected and

supernatural origin; whilst Matthew and John speak of their angels as assuming particular positions which a bodily frame only can occupy. Remembering this fact, we have only further to recollect, in order to see the consistency of their variations here, that the Hebrews, when they spoke of angels appearing in human shape, indifferently called them, as in the case of their famous visit to Abraham and Lot, men or angels; and that in many instances of the mission of angels, there is a chief in the delegation, who sometimes engrosses the appellation to himself, and sometimes is only classed with his associates; as, in the same instances of Abraham and Lot's men or angels, who are again and again mentioned, in the recital of the same transactions, both in the plural and singular number. For, let me remark, there is not the shadow of an inconsistency in their accounts of the position of these angels at the time the women arrived at the sepulchre. The women, it is beyond a doubt, did not arrive till some short time after the resurrection;—a period from the descent of Matthew's angel and from his rolling back the stone and sitting upon it, more than sufficient to permit his removal into the sepulchre; where all the other historians speak of the abode of this heavenly deputation at the moment of the women's arrival.

But, my brethren, what I would particularly remark to you here is, that whilst, with all of their profession, the historians of Christ exercise a distinguishing prudence in the choice of those particulars they are to narrate respecting its concomitant circumstances, they all assert, most positively, the main point, the resurrection itself. There is the utmost freedom of heart apparent in all their declarations of this, and the utmost ardor shown to present it as the centre around which all their powers of belief are collected and gathered together. No reader of the New Testament can peruse its pages, without seeing that the alleged fact of a risen Saviour, is the call which reassembles his disciples; is the spirit which animates them unto a unity of proposed exertions; is the bond which binds them, in all

regions, with equal firmness to the same cause; is the object which inspires them to write of Jesus of Nazareth; and is the foundation on which they would build the whole of that society they are travelling so far and wide to establish.

Our fourth and last inquiry is, Are the witnesses of Christ's resurrection men of moral honesty; and in the propagation of this doctrine are they without all intentions to deceive? This is the great point now to be established. For if the resurrection is an event possible, and if it may be effected by the cause to which it is ascribed; if the disciples were competent witnesses to ascertain this great, inviting, and prominent fact; if they have declared that they both had and improved every desirable opportunity of ascertaining it, by all the unerring marks which a risen friend and master, absent part only of three days, and bearing the green wounds of crucifixion, could present; if as a cloud of contemporaneous and personal witnesses they have most unfeignedly declared that they did ascertain it;—it will follow, if they are not determined to urge an imposition upon the world, that the matter of their concurrent testimony is entitled to our belief, and the rejection of it is highly unreasonable. But how sincere, and fully persuaded of the truth of what they propagated they were, will clearly appear from the following considerations.

Had they been hypocritical impostors, how could they have given us so many excellent instructions as they have done in their writings? Had they been men of this description would they have been so careful to have their writings so replete with so many excellent moral precepts and so many pious sentiments? In this character, could they have exposed vice in so odious a light, and have been ever so watchful to drag into view and reprobate, with such a sincere countenance, the ways and motives that conduct unto it? Would such, impossible! have portrayed it in all its aggravated circumstances in their own cases? Could feigned characters have explained so clearly to us the reality of the hidden religion of the heart? Or would

they, in a word, have breathed in all their writings such a savor of genuine unpolluted holiness?

But what I have now mentioned I intend as presumptive evidence only,—I bring human nature to bear testimony, by all her possible capacities of acting, to the sincerity of the apostles of Christ. And be it remembered that all I am proving on this head, is,—That the apostles were men of moral honesty and had no intentions to deceive. My brethren, had not the apostles been thoroughly persuaded of the certainty and truth of the fact which they propagated, is it credible that such a number of them, after having been so easily dispersed by the melancholy prospect on the cross, would have all reassembled and united to propagate the greatest falsehood that ever was imposed upon the world; and that every individual of them afterwards, should, in the midst of the most discouraging difficulties and dangers, and even under the arm of death, have continued to assert, maintain and propagate this most palpable falsehood, though little honor, wealth, or prospect of promotion of any kind, could operate to purchase his perseverance? Never did it happen in another case, that even one man, far less a number of men, all at the same time, and about the same affair, were of so odd a turn of mind; so easily attached to a glaring scheme of imposture; and then so stubborn and so devoid of the common principles and feelings of humanity in his dissemination of it; so bold in the face of every enemy, so unshackled by the remonstrances of friends; so ready to tear himself from the bosoms of the most intimate relations—all to sound abroad a known and fabricated falsehood; proclaim it too, at the peril of his own reputation, at the expense of that ease which we all ultimately seek; at the risk from daily increasing persecutors of his own life, and under those sad anticipations of an awful reckoning at last which even the hypocrite must often feel.

Zoroaster, the author of the superstition of the Chaldeans, indeed, maintained some of the grossest errors he at first broach-

ed, and propagated them till the day of his death. But in this there was nothing wonderful. He had few and feeble enemies to encounter; the most exalted and powerful princes and nobles, in most of the circumjacent regions, soon appeared upon his side. As a reward of his perseverance, his ambition, his ease, his convenience, his honor, his worldly interest, had all a prospect, daily brightening too, that they were to be effectually consulted. To stand the first man in ecclesiastical matters in all the kingdoms of the east; to appoint laws and ordinances which as lights from his singular wisdom were to be received; and to behold kings, princes, and magistrates, look up to him for laws, liberty, and instruction, were the powerful motives which influenced and led forward the conduct of this ancient and admired chief of the wise men of the east.— Besides they were doctrines, not obvious facts, which this philosophical individual strove to establish; and great as his mind was, many of his errors might have beguiled him into a belief of their better foundation, either by their venerable parentage for many generations among the nations whence he imported them, or by those specimens of plausibility by which error so frequently imposes upon the greatest of mankind.

Similar things must be said of Mahomet, that false though admired prophet, among the nations which he deceived. This extraordinary man exhibits a mixture often operative though seldom so successful in human nature, of insatiable desires of glory and power, of carnal gratifications and delights, and of religious respects, on the one hand; and on the other, of that wild enthusiasm which creates to itself heavenly visions, cultivates an intercourse with them; and then devotes all time and talents in obedience to their supposed mandates. Even in some of his alterations and changes of formerly written revelations which lead the unreflecting reader of the Koran to wonder at the stubborn impudence of the Arabian impostor, there appears to be no less the operations of a heated imagination, figuring to itself heaven subduing all inconsistencies to gratify

the desires, and to supply the wants of its greatest favorite, than of that inclination which so visibly reaches forth its hand to turn an acquired exalted station to administer to the tastes and passions, it is known, can now be gratified. A vast fabric has been erected by Mahomet, but its loosely jointed parts are obviously the brood of an imagination which had been active in silence; whose images brightened daily and gathered life upon it; which had returns of those that were most congenial, till it bowed in reverence and heard their divine mandates; which led to withdraw into retirement till all was supposed delivered that was to qualify the legislator;—and which after success commanded by other powers and this confidently inspired preparation, believed alteration to succeed alteration among his former revelations, in order to reward so prosperous and highly favored a messenger of heaven.—I ascribe the success of Mahomet to other causes than to his wild enthusiasm; because, in his instance, there were many other causes that evidently operated; and are, indeed, sufficient to account for all the spirit and fury of his perseverance, although we should suppose that he, as an individual, started from motives of imposture only. The private fortune of the Arabian, previous to his assumption of the character of the prophet of God, was great and influential: His uncle, who though late in becoming a convert, yet in all dangers of the early part of his progress proclaimed himself his protector, was a great and powerful prince; and could, and did effectually protect him: And he was early inured to warfare, which, it is known, he soon applied to the propagation of his religion; and the success of which promised always to raise him, and soon did so, to the highly gratifying station of being the prince and priest of his people. Once start the son of Abdallah, and every motive that lies within his view points to perseverance, and comes in the lines that will push him forward.—The honor of the last and greatest prophet of God; the glory of the founder of a new religion; the influence which his own circumstances can procure him; the protection that his uncle

actually affords him; the spirit which the manner in which he enrols the names of proselytes inspired; all attest the known principles in human nature on which this great deceiver propagated his cause. I ask, is it possible for the common principles of human action to stop the course which is once begun, bribed, solicited, and steeled to further exertions, as both the early and more late progress of Mahomet's ambition, enthusiasm, or military renown, is perceived to be? He has great difficulties to encounter, and at length his life is threatened more than once; but by this time he is a warrior; and are not the glancing of arms, the parade of martial order, the noise of musters, the hardships of marches, the dangers of battle, what breathe, independent of all other causes, a spirit into man, which leads to its own cultivation; and when the laurels of victory have already adorned the brow, can any thing farther be needful to keep for ever the name of the first captain on the roll of danger?

But, my brethren, very different from the situations now described, were those of the continually persevering disciples of Jesus. They could not be mistaken respecting the matter they propagated—it was no doctrine formerly disputed or received amongst men, nor was it a delusion that could rise by degrees upon their religious feelings by the assistances of fancy; it was a palpable matter of fact; a matter to be turned and examined on all sides by marks that their senses and their reason could not mistake. On a doctrinal point, the greatest mind may be deceived, and a single imagination may burst into a blaze of enthusiasm by the images that court admittance into it; but in the concurrent matter of the testimony of the apostles, we have a fact only; a fact that invites to its examination their reason and their senses; and which, as it is impossible to suppose such a number transported into a trance of enthusiasm in a moment, so it presents none of that unsettledness in which imagination wanders when it loses itself in religious frenzy, but it ties down every power of their minds to a palpable object of observation only.

Is it said that they started and pursued their course from the glory of being the founders of a new religion? An individual may arise, feel his ambition, and swear undaunted perseverance from such a motive:—But could a number of men do so? Could a number of men, collected together as Christ's disciples were, and untutored as their education proclaims them to be, do so? Could they all agree to remain on the same level, and would never an one of them feel an ambition to outstrip the rest of his companions? Teeming with the vanity of imposing upon the whole world, are these men so profoundly artful that they will never show a shadow of desire to pilfer from one another a portion of that glory which is so dear to them in its divided state? If the disciples of Christ buy the renown of founders of a pure religion at the expense of present reputation, ease, and life, can it be supposed, that these men, these men thus breathing ambition only, would all seek a portion, and a small portion only, of the general stock in the firm of glory which belongs to the apostles? Do men thus peaceably trade in the world of ambition, and thus for many years, though in different circumstances and possessed of different talents, yet remain the contented and humble sharers of a general treasury? Can ambition thus content itself, when its zeal has snatched up a falsehood, for the maintenance of the truth of which, against conscience and honor, life is sacrificed, and when after long fatigue in the propagation of it, contentions arise and reproofs are administered? Ambition might fire Mahomet and other individual impostors, with a desire to shine through all difficulties and dangers, the authors of a new religion; but we think it impossible that this ambition could enter into the minds of so many men at once, and the peculiar aspiring nature of the principle not shoot forth, in their instances, into that individual and selfish aggrandizement which it assumes on every other occasion where circumstances can remonstrate so feebly against its most characteristic operations. But why do I reason in this manner? What glory or honor could possibly accrue to the undaunted and continually per-

severing disciples of Jesus? Was not the fame of Jesus great in the world before his disciples entered upon the propagation of their cause; and was it not as the servants of this renowned master that they encountered their perils and death? Jesus of Nazareth, a man mighty in word and deed, is the confessed author of all the doctrines they preached, the precepts they inculcated, and the ordinances to which they challenged an attention; and before those who then, or ever will, believe them, they are only the immediate disciples of a great teacher that obscures them, and hides them in his shade; whilst before their opponents, they are, and will ever be, the most wretched and vile of characters.—It cannot be from ambition that the disciples of Christ enrol in a common cause their names; travel through all lands, amidst all hardships and dangers; and ever with their life in their hand ready to be laid down as the only stopping place they will allow to their progress.

But is it said that the prospect of worldly protection and aggrandizement bought their singular and unwearied endeavors? No protection, no emolument, no preferment, could long in the propagation of their undertaking, be expected from the princes and great ones of the earth by those that could not expect them and did not receive them at the origin of their undertaking. The treasures of the rich and powerful never opened to the first preachers of the gospel. Where they stated all the great and influential were already exasperated against them and ready to destroy them for the very name which they proclaimed. And in all places of the world the discouraging faces of want and poverty soon presented themselves as the only supposable circumstances in which they could ever afterwards struggle with their cause. My brethren, the whole history of the disciples, and their declarations, in their epistles, before thousands in their own day, who could easily have contradicted them, instead of receiving their statements on this head as the dictates of inspiration, show us that the apostles did not act from pure principles of avarice; whilst, let me add, that instead of

being allured in any respect by the protection of the rulers and nobles of the world, they receive, wherever they show their countenances and broach their cause, scarcely any thing but contempt, insult, threatening, imprisonment, scourging, and death. Men that started from concerted measures of avarice, and schemes of applause from the governors of nations, could not, all, long have pocketed this sheer emptiness of disappointment, and all this catalogue of evils and death into the bargain.

Is it suspected that they were warmed into a forgetfulness of the main subject, by the activity, the promises and dangers of distinct and collateral pursuits? A practice of this nature it is possible to engraft on the principles of human nature. Mahomet's military glory and activity were quite sufficient, according to the laws of human action, to nourish his zeal and perseverance towards the close of his life, even on the supposition that he commenced his course from entirely different motives. But it ought to be remembered, that the disciples of Christ had none of the activity, the splendor, or renown of a hero, to gather up all reflections to the present moment and impending pressures of futurity; and to make them forget what was the primary and professed object of their undertaking. Were the disciples impostors, they kept the only thing which could have been the most galling and teasing to their feelings always before their eye; and, wonderful indeed! they never sought to taste of the least solace under this image of their hypocrisy, in all the various expedients of human contrivance.

Thus, my brethren, if the apostles were not acting in the cause they propagated as honest men, seriously convinced that what they affirmed was the truth, they all acted a part the most singular and without a parallel in the whole history of man. It proceeded from such motives as no other ever practised upon, and on these motives it was pursued with a constancy of which the most engaging and profitable inducements have seldom furnished us an example. The poor, the despised, the persecuted apostles, take up, knowingly and deliberately, a most dis-

reputable and execrated topic, the resurrection of a crucified impostor; about this they all agree at once; honor does not induce them to propagate it, wealth does not bribe them, security does not allure them; on the other side, poverty hangs upon them, imprisonments arrest them, awful deaths thin their numbers, and yet to the last they are zealous and unshaken. Hence, christians, I am forced to allow, that to have thus pursued such a conduct, as supposing them disingenuous they must have done, would have been to counteract, in their instances, in the most violent manner, and for a long tract of time, the constituent principles of action in human nature—on which mankind in all ages have judged that men are to act, and which they have never been known in a single instance so far to pervert.

That, however, they were so far perverted by the apostles of our holy religion I would now demonstrate impossible, by an appeal to the principles of human nature in every man's own breast. Look inwards, my brethren, and examine and feel, if it be possible for human nature so far to divest herself of her common desires, her rooted inclinations, and her ruling propensities? Can you believe that the apostles, plain and simple fishermen so lately, are now these strange monsters which a supposition of design and imposture so preeminently proclaim them to be? Where truth is concerned, indeed, and conscience is about to be injured, there are often surprising and in all other circumstances incredible heroism and steadfastness displayed by the human mind in encountering and overcoming difficulties and dangers of every kind. A sense of duty braces and fortifies the mind; and suppresses the rising bent of natural inclination, fear, and self-love; and thus will keep on the arena the wrestler, whatever enemies he has to engage, and whatever wounds he may receive while life and strength remain. But that independent of this principle, yea, in direct opposition to it, under the uneasiness of a guilty conscience, a number of common men, all as already remarked, at the same time, and

about the same affair, should, together with this burden of a mind inwardly dissatisfied with their cause, without any known or assignable operating motive, encounter, during years, every hideous form of danger, should see their fellows for the same cause dismissed from the abodes of light, and dismissed by the most disgraceful and excruciating torments; should be in prisons and under scourges themselves, and yet no one of them, during fifty or sixty years, should seem to hesitate even in the prosecution of their undertaking; but should, on the tide of years, wax bolder and bolder, and proclaim more zealously their persecuted truth; should swear to it at his own block and on his own cross; should, with his last breath, obtest the world to believe him, and even to die thus for the great truth the world must receive.—That a number of men, I say, should thus start, and thus for ever act, passes all the bounds of credibility with any reasonable man. Will any bold champions of the infidel world assume any false tenets they please, they may have the most delightful and specious, and let them go propagate them through the nations far and wide; under the scorn and contempt, till the termination of their mortal career, of the virtuous rulers of their own country; a pestiferous nuisance by their unheard of novelties in the eyes of the learned and great, in all places of the earth; at the expense of every convenience, at the combating of so many dangers, at the loss of many of their own lives, at the daily peril of them all, and then returning let the remainder tell us, that it is possible for human nature to perform such an incredible and tragical scene as they feign the witnesses of the resurrection of Christ to have done? In the meantime, we pronounce that their stout hearts will fail them, and that notwithstanding they practise on the principles of emulation, yet, in their instance, human nature will declare that she is unable for such a soul-aborrent undertaking.

My brethren, almost all infidels attack the honesty of the apostles. They seem willing to grant that the fact of the rapid spread of the gospel in the first age of christianity is evi-

dence that there were a sufficient number of men proclaiming it; and they can with no steadfastness assert that the disciples could not most undoubtedly ascertain whether Christ, who had been absent from them only part of three days, rose from the dead.—But the determined deceit and hardihood of imposture of the apostles, they think, introduced that mighty revolution of religious sentiment into the world, which took place eighteen hundred years ago.

But I must urge this view of the subject which we have been taking. Could, oh! infidels, so many men as were employed obviously from the very commencement in propagating the resurrection of Christ, have been enlisted, by their own voluntary choice, into the ranks of the propagation of a known and fabricated falsehood? If there can be in Asia, Europe, Africa, or America, so many, savage or refined, learned or unlearned, collected together to think seriously even of propagating among the nations, a known fabrication, then, I will venture, oh! enemies of our heavenly born hopes, to stipulate for the christian world that they will renounce their faith. And I will venture upon another proposal. Supposing so many men to start in any manner whatsoever which exhibits the fact, if each and all of them, for years, wear countenances of sincerity, speak the very feelings of the heart, and die under the robes of their solemn mockery, then we shall permit these competitors of the apostles to extinguish that star of immortal life which the resurrection of Christ has brought over our world, and to bury in the dust those sublime anticipations which our fashioning like to his glorious body begets.—But till this takes place, we hold, my christian brethren, that the principles of human nature, in all ages, and under all climes, is bearing silent testimony, solid as the foundations of the earth, and unextinguishable as is the light of the sun, to the character of the witnesses of Christ's resurrection, and to the divine cause in which they were engaged.

A word more, my brethren. About any matter of fact of importance, all the connected circumstances have a powerful influence in regulating and confirming our assent. But as connected with every other affair there is no instance in which they conduce so much to the establishment of the main point as in that of the resurrection of Christ. Could more suitable and worthy ends be proposed to be attained by an event, or could they be better proportioned to its importance, than those which are proposed to be attained by, and are set forth as the equitable reasons of this great occurrence? The redemption of the world, and the government of the redeemed society by him who hath established it, are the dignified and justly proportioned ends, proclaimed to be attained by the death, and miraculous resurrection from the dead of man's mediator.

Do we attend to the circumstances amidst which this event took place? How could Jesus be absent from the tomb whilst soldiers were standing over it to prevent the felonious endeavors of former friends,—in any other way than what we have related? After the affair was over they might easily adopt any excuse for their cowardice or inattention, which their own ingenuity, or the craft of others might suggest. But are they not driven to a most miserable shift, though no doubt they adopted the most plausible, to give their story the least appearance of coloring? The best that they can say is, "His disciples stole him away whilst we slept." Wise men, who, though so wrapt up in a profound sleep, that the necessary noise of rolling back the stone from the sepulchre could not awake, yet heard and saw, in the midst of this their profound sleep, and remembered and could tell too, with the morning's light, the very conduct and its quality, which the disciples of Jesus did lead!—They stole him away whilst we slept!

Do we attend to the consequences which followed? How could the belief of a risen Saviour have so rapidly diffused itself

on all sides, if, besides the disciples having countenances beaming with ardor and sincerity on all occasions, they had not had an evidence correspondent to the extraordinary nature of the fact they propagated, always attending them? Nations, you know, were subdued at once and kingdoms as in one day, by the power and prosperity of the witnesses of Christ's resurrection. To what are we to attribute the unexampled success respecting such an extraordinary cause? Is it not to a birth of miracles which succeeded to the great miracle of Christ's resurrection in the persons of the apostles, who wrote and spake daily of miracles; of miracles too of the most public and palpable nature, and which could not but be scrutinized by the public in the most particular manner? Did the apostles proclaim the wonder of the resurrection and ascension of Christ, and then allege their own sufficiency to work miracles, be assured that mankind would not admit an imposition to be put upon them from men of such high pretensions, and in such a serious concern. Enemies in that age of general superstition might ascribe the miracles of Christ and of his apostles, to a malignant cause, and thus might elude the force of the miracles to produce a conviction in their mind of the truth of the doctrines in a subserviency to which it was alleged they were performed; but since they never denied the fact of their existence, the certainty that millions were converted by them and always acknowledged their history as even the dictates of inspiration, puts it beyond doubt that these miracles did take place; and that the unexampled success of the apostles was owing to their discerned sincerity in asserting the resurrection, and these prominent and congenial operations which could be produced by their hand. Yes, the power of working miracles, they declared, was in Christ, their crucified but now risen Saviour, and they said they received it from him; and all men are looking to this long contested cause of half a century's standing for the proofs of which it so highly boasts, and this

is given them till in every quarter the morally lame world arise and walk.—Our faith, my brethren, is in God: For, it is still the voice of heaven which continues, and will to every age continue, through these evidences that are bright as the robe of the angel, to say, respecting Christ our Saviour, He is not here, for he is risen.—Amen.

DISCOURSE III.

ON THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

HEB. 1:6. *Let all the angels of God worship him.*

MANY controversies, my brethren, have been agitated in the christian world about matters of little moment. Topics which early education, in a divided state of the church, has engrafted upon our minds, grow up with our years, and, in respect to the greater part of professing christians, maintain a strength either of independent or of associated importance, far beyond that to which enlightened and charitable christians can consider them entitled. In the mind of man there is a strong and operative principle of self-love, predominating more secretly in some than in others, but generally in a higher degree in the leaders of parties than in other men; and when this principle has been warmed by opposition into action, whatever it has once espoused, must be protected, with equal zeal and tenacity; and thus these leaders, who have always some retainers, devote their whole talents and time to subjects which appear indeed to be fairly fought into importance, but which otherwise could never interfere with christian character, with christian duty, nor with christian happiness. The past century and the present have presented perhaps more instances of the honesty but frailty of the human mind in this respect, than all the ages that have preceded since the christian era. The wrangling of the schools, previous to the introduction of the proper method of philosophizing, about being and its proper-

ties, lost itself in airy distinctions which no man could understand; but after all these absurdities were banished from purely philosophical pursuits, the church, in many corners, with awful sublimity, held the thunderbolts of her power, her anathemas, over the heads of those who could not understand the distinctions of leading men, and who would not speak and act respecting these, as if, in the eye of Providence, they were the sum total of present truth.

But while, with the general voice of the more considerate and pious, we regret that christian fellowship is often embittered or interrupted by a zeal that outstrips knowledge, we cannot agree with some, that all controversy is foreign to christianity. The zeal of the prophets, the edge of the expressions of the Prince of peace himself, the attitudes of Paul in his fighting the good fight of faith, and the common feelings of all parties of christians, show that we ought not tamely to permit the foundations to be destroyed.

There is no truth, however clear, which has not had its opponents. The being of a God, the existence of the material world, the immortality of our souls, the divinity of the scriptures, have all been denied: and that some of the most important truths which are contained in these scriptures would be denied, is what every reflecting man, from the principles of human nature and from his knowledge of its tendencies, would be ready to predict: nor is a continued and determined opposition to them, any presumption against their truth, any more than a continued and bitter opposition is a presumption that the scriptures are not the word of God, or that God himself does not exist. The being of a God is a fundamental truth throughout the universe, the existence of the material world is a fundamental truth to man that is its inhabitant, the immortality of intellectual natures is a fundamental truth to all them who dread annihilation; and the sun is not more necessary in the centre of the planetary system, than is the light of knowledge, respecting the character of Christ, to his church.

The opponents of the divinity of our Saviour may think that our error is but an error of the judgment, and not of the heart; and, therefore, like other errors of the kind, to be supposed entertained without depravity and alienation from God: but let us suppose that our side is true, and that this truth is supported by evidence.

We would not restrict the mercy of God, but if he did love us as our views suppose, if our Saviour be as glorious as we believe, if he humbled himself, as we think we see that he did, if he has bound us to his Father and to himself by so many expressions of authority as are scattered throughout every page of his word, and if he has sanctioned all the laws of faith and the covenant of his church, as we understand, by the sanctions of eternal life, and eternal misery, themselves being judges, would they not suppose us more vile, if we did not endeavor to defend these doctrines, than they can suppose the doctrines themselves to be erroneous? Take away the divinity of Christ and that which is necessarily connected with it, his atonement, and is not its very life, in our view of christianity, destroyed? There are indeed no men who have illustrated the relations of moral agents and who have spoken of the extent and purity of the moral law, to better purpose, than those who believe in the divinity of the Saviour; and there are no men whose lives have been more irreproachable; but take out of their system of religious thoughts, their view of the character of the Son of God and of his work, and you leave them with the whole universe essentially changed; God is not the same, his government is not the same, their motives to action are not the same, and their prospects are not the same. Of all the controversies that can arise among professing christians, there is none that can approximate the singular preeminence of this controversy. Though the opponents of the doctrine of Christ's divinity rest secure in the confidence with which they entertain their sentiments; yet, they must see, what, we think, from their own familiarity with the Saviour as a mere man, they are apt to

overlook in respect to us, That we dare not deny the Lord who bought us, but must defend his cause.

In deciding any controversy it is necessary that there be some fundamental principles in which both parties are agreed. Now, in prosecuting this controversy, we declare, that it is our belief, that it cannot be decided, but by the authority of revelation. To presume that we can decide it upon principles of natural religion, is to suppose that we know the will of God independently of any revelation, and that revelation itself is a superfluity. Indeed, so obvious is it, that this question must be decided by revelation, that our opponents seem to concede this to us. So obvious a principle is it that if God be revealing himself to us, he will give a better account of his character and actions, than we can by the utmost stretch of reflection acquire; it is only after we have lost ourselves in the difficulties of our subject, that we can venture, even implicitly, to deny it. Unitarians do, indeed, insist, purely from the dictates of reason, that it is impossible for three persons to subsist in one essence; but the weight which they obviously lay upon this principle, is to free themselves the more successfully, from certain views and expressions of scripture with which the Trinitarians press them.

The leading object, brethren, which God has in view in revealing himself to man is to preserve the purity of religious worship. The adoration of the one God is the first and fundamental commandment to which all others are subservient; and to guard men against idolatry is the very end for which the prophets and inspired men were sent by that God, who says that he will not give his glory to another. Indeed if a religion were to encourage idolatry by the whole tenor of its communications, we might at once state, that it overturns its own purposes, and that it cannot be true.

But in all the nations where the religion of Christ was about to be propagated, idolatry was established and rendered endearing to the people, by the beauties of poetical composition, by

the splendor of consecrated temples, and by the costly rituals on which they were in the habit of attending; and the false Gods themselves whom they adored, sprung up among them from their renowned warriors and legislators. These had all a human origin; and a revelation was required that would clearly state God's holy jealousy, and mark what characters were to be adored and what it would be blasphemy to worship.

There is no character spoken of in the scriptures, in respect to which, men were eminently in danger of falling into an idolatrous adoration, except that of the Messiah. This character, however, had been so long expected, so many figures of him had been displayed, and so many advantages had been proposed to arise from his government, that, when he appeared, if he surrounded his path with a train of miracles, died, rose again from the dead, and ascended into heaven, men could scarce refrain from adoring him.

But, my brethren, if he be only a mere creature, all this splendid train of events in his history, can never entitle him to religious homage, but, in the revelation which is given, calls for precautionary admonitions and warnings in every page not to raise that adoration which belongs to the great God, to any creature however beneficent. The whole of revelation, my christian brethren, instead of suspending the thunders of divine vengeance over the gross idolatry of the heathen, which by the natural progress of society in science and knowledge, might, in some degree, have begun to totter, and which could by no means stand long before the declaration, I will have no other Gods before me, ought to have directed its energies against this germ of idolatry which grows out of its own husbanding, and which, if not fully and distinctly reprobated, will rob God of his glory till the end of time.

But instead of this, what do the scriptures do?—They begin with the declaration, at the time of the giving the law to Israel, My name is in him, whilst yet this name has been no otherwise explained than by, Almighty God, or I am that I am.

When the church was provided with a system of praise, she was taught to speak of him as the Son of God, as God whose throne is forever and ever, and as the Lord to whom it is said, sit thou at my right hand. Isaiah, in the most solemn circumstances, has to tell us that his name is to be called Emmanuel, and Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the Prince of peace. Daniel proclaims him to be the Ancient of days; Micah calls him the ruler in Israel whose goings forth are from of old, even from everlasting; and Zachariah pronounces him the man who is God's fellow.

These are extremely dangerous expressions to announce for the regulation of the worship of nations, which, for so many ages, had laid hold upon the slightest encouragement to idolatry. One would have been apt to think that the God of Israel who had chosen a particular people for the express purpose of preserving the worship of the one God unadulterated, would, in some way or other, have restricted the tendency of this language respecting the Messiah, so that he might not have been stript of his peculiar glory, by its being bestowed upon another. But what is very remarkable in the revelations of the Old Testament, is, the longer the Spirit continues to speak on the subject, the more bold and unrestricted is the language used, to press this Messiah forward as an object of adoration. The nations must do him service, and kiss the Son least he be angry, in the songs of their praise; but, at last, he comes to his temple as his own house, and receives the adoration to which he who sits between the cherubims is entitled. Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in: behold he shall come saith the Lord of Hosts. Mal. 2:7.

But if the writers of the old Testament all conspired to bring forward the Messiah as an object of that adoration which belongs to God alone, let us see how the more clear light of

the New Testament directs our conscience upon the subject. Undoubtedly, if Christ be God, he will be worshipped in the New Testament, both by men and angels; but, if he be not God, while very eminent language may be used respecting him, yet, the diamonds of the crown of heaven will be guarded, so that no one shall wear them, but the eternal and uncreated God who alone has a right to have them upon his head. But wonderful to tell, the very forerunner cannot think himself worthy to stoop down and to unloose the latchet of his shoe; while the Messiah himself, who reveals his Father, says that he came down from heaven, that he is in heaven, that his Father worketh hitherto and he works, that his Father and he are one, that he hath given him to have life in himself; and while he receives homage from all that offer it. An angel will say to the most venerable and beloved of inspired men, I am thy fellow servant, worship God: but when there was the greatest danger of enthusiasm in his cause setting an example which men would forever follow, as Jesus stood the risen Saviour before the disciples, and Thomas exclaimed, my Lord and my God, he took no care to correct the expression, as if it were unguarded; but, on the other hand, received it, as that to which he was entitled. Indeed, he did believe himself to be entitled to adoration, and adoration equal with his Father: for when he was about to call the nations of the earth from their idolatry and superstition, and to bring them under the light of the truth of heaven, he said to his disciples, Go preach the gospel to every creature, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. He will not permit an individual to enlist under his banners, but him who bows in the solemnity of the initiating ordinance, equally to the Father, Son and Spirit; as if to preclude, in future ages, any dispute about the genuineness of this sentiment, There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.

The apostles and evangelists rise far above the prophets and even Christ himself, in their declarations, that the Son of God is to be worshipped. As the tree of revelation grows and its peculiar fruits look more distinctly displayed to the eye, that adoration, which the apostle emphatically calls the fruit of the lip, clusters on every branch as belonging to Christ. So the disciples in taking the first preparatory step in the great work to which they had been appointed, prayed, saying, thou Lord who knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen; and Stephen who led the way to the faith and devotion of martyrs, said, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. Indeed, to the name of Jesus every knee does bow and every tongue does confess, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth. Says our text, let all the angels worship him; and the whole of the heavenly host, in the book of the Revelation, worship equally him who sitteth upon the throne and the Lamb. It is astonishing, in what climaxes of praise, this adoration is presented. Unto him who loved us, and washad us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

It may be said that it is only a secondary worship that in these passages, by all created existences, is given to the Son of God. But we have no hint of this in all revelation; there is the same ecstasy when the mind is turned towards him that sitteth upon the throne, or towards the Lamb. In reality, this inferior kind of adoration, which in the writings of men we find so often mentioned, is nothing else than a figment which

false systems of religion have led them to adopt. We acknowledge an homage among men which our manners easily interpret; but that homage which is directed from earth to heaven, must, if there is any meaning in it, acknowledge necessities and dependence on the one hand, and omniscience and infinite care on the other. Adoration supposes an actual intercourse carried on intelligibly between the parties; we confide in a knowledge which at the moment attends to us, and in a care which cannot be disappointed in its exertions for our welfare. The adoration of saints, or angels, or any mere created existence, is the most abandoned rejection of reason that ever superstition adopted; for while there are millions in different places and different situations in the world, who are filling their mouths with arguments, it is supposed, that a mere creature, whose existence is confined to a point in the creation, may yet, like the great God himself, see millions of objects, in different places, all at the same instant of time; and also effectually attend to them. If Christ be not God, those only act a consistent part who intrepidly and boldly assert that Paul and other writers of the New Testament often reason inconclusively, and who refuse all adoration except to the one God the Father. If the Son be not divine, he is not entitled to divine homage;—but we apply our reasoning to the case in hand. Christ is worshipped, he is worshipped by men and angels; he was worshipped in the days of his flesh, and is to be worshipped till the end of time.—Such are the clear and repeated appointments of heaven. Why so? He has the omniscience, the omnipresence, and omnipotence of Deity.

Indeed the great God knew that adoration could not be consistently and contentedly given to his Son, by those whose religion was purified by the fountain of revelation, unless his character were presented with the attributes and properties which belong to the divine nature. Hence not only were the prophets commanded to speak of him as God's fellow, as the Ancient of days, as Emmanuel, as the everlasting Father, and

God whose throne is for ever and ever; but the New Testament writers were directed to present him, more especially, as God, as having God's attributes, and as performing God's works. By their declarations are the lights thrown around us which send off to an infinite distance all the darkness and idolatry which otherwise would necessarily seem to attend the worship of the Son of God.

We proceed in addition to what we have heard.—Feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood.—Paul, when he began to speak about his Saviour, sometimes became most deeply interested, and his words flowed in the most ecstatic eloquence. This was the case when he was taking a final farewell of the elders of the church of Ephesus; and when, by the spirit of inspiration, he saw the grievous wolves that were to enter not sparing the flock; and amongst his last words, to melt them, and to gain them, he says to these elders, Feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood. It is supposed that the word, God, was not originally in this expression of the deepest earnestness from the apostle Paul; because it is not found in a few ancient manuscripts. But the form of his eloquence which is so fair, is mutilated, and its life departs, when we alter the reading, which all the most ancient and authentic manuscripts contain, and which is so like that wonderful expression in his epistle to the Romans, respecting Jesus Christ, which he spake as he reflected on his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh: “who is God over all, blessed for ever, Amen.”

A similar observation is applicable to that language, Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifested in the flesh; where it has also been stated that an unhallowed hand of interpolation had been successfully employed; and to the celebrated passage in John's first epistle, There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one. The anti-trinitarians imagine no judicious critic would be willing to allow a place to this last

passage, in the page of inspiration. This much we must remark, that what they tear out obviously leaves a chasm; while, it may be asserted, that the trinitarians have never, in fact, been detected in the very act of amending the originals of revelation to aid their argument, whereas their opponents are by no means scrupulous, in laying their hand on the sacred originals, and erasing from them every text which their ingenuity may suggest to them probably to be an interested amendment. It has been alleged that we alter scripture; but on the evidence of experience, and as opposed to gratuitous suggestions from our opponents, we hold that we are immaculate. The trinitarians need not be afraid of the curse of God, "Whosoever shall add to this book, to him shall be added the plagues which are contained therein;" for though the whole of their ranks were reviewed there will not be found a single name that actually has been detected in offering the strange fire. But on the other hand, my brethren, the unitarians never make a new translation into any language, or give to the world an edition of the originals; but you hear them grumbling about innumerable passages as of doubtful authenticity, and tearing out others with as much confidence of their being spurious, as if they could refer to some historical records of the impious alterations. There have been some of their belief in every age since the christian era, and nearly equally without scruples about erasing what is particularly displeasing; and hence it is a thing necessarily to be expected, that some passages, which are supposed to enter vitally into the controversy between us and them, should be doubted, and that others should be discarded.

But there are, my brethren, by the New Testament writers, as a proof of his divinity, the attributes of God, ascribed to Christ: eternity in these words, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God:" unchangeableness in these, "before Abram was I am; I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last:" omnipresence in these, "Lo! I am

with you always:" omnipotence in these, "upholding all things by the word of his power:" universal dominion in these, "all things are put under him, and there is nothing which is not put under him, God the Father excepted, who put all things under him:" and sovereignty in these, "for as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will."—These attributes of deity are, indeed, more frequently implied than expressed. So, where it is said, that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us; that God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law; who being in the form of God and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant; and though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, we have an evidence that pre-existence is predicated of him, and that it was by a sovereign act of his own, that he assumed our nature and appeared as our mediator. When we see him acting on the principle in the days of his flesh, that he knows what is in man, and when we now behold him in the administration of his universal kingdom, sending the angels as ministering spirits, superintending the faithfulness and love of his followers, examining their wants and advocating their cause, his omnipresence necessarily appears. And when we reflect that the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son; there is so obviously omniscience required to fit him for this station, that one might say, solemn as is the general judgment in itself, and so solemn as it is presented in revelation, accounts after all must be settled, if he be a limited creature, without knowledge either to condemn or acquit. A judge who is to bring into judgment for every thought and for every secret thing, who is to try the heart and the reins of the children of men, can be no other than the omniscient God.

But there are divine works which the New Testament ascribes to Christ. He is the creator; "and without him was not any thing made that is made," "For by him were all things

created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by him and for him."—The first of these expressions is found in the beginning of John's gospel; and as Matthew and Luke had both written before John, and given an account of the lineage and birth of Christ according to his human nature, John will follow something of their manner, and present us, not with the history of the child born, but of the Son given; and so the Word is in the beginning with God, is God, without him nothing is made that is made; but afterwards he becomes flesh and dwells amongst us. What imprudence in the beloved disciple, if Jesus be only a mere man, after the prophets had spoken so unguardedly, after Christ himself had said so much that might be followed with the most dangerous consequences; and after Paul had settled it, by the character of his writings, that he was to be received as God over all blessed for ever, amen, to commence that book, in which he was to bring forward Christ's expressions, about coming down from heaven, about being in heaven, about being before Abraham, about having life in himself, about being one with his Father, in which he was to be addressed by, my Lord and my God, with such an introduction as he here makes! The very words which he uses are applied to no created existence. The man who was born of a woman, who had flesh and bones, and was crucified, retires, in these introductory conceptions of John, from all created forms, and appears,—what is he?—the word of God, in the beginning with God, yea, God, and all things are made by his hand. In John's conceptions, his Saviour, though he becomes flesh and tabernacles among men, is originally, no other than he who dwells in light inaccessible and full of glory.

But as he created all things so he upholds them. In him all things consist; He upholdeth all things by the word of his power.—If these expressions were spoken respecting the Father, their philosophy and sublimity would be marked by our oppo-

nents and presented as an argument for the divinity of the scriptures, arising from the sublimity of their language. Indeed, while the expressions are inimitably sublime, I must remark, that it is blasphemous to refer them to a mere creature.

Let us try the last of these expressions as appropriated to created energy. The construction in which the words lie, forbids their application to God the Father. Whom shall we bring forward with such a fountain of power and with such a facility of communication? Shall we imagine them appended to Moses or Elias, to Paul, or to the angel Gabriel?—The words suit not any creature. They remind us of that omnific voice, Let there be light, and it was.

But it may be said we fill the scriptures with mysteries, and militate against philosophy. But such is our case, my brethren, we cannot avoid mystery. The greatest mystery of all to me would be, since it must be so abhorrent to revelation to present a mere creature as God, since it would be so easy to establish the truth on this subject; and since there was only one character mentioned in the whole scripture that men were eminently in hazard of being beguiled by, that, instead of the truth being told about this character, the very reverse is not only alluded to and stated in innumerable passages, but it is interwoven with the whole plan of the divine government, and with that salvation, as scripture would seem to state it, which is bestowed upon the meanest of the saints.

The alcoran is an honest book compared with the bible; for there the distinction of persons in the one godhead is rejected: reason is a better guide than revelation; for she has a greater prospect, by the light of science, of dispelling the clouds of superstition; and of all things in the universe, that are inapt to accomplish their own ends, infinite wisdom has been the least successful in guarding her own honors.

For, my brethren, Christ will be believed to be God, and will be worshipped, till the end of time. In every age almost all who have read the scriptures, believe that it is stated in them,

that our Saviour is God. There are some exceptions, and a few of these are men of very considerable talents and learning; but they are not more than we would expect to meet with in this part of that great field of controversy which encompasses the paths of men.—The operations of Providence, my brethren, are translating into all languages the original books of inspiration; they are carried into all lands in the hand of those servants who have the most august view of their Saviour's character; who cannot utter the word salvation without connecting it with an omnipotent procurer; and who, as if to confound the philosophy that would lay a hasty hand upon any portion that has fair claims to be considered a part of inspiration, triumphantly bear along those passages which criticism has supposed that she has expunged. The world, at present, has something of the christian activity of the days of the apostles; but it is all under trinitarian banners.

We know there are many objections started to the divinity of Christ; some founded on the supposed absurdity attending the doctrine itself, and others arising from what is said in scripture about Christ's inferiority to the Father. We acknowledge that we cannot comprehend the doctrine of the trinity. It is a mystery far surpassing the comprehension of man. But so is eternity, so is self-existence, and so is omnipresence. Yea, so is almost every thing in nature: The principle of the attraction of cohesion, magnetism, and gravitation, the connexion between mind and matter, and the manner of perception of external objects. It is but little we know of ourselves or all that is around us; and we may surely grant that when the eternal, self-existent, and infinite being, reveals himself, there will be something about his purely revealed character, that will as infinitely transcend our capacity, as do his eternity and immensity in his natural character. But, my brethren, if we can reason in any respect from analogy, the absolute simplicity of the divine existence, both in nature and in personality, is not recommended to us by any thing that exists. There are certain

elementary substances, simple and unmixed in themselves, but they always coexist in nature with other elements to make up the actual unities which creation presents. The light of the sun has several primary rays, the particles of heat have not all the same degree of refrangibility, the air has three elements in its composition; water, though so like an unity, is made up of distinct substances, every vegetable has three elements, every animal is composed of matter and the principle of animation, and all the stones which form the great body of our earth, are formed of several primary elements, which cannot be separated without breaking up the very properties which are so distinct and have been so permanent. The elements of the divine character, are, indeed, transcendent in their distinction and union. All other things being created, their unity arises from the combination of distinct natures; but the godhead, being uncreated and eternal, there is only one simple element of nature in it, and the distinctions, different from all other beings, arise from the form of subsistence: a mystery unlike to any thing else, and which men always degrade and injure when they would attempt to explain it, or to place it on any other foundation than the dictates of revelation.

Christ is inferior to the Father as mediator. In this character he is his father's servant, he is clothed with human nature, the Word is made flesh, the Son of God is born of a woman, he that was in the form of God puts on the fashion of a man, he grows in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man, he is hungry, he is weary, he rejoices, he weeps, he prays, he complains, he suffers, he dies. When we join the company of the Son of man there is nothing within the whole circle of human duty or privilege which we do not see him perform. That he should say, his Father sent him, that he does not do his own will, that he can do nothing of himself, that his Father is greater than he, that the Father heareth him always, that he could send his angels to strengthen him, that he is an heir under him, and that at last he will surrender his kingdom to

him, are expressions which he ought to use, and ideas which he ought to repeat and vary by every form of language, to let his true character be known, and to explain the circumstances of his history as they really took place. Nothing can be more astonishing than that the adversaries of Christ's divinity should insist on the innumerable statements in scripture which present Christ as inferior to the Father, when we grant, that, although it be clearly and fully stated that he is divine, yet, the general line of the whole business of the mediator, was to act on earth as man, and to state what were the results of his acting in this character. The unitarians in laying hold of one side of Christ's character and denying the other, remind us of the modern Jews, who, to reconcile the prophecies respecting their Messiah both suffering and reigning, imagine two Messiahs, the one tentative and unsuccessful, and the other persevering and triumphant. We believe that both characters meet in the one Messiah; that Christ both suffers and reigns; but his sufferings are correlative to a state of humiliation, and his dominion is correlative to a state of exaltation: and we believe that his character qualified him for even the extremes of both these states. As man he was born, as the Word he was in the beginning; as man he was laid in a cradle, as God he was worshipped there; as man he grew in wisdom and in stature, as God he was the same yesterday, to-day and for ever; as man he was tempted of Satan, as God he said, Get thee behind me, for it is written thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve; as man he was baptised in Jordan, as God he kept the fan of vengeance in his hand thoroughly to purge his floor; as man he walked about the regions of Galilee, as God he called his disciples and said to them, I will make you fishers of men; as man he was wearied and sat on Jacob's well, as God he told the woman of Samaria all that ever she did; as man he attended the marriage at Galilee, as God he turned the water into wine; as man he was hungry, as God he fed five thousand on a few

loaves and fishes; as man he wept at the grave of Lazarus, as God he said, Lazarus come forth; as man he was in agony in Gethsemene, as God he instituted the sacred ordinance of the New Testament passover; as man he expired on the cross, as God, when in death, he wrote a charter for life, and rose triumphantly over death; as man he was seen ascending, as God he made good his way, leading captivity captive; as man he is our forerunner entered into heaven, as God he is heir of all things; as man he presents the sacrifice of himself within the veil, as God he sits on the right hand of the majesty on high, angels, authorities, and powers being made subject to him; as man he is the head of his body the church, as God he reigns in Zion, and has all things put under his feet.

But while there are two distinct natures in Christ they are united in one person. This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. He that ascended is the same that descended, first into the lower parts of the earth, and then ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill all things. For he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained. Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Two natures and one person in Christ:—A mystery again! But it is a mystery not like that of the trinity, where the divine nature alone is concerned; it is a mystery, which, as the properties of a creature are connected with it, comes recommended to us, by all the individualities of organized existences in the universe; all are unions of different natures. All organized existences derive their perfection and are adapted to the end of their formation from the combination of elements that are dissimilar; and Christ's character is adapted to the accomplishment of the great work which was appointed to him, by his being the omnipotent and adorable creator of all things, and by his being man who is both capable of suffering and of dying.

We would not have Christ considered to be God by all men. The infidels, who deny the authority of his religion and who acknowledge that Jesus of Nazareth did exist, and gave origin to that religion which bears his name, can consider him in no other light than as a man, artful, eloquent, successful, and revolutionizing. The Jews themselves are in every respect greatly excusable, if he was only a mere man; for before them he pertinaciously adhered to language which they understood to claim divinity, and made himself undoubtedly in their presence equal to God. Indeed his whole ministration was criminal, and polluted their land, their city, and their temple, if he was a man only. Moses, their lawgiver, was afraid to speak in his own name, and always bespeaks the ear of piety, with, The Lord spake unto Moses, saying; he trembled at the introduction of idolatry, and said, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve. Their prophets had no other spirit than that of their great lawgiver. But Jesus had no scruples of introducing idolatry among them, and of condemning them to the fire of hell if they refused to follow him. Ye believe in God, said he to the Jews, believe also in me. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son; that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father. But Jesus answered them, my Father worketh hitherto, and I work: therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him; because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.

Our Saviour, my brethren, is not to be blamed for forming a contrast to Moses and all the prophets in their zeal for the glory of the God of Israel. Revelation is all of a piece as it respects Christ. It is a great army of prophets, of priests of the most high God, of princes, and of seers, collecting together, under the Old Testament dispensation, to destroy the mouldering idols of idolatry, and yet to place, permanent as

is time, and unfading as is the sun, an object before men, clothed in all the attributes of human nature, to be adored. The New Testament takes up the determination received from so many voices, and at the very first begins to add every feature that can awe imagination and instil hope. Wise men worship, and angels sing, glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will towards men; the mother nurses in Bethlehem him whose goings forth were from of old, even from everlasting, and of whose kingdom there shall be no end; and Zacharias prophesies to the infant John, and thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways. The whole disciples, listening to his claims and attending to his miracles, by sea or land, on the mountains or in the valleys, keep up the sound of adoration, Lord save, thou hast the words of eternal life, Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee, My Lord and my God.—The universe, my brethren, is startled and does homage when the moment of the fulness of time arrives.—The sun looked on the death of Moses as a common occurrence, of Abraham, of David, and of Isaiah. Though perhaps some of these were sawn asunder, the earth felt no commotion, the graves maintained their silence, and the veil of God's temple knew no violence. But this is no common death, it is not the death of an inspired legislator, of a prophet, of a mere friend of God; for the sun is darkened, the earth shakes to its foundations, the graves are emptied by the entrance of the breath of life, and the veil of the temple is rent from top to bottom.—And this strain of adoration, and of homage, which, from the beginning the world has circulated from age to age, the disciples of Jesus adopted, and wherever they went they taught the knee to bow to the name of Jesus. And the christian world have bowed, and will for ever bow: for our religion should either be discarded as blasphemous and idolatrous, or our mediator should be re-

ceived as truly divine, the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person. Yes, my brethren, for the great God, and the Holy Ghost, if Christ be only a creature, is chargeable, immediately and directly, above all others, with overspreading our world with this blasphemy. The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, therefore, that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of the Highest. If this language was to signify that the Ancient of days was appearing among men, it was a beautiful and well timed expression which announces that the thing which was born, though seemingly insignificant, was the Son of the Highest; but if it was to signify that human nature was a more immediate effect of divine power in Christ than in other men, and so exalting him to divine honors; it was an expression, which is like the tongue of sinful man, an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. For, my brethren, no creature, angel or archangel, though new from the hand of God, bright as the gold dropt from the furnace which formed the hinges of Milton's gates of heaven, can be entitled to any of the peculiar honors of Deity.—The opponents of Christ's divinity speak highly of the morality of the gospel; it is pure and untainted, say they; a peculiar blessing to our world; but if morality, in any point of view, respects the relations of the creature to his creator, the principles of the scriptures and their expressions, if Christ be a created existence only, are what overturn the very foundations of that moral order which is supposed to support the pillars of the divine government throughout the universe, and give to it its sublime character. Yes, if other worlds are like ours, if God hath revealed himself to them, and told them that all the angels around his throne worship one who has been born amongst them, and that they must worship him; that they must use expressions in their most solemn language, of him being the Lord of all, in whom all things consist, and by whom all things were created in heaven and in earth, the universe, which is so fair, and the

perfection of whose physical form is so absolutely finished, has been, and by its creator himself, turned, in all its moral inhabitants, into perpetual idolatry. The most polluted of all systems of morality is that which dresses up a creature by names, attributes, works, and stations, to appropriate to itself the homage of the Eternal, and which states that all this is the doing, through ages and generations, of God himself.—But enough!

Revelation is the covenant and promise of God. Its propositions may contain mysteries, but cannot inculcate blasphemies. They may humble the pride of reason, but they cannot mislead devotion.—All is well.—Thou Lord Jesus in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands; they shall perish but thou remainest, and they shall all wax old as a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou fold them, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same and thy years shall not fail. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all, Amen.

DISCOURSE IV.

CHRIST'S SUFFERING WITHOUT THE GATE.

HEB. 13: 12. *Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.*

A STRIKING adaptation, my brethren, to all their intended relations, subsists amongst the works of God. Every object in nature is exactly suited to the circumstances of its condition. The beauty and wisdom of its maker are fully perceived only when its relations are considered. Not an object in the natural world undisturbed by the injurious hand of a sinful agent, but smiles on the prosperity of all those with which it is intimately connected; these bear the same benign aspect to those that environ them; this circle the same to that which encompasses it, till the immense fabric of the universe stands arrayed in the utmost exactness of harmony and order. In the providential dispensations of God the exact subserviency of event to event, of series of operations to mighty evolutions, of predisposed circumstances to what are to fulfil them, gives us the same view of the boundless symmetry established in the divine operations. Do we survey the kingdom of grace, consider it in the predictions and types that, in the first ages of the world, and particularly under the Jewish economy, bore a respect to the displays and realities of New Testament times, still we are led to admire the correspondence of one thing to another, and to say of God's works, in wisdom he hath made them all.

What has suggested this introductory train of ideas is the view we take of the subject of discourse we have now read to you, as we have considered it, not merely in its connexion with the immediate context, but as a constituent part of this admirably arranged, and beautifully constructed epistle. This text, we suspect, is often read without the mind being led into a just view of all those points of exact correspondence, to which, in that delicate and copious contrast that the author must be supposed triumphantly to consummate in this epistle, the distinguished station of this text towards the close of it, and its character as the last touches he puts upon his perfect picture, must be supposed to conduct the mind of the more attentive and reflecting.

In the preceding part, my brethren, of this epistle it has been shown, That every high priest taken from amongst men must offer both gifts and sacrifices unto God: That the Aaronical priesthood did offer both gifts and sacrifices, which, however, could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience: And that Christ being come, an high priest of a greater and more perfect tabernacle, did obtain eternal redemption for us. Already, by the writer of this epistle, have these three points been regularly adverted to, and fully demonstrated.

What, then, the relations of our text lead us to ask, is the reason of the apostle's returning here towards the conclusion of his epistle, in the midst too of his impressive practical exhortations and injunctions, to a subject, all the parts of which, he hath already apparently exhausted; and in what manner does his contrast of the sin-offering of the Jews, and sacrifice of Christ here, illustrate, still more clearly than has yet been done in preceding points of comparison, the harmony of the system of truth, exhibited first in a shadowy, and then in a real manifestation? Is it true that the apostle has no higher motive for returning to a subject, to which he has done so much justice, than, as some commentators would appear to main-

tain, to account for the literal fact of Jesus' crucifixion without the gate of Jerusalem?

When I meditate on the relations of this text; when, in particular, I look into the commandment mentioned in the preceding verse, and which is the hinge of the apostle's argument here; a commandment which I recollect their law expressly enjoined upon the Jews,—to burn the bodies of their sin-offering without the camp of Israel; I see I cannot add to this recollection, a view of Christ's crucifixion on the desecrated ground where the anathematized suffered their accursed death, without convictions arising, that many have neither fully examined the typical system of ancient sacrifices, nor the admirable and connected structure of this epistle, the design of which is to illustrate to Hebrew converts the doctrines of christianity, by leading the mind through the whole field of their own prophecies and ceremonies of worship, while every prophecy is placed by the side of its own event, and every type is read in the light of its own antitype.

If my text, however, my brethren, be the marrow of this wonderful epistle—if this epistle collect into a focus all the scattering rays that presaged the rising sun of righteousness—if the whole of the loose tints that wandered on the dark shadows of the patriarchal and Mosaic economy, be collected into the cloudless noon which warms and fills us with life, as we read it—and if my text be to the epistle, like the divine light, that at his conversion, emerged, brilliant as the sun, from the noon-day that surrounded the author of it, what abilities are adequate to the task that is now before me? Who can travel through the lines of its relations; show it in all the bearings of its respective parts; and do justice to the general sentiment which the proposition conveys? This text, oh God, leads us to interpret the principal emblems thou sawest proper to institute previous to the fulness of time; to investigate the extent of the efficacy of the great sacrifice of the New Testament; and to establish from the treasures of revelation, the general senti-

ment which is here so prominently propounded. Thy grace, oh God, is sufficient for us; and under thy direction I would first, investigate the import of the respective clauses of this text; and then, secondly, demonstrate the general truth which it declares.

We begin our inquiries by ascertaining the import of the clause which the immediate context presses upon our notice,—For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp: Wherefore Jesus suffered without the gate.

In a preceding part of this epistle, let me remark, we are expressly informed that Christ, who is here said to have suffered without the gate, was constituted a priest, not after the order of Aaron, but after the order of Melchisedec. Now both Aaron and Melchisedec, we have seen, must be supposed to offer both gifts and sacrifices; and Melchisedec's oblations being merely typical as well as Aaron's, could make a typical atonement only. What then is peculiarly taught us in this epistle by Christ's being made a priest, not after the order of the former, but after that of the latter?

Aaron was the priest of the Jewish nation only, but Melchisedec, who lived four hundred years before the Mosaic economy, and to whom Abraham the father of circumcision paid tithes, was absolutely a priest without respect to any particular people, and adumbrated Christ as the Saviour of the Gentiles no less than of the Jews. Had the high priest of our profession sprung up under the order of Aaron, as the Levitical priesthood was appointed expressly for the Jewish nation, whom God had chosen from amongst all the nations of the earth to be, for a time, a separate and a peculiarly sanctified people, none could have obtained salvation by Christ but the Jews only. In the steps of divine providence which led the church through all previous changes and ripened her for the fulness of time, Egypt and her first born, at the epoch of the passover, strictly represented the world deserving

God's wrath; and the children of Israel, whose first born were saved by the atonement of the paschal Lamb, and in whom all the rest of their brethren found protection, strictly represented the members of the true church; and Aaron and his sons, who were chosen to officiate to a people so separated and sanctified, could not widen the circle of their relations beyond the definite character of their original call, and that end to which the people for whom they were appointed to minister in the priest's office, had been so especially separated. The sons of Levi were not shadows before the vision of sinners of mankind simply, of a Saviour to be revealed, but they were types of this great character, under the circumscribed relations of that covenant which separated them and their people from the accursed nations immediately represented by Egypt; and which placed themselves and their people, as it were, in a city of refuge, till the death of their priesthood, and the cessation of their oblations take place at an appointed time. To the Levites, indeed, for whom to be his own, God released the first born to the commonwealth of Israel,—the first born whom he had had a right to destroy, but whom he had admitted to be exchanged for the Lamb of the passover, tithes are appointed to be paid by all the tribes of Israel, as an evidence that it is from the blood of atonement they have a right to live; but while all Israel acknowledge their dependence upon the priesthood, the means of their reconciliation to Deity, in the tenth of the increase of their hands; yet, these very characters themselves occupy their preeminent station in Israel, only by substitution in the room of the first born, the heirs of the inheritance of Jacob; and even on this ingrafted stock where we see them, they themselves must acknowledge, that they are only the interior arch of that great rainbow, which to the world at large was an emblem of the real priesthood and atonement for sin. And, as I may so say, Levi also, who received tithes, paid tithes in Abraham: For he was yet in the loins of Abraham when Melchisedec met him. Melchisedec before the eye of mankind sinners stands

arrayed in absolute relations; no nation in respect to him is an emblem of our world, and none presents a people separated for his peculiar ministrations; his lineage is not marked on any record; his office does not date its origin from any epoch of time; its exercise is not cut off by predictions and decrees that scatter the people whom he serves from the sacred eminence he and they occupy;—"He is without father and mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of years; but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually."

But, my brethren, if Aaron officiated not in the open world, but under the cover of a restricted economy; if this cover be erected not by his own performances, but by the blood of that sacrifice which a particular people, under a previous protection from divine predictions and promises, presented each family for itself; it is obvious, that his sacrifices respected God, not in his absolute character of governor of the universe, but of governor of a peculiar people by positive institution: And hence his sacrifices, that were formally sin-offerings, could not, from the very nature of relations, be admitted to the eminent station of absolute and formal emblems of the great sacrifice for sinners of mankind.

If these observations be well founded, then, it is obvious, that though, on the one hand, our apostle hath already shown the inefficacy of the blood of bulls and of goats, and the sprinkling of the ashes of an heifer, to purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God; and, on the other, the efficacy of the death of Christ to obtain eternal redemption for us; yet he hath not exhibited the true character of the type, as contrasted with the antitype in the formal sin-offerings of the Jewish economy, whose blood on the great day of atonement was carried into the holiest of all, and whose bodies were burnt without the camp.

My brethren, an offering for sin that is in every respect perfect and accepted of under a typical economy, must not only have its blood carried into the figure of heaven, or holy of ho-

lies; but the priest and people themselves must eat of it, and live upon the nourishment it is supposed to yield them. Of the peace-offerings and burnt-offerings of the Jews, so distinct throughout their divine ritual in character from the sin-offerings, the priesthood and people could eat; and their blood being sprinkled before the vail, they could thus behold in them an emblem of a perfect sacrifice, though not before the governor of the world, yet before that merciful God who had, in relation unto them, left, as it were, his seat in heaven where he views our world as such, and had entered with themselves within the circumscribed circle he had been pleased, by the blood of the paschal Lamb, to draw for them. The blood of these peace-offerings and burnt-offerings, however, never could venture into the holiest of all, because the first tabernacle being yet standing,—the tabernacle of the priesthood and people of Israel,—no sacrifice could be a feast even ceremonially whose blood should dare to meet the eye of the Eternal, beyond the contracted canopy under which he had condescended to reside with them. Hence, says the apostle, in the 9th chapter of this epistle, “Now when these things were thus ordained the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God; but into the second went the high priest alone, once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people; the Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.”—The Jewish tabernacle in its two apartments of Holy and Most Holy, admitted of being interpreted three ways: As an emblem of heaven and earth; of the church militant and church triumphant; and of the circumscribed and indefinite economies of the dispensation of God’s grace. Considering themselves as sinners, and God absolutely holy, the first view, and that through which all the rest are happily perceived, that they can take of the tabernacle, is, that in which they see in the first tabernacle, the peculiarity of their own separated station; and in

the second, the Judge of the world yet hiding himself from them. Yes, at the era of the erection of the tabernacle God withdraws from the world at large, and dwells in the holy camp of Israel; at the termination of this dispensation he breaks down the wall of peculiar separation which he had built, and on the theatre of the world calls, Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters and drink; and when he shall have gathered the subjects of his kingdom from the four winds of heaven, and placed them on the thrones of glory to which he has destined them, then will he connect himself to these his creatures by an immediate dominion; and the Jews, who as a people related to their tabernacle were only ceremonially sanctified, as they interpreted this tabernacle itself, could see immediately in it, nothing but the figure of their own happy privileges, and a representation of privileges upon earth that were yet beyond them; and through these glasses they could contemplate the real church militant and triumphant; and, imagining the veil to be removed, even the absolute kingdom of the Mediator surrendered up to the Father.—But, is it said, that the high priest entered into the holy of holies? He did so once every year: But it was in the character of the representative of God's first born, who, in Egypt, in the night of their sanctification, had been ceremonially redeemed to be, till the wall of partition then erected were cast down, a peculiar people; it was with the memorial of the passover he entered; and by his entering in this manner, he was permitted, as his dispensation was of a restricted and temporary nature only, to view, once every year, the station from which God had condescended to choose the Israelites, and to which after he had served his purposes with them he would return; the station from which he addresses mankind sinners in the privileges of the dispensation of mercy;—that dispensation which applied to the sinner changes his character and nature, and clothes him with the garments of salvation;—those garments which in the kingdom of heaven will be eternally the pure and white robes of the saints.

But if the blood of the sin-offering on the great day of atonement be only a renewal of the passover, and in this relative sense only, an atonement for the high priest himself, and for the errors of the people, what difference, we are led to ask, is there between the original passover, and the sin offerings on the great day of atonement in the Jewish constituted economy? The original passover was a formal sin-offering, its blood was sprinkled towards the naked eye of heaven, on the door posts and lintels of the door, and the people all eat of it. Out of the original paschal Lamb was begotten by a new birth the person of a people, that as a vine was to be planted in a fruitful land; and which, though changing often individual leaves, and often torn and broken in its members, was yet to grow till the great husbandman should clear the ground for another more pure and promising stock. The Levitical sin-offering of the passover, on the other hand, never could beget a new people; it could only raise into immediate view the primary fountain from which their life sprung; and calling their faith to this, year after year, it was a means, in its character of reminiscence, of washing from ceremonial defilement. Christians, every Israelite had as much a ceremonial, as every real christian has a spiritual new birth; and his character of born of God all flowed from that blood of atonement that was the basis of the Jews' peculiar economy, as the christian's new birth all issues from the great passover at the fulness of time; and in their constituted economy, the memorial of their passover was a means of daily washing them, as our remembrance of the death of Jesus in our New Testament supper, is a means of our purification.

But if the sin-offering on the great day of atonement must be viewed, not as a formal pattern, before the sight of heaven, like the original passover, of the great sacrifice for sin; and if it is not to be viewed, like the burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, as real patterns shown for their instruction and comfort,

to a peculiar but already reconciled people, how, let me inquire, since its blood has entered into the holiest of all, does it discriminate itself from all other sacrifices?

Here, I beg your attention to the fact that the variety of sin-offerings which on the great day of atonement was first presented, and being a memorial of the passover, took off, from the original deed, a copy of its privileges for that year, and so paved the way during that period of time, for their burnt-offerings, peace-offerings, and ordinary sin-offerings, though consisting of bullocks, rams, goats, and lambs, was in effect only one offering. Remembering this, we have only to add farther, that while all other sacrifices are emblems of a real purification from sin, either in the open world, or to a peculiar people within the circle of their separation; yet, the offering in question, will support neither of these characters. During the encampment of the children of Israel in the wilderness their camp encircled their privileges, whilst all without it was unhallowed ground; in the desert, it represented Canaan, in the world; and on the altar that was in the midst of their holiness they saw the fat of their sin-offerings laid by the consecrated sons of Aaron, but it is thoroughly consumed, while the fire is yet unsatisfied: for over the heads of the offerers, breaks a voice which pronounces them unclean, and drives them, with the remainder of the offering, from the holy ground on which they stand, into the profane world, and there the fire is rekindled and burns till all is destroyed. The bullock, the sin-offering, and the goat, the sin-offering, whose blood was brought in to make an atonement in the holy place, shall one carry forth without the camp; and they shall burn in the fire their skins, and their flesh, and their dung; and he that burneth them shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp. Lev. 16.

But we will analyse another instance of the Levitical sin-offerings on the day of the commencement of the ecclesiastical

year of Israel. The scape-goat makes an atonement for Israel; but this is in the same lot with another which has been slain; whose blood has been sprinkled towards and upon the mercy seat in the holy of holies; and whose hide, flesh, and dung are burnt without the camp. What is the import of this wonderful manner of oblation on the great day of atonement? Does not this machinery of expiation show us, that, though the blood of the latter has been admitted to renew the memorial of the passover, and to afford for a moment protection to the representative of Israel, while under the darkening cloud of incense he views, on the day that recalls the origin of their economy, the glorious character in which God originally chose them; yet, the blood which he scatters around him in the emblem of heaven, having served its present purpose, loses all efficacy; the guilt, which was supposed buried for a moment, rises from under it; this being all Israel's is thrown back upon them; and there is no way of their being freed from it, but by the happy institution of the other ceremonial sacrifice, that, without attempting to expiate it, carries it, on its living head, into the wilderness? The scape-goat is a type of the Messiah, as it is generally viewed, only, in as far as it is a ceremonial atonement for the sons of Jacob in the city of their refuge; but, in as far as it is the winding up of that offering which, in its complicated process, has touched upon the eye of Deity as he sits upon the circle of the heavens, it proclaims to the Jews, That the offerings of the children of Israel are of no avail; that the moral relations of the people, notwithstanding all their offerings, are still the same: It says, ye peculiar people, ye race already sanctified, may be saved, to all the ends of your sanctification; but the moral character of man—the world and all that dwell in it, are yet absolutely guilty. Yes, my hearers, the representative of the first born of God in Egypt, did slay his offering and was permitted to view the formal emblem of heaven annually; and by this review of their original privileges to refresh the spirit, renovate the vigor, and purify from

filth, for the passing year, the whole ritual of the Jewish nation: he was permitted to reconcile the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar: But yet every time he finished his service he might have cried out, "We need a greater and more perfect tabernacle, one not of this building." Looking around him, this high priest might have exclaimed, oh! ye sons of the promise, we have not a perfect image even of a sin-offering.—I perceive that the blood of our sin-offering which is permitted to reach the mercy seat, and to remain there covering our guilt, while I stand for a short space on this day, as the representative of the sons of Jacob; yet, as soon as my presence withdraws, the guilt that seemed buried, rises from under the temporary shadow; and that we may find safety, it must again be transferred to another offering which bears it away into the wilderness, the located emblem to us of an accursed world—where it abides, never expiated by blood: And, moreover, the whole original sacrifices, instead of affording any communion with God and with one another, are consumed in the same world of our sinful nature. As the sons of a promising God, the seed of Abraham, the children of the birthright of Jacob, as a people redeemed by God at a marked period of time, I see, indeed, that God does admit our sacrifices for sin, to renew, for a few moments, the paschal sacrifice, through which, from every one's own hand, God originally sanctified his people to himself; but while this is the case, the ceremony breaks away among my hands, and, just having announced our positive economy and the privileges which it freely contains; it escapes from our view, like an image in a dream that changes and moulders away while we contemplate it. To behold a perfect ceremonial sin-offering from the hand of a priest separated from among the people, and sanctified to his office, as I am, it is necessary to look without the orbit of our restricted economy, it is necessary to look into the wide theatre of the world itself, where guilt in its naked character appears; and to see presented there a sin-offering whose blood

has been accepted of by God, and whose flesh feeds the people that offer it. Yes, children of Abraham, to explain our sacrifices which have not merely a typical character, but as contrasted with sacrifices previous to our economy, have this character particularly modified according to our subservient dispensation, I must tell you, that the law of our sacrifices must be interpreted by a connexion with the history of our religion. When we sing the Lord hath sworn and will not repent, thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec—Melchisedec who blessed Abraham and all us in him,—then, and then only, do we see that great high priest, and his sacrifice that in the accursed world, is a perfect emblem of the great sacrifice for sin.

Guiding our thoughts, my brethren, by the discriminating principles of this epistle—that every high priest must offer both gifts and sacrifices unto God, and that Aaron's priesthood was ceremonially inferior, and included under that of Melchisedec, we have, in some measure, illustrated our prospects, and are now ready to tell you, that this doctrine is the subject warmly presented in our text and context. When it is said in the 9th verse, that it is a good thing to have the heart established by grace, not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein, it is obvious, that by meats the apostle intends sacrificial meats, and that his aim is to convince us, that all the sacrifices of which the Jews could eat were such as presupposed their God already reconciled to them and were not strictly sacrifices of expiation or sin-offerings. For it is immediately subjoined, verse 10th, We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. This was the altar of sin-offering; an altar which though materially the same with the altar of burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, had yet a peculiar character as related to the sin-offering, and consumed all the marrow and fat that was imposed upon it, without producing, on the great day of atonement, a sweet-smelling savor unto God; as, in the common sin-offerings, and the offerings of

ignorance, as well as the burnt-offerings, the peace-offerings, and the drink-offerings, on the same day, and all the other festivals and dedications, and in the daily sacrifice was produced. This altar, the 11th verse shows us, yielded the honor of perfecting an emblem of expiation, and leaving priest and people under ceremonial defilement, saw them carry off to a clean place without the camp of Israel, the remainder of that sacrifice, its virtues could not sanctify. "For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin every year, is burnt without the camp." Failing within the circle of their sanctification to produce a savor of a sweet smell, the sacrifices of the sons of Jacob are tried on the open theatre of our world, and all that we can learn from these sin-offerings is, that though the God of Jacob be pacified, the ruler of the universe is yet offended,—absolutely offended—that his wisdom and jealousy demolish the very shadows of a sin-offering.

But although the Israelites durst not eat of their sin-offerings, and although in the open world they were entirely consumed, and both in relation to them, and to the condition of the scape-goat, their sin is yet crying for vengeance; yet, our apostle informs us, that we have a right to eat of this altar of sin-offering. Melchisedec, who blessed Abraham in the character of priest of the *most high God*, has offered his emblems of expiation, and in the world of mankind he maintains the character of king of righteousness, by the perfect acceptance, as it is supposed, of his sacrifice, and as the relations of his priesthood, a perfect image of the eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ, demonstrate; and the apostle now exhibits to our view the great antitype of this priest, that was made like unto the Son of God. In our text we are called to behold Jesus, the substance of all predictive forms; Jesus who has taken from the head of the scape-goat all the sin of the true Israel it ever bore into the wilderness; who has carried it back to the seat of the ineffectual sacrifices of the sons of Jacob; and who, demolishing entirely

their whole restricted and emblematical ritual, by a legislative anathema of your house is left unto you desolate; then stands on the bare bosom of our accursed earth, on that station that had been so long awaiting him; and on this station of our open world he purifies the things of heaven itself by his blood, and he gives us his flesh to eat. "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." Yes, thou, oh! Jesus, a priest, not after the order of Aaron, but after that of Melchisedec, wast, on the scene of the death of persons excommunicated and anathematized from the peculiar people that God had chosen, subjected to the fire of the wrath of the Judge of the spirits of all men, which no sacrifice could ever endure; and on this accursed scene, thou didst endure, sustain, and exhaust it: like the bush, which was a figure of thee, and which grew in an unhallowed region, except what its own light and heat consecrated, burning and not consumed.

Having authoritatively revoked their subservient economy, and thus having also by his death redeemed the faithfulness of God that had been pledged under the emblems that had been shown to the Jews of a real sacrifice, as well as having fulfilled all shadows that ever prefigured him,—is it not with propriety, my brethren, that the apostle continues the subject, and urges the improvement of this great prospect that he has opened in the world at large on them, who by a wall of separation, had been so long preserved a peculiar people? He has just been telling the Jews, that in the dispensations of God, their emblems have passed away, and that now they are come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to the church of the first born, to God the judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel: to beseech them, therefore, to leave their camp, the image of it, and to enter into the city itself, is what is to be expected. Hence these subsequent verses—Let us therefore go forth

unto him without the camp bearing his reproach, for here we have no continuing city of abode, but we seek one to come.—The blood of Abel, my brethren, being the first that was shed in our world, stands, in our apostle's reasoning, opposed absolutely to the blood of Christ; it opens a mouth of vindictive justice, which has blown from the field of truth the sacrifice of Melchisedec and left only the mystery of his names, from which to learn the extent and formalities of his office, which has held the first born of Israel for ever forfeited unto God, and which has consumed the sin-offerings of Israel's peculiar economy as a standing testimony that God is a consuming fire: But while Christ vindicates the propriety of instructing the world by those mere images that divine justice tears asunder in the history of its procedure, he does yet take upon himself the whole task of opposing the fury of divine vengeance, and his blood speaks better things than the blood of Abel. Hence follows this exclamation of the apostle: By him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lip, giving thanks to his name.

But against the general view of the subject which we have exhibited, it may perhaps be objected, that we place the Jewish types in such an inferior station among the emblems that God had appointed to prefigure Christ, that we invert the order of a gradual increase of light and privilege till the fulness of time. But, it is obvious, our view militates against this idea in the clearest and most forcible manner. The introductory economies that God had established in our world, as already hinted, were pure expressions of his free and sovereign grace; the limited or unlimited nature of them, might have been changed or continued according to the divine pleasure. Nothing can be more erroneous than to suppose that the Jewish economy was capable of being formally repealed only in the death of the Saviour of the world. Had it not been for the prophecies that carried down its existence till the fulness of time, this restricted and positive economy, might, at any time, have been as sover-

eignly revoked as it had been freely instituted. Being indeed, established upon divine promises and predictions as the last typical dispensation, it was indispensable that it should continue till the Messiah arrived; and containing real types and shadows which he alone could fulfil, this Messiah must be said to have nailed it to his cross, since in this way only could forms be displaced by their substance; but considering the economy by itself, it was the subject of authoritative establishment or revocation only. Jesus nailed to his cross all pre-existing shadows, as well as those in the Jewish economy; although, this being the last typical dispensation, and containing the privileges of all previous times, and many pre-eminent excellencies of its own;—privileges and excellencies, however, that the world at large might have forever enjoyed, but which were sovereignly bestowed, for the wisest purposes, upon a peculiar people,—it is said, in relation to this people, that as the Sun himself arose and dispelled all shadows, the wall of their separation disappeared. The Jews from the epoch of their deliverance from Egypt, represented, by the peculiarity of their privileges, the world, as it had once been placed under a dispensation of mercy; and all the rest of the nations are viewed, during this period of time, as under the region and shadow of death; and when the light that is the fulfilment of prophecy and prediction is now about to visit the long abandoned nations, Jesus dispels the shadows of the world, dispels them from under the restricted and particular pavilion under which they had been all grouped together; and breaking down thus a partition wall that a particular dispensation had erected, he gives to the world the realization of all types, and those privileges they once enjoyed, but which had been long withdrawn from them.

Remembering, then, that the world in every age had had figures of Christ, we see clearly, how the Jewish economy was inferior among the types, and yet its privileges must be considered an advancement on the scale of light and privilege in the dispensations of God. A perfect figure might easily have

been mistaken for the reality. But while the Jewish burnt-offerings and peace-offerings were shadows that, under their restricted economy, taught them the true relations of a formal sacrifice for sin; while the blood of these was sprinkled before the vail, and they themselves eat of the sacrifice; their sin-offerings that ventured to purify the representation of heaven itself, the abode of Deity by his presence, his law, and his yet covered mercy, taught them, in the most practical and convincing manner, that the blood of bulls and of goats could never take away sin. The ordinances of all previous types were merely sovereign and admirably adapted methods of teaching mankind, in the first and rude ages of the world, the fact of a real atonement; and the machinery of the Jewish economy in its ordinances of expiation merely, was prominently superior to all previous institutions, reflecting the shadow, though not the formal image, of a sin-offering, and also proclaiming in the most pointed manner the worthlessness and insufficiency of them all. "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never, with those sacrifices which are offered year by year, make the comers thereunto perfect." A perfect image of a sin-offering once presented and formally accepted by God, would ceremonially have forever taken away all conscience of sin; and as there could be only one offering by Christ in making a real atonement, so, had the sin-offerings of the Jews displayed a perfect image, they could have been only once presented; the majesty of equity would have forbidden the presumptuous ceremony, that attempted to appease, what was already pacified. The Jews' sin-offerings were only the shadow of an image, they were only the remembrance of sin once every year; of sin, which though expiated ceremonially in the original passover, was yet morally unbroken and untouched, and which cried annually before them for that vengeance which it merits. The law, as well as reason, or the inspirations of the New-Testament, enstamped its seal of imperfection upon its own methods of expiation: Its usages suggested to our

apostle, what his reason, and the spirit of inspiration, so powerfully urge in these subsequent words, "For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins: But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year: For it is not possible that the blood of bulls, and of goats should take away sins."

Thus we have illustrated our first object,—we have shown what is meant by Jesus suffering without the gate. And the sum of our remarks is, That a leading object of this epistle is to convince us that the Jewish dispensation was confessedly a restricted and subservient economy; that it never in its priesthood and sacrifices formally typified Christ; and that when Christ offered his great sacrifice it was as the antitype of Melchisedec; Melchisedec who was priest of the most high God, and who blessed Abraham and filiated to his sons their right of priesthood; Melchisedec who officiated without a respect to any people, and adumbrated Christ as the Saviour of sinners of mankind; Melchisedec who directs the eye to our Saviour in the open and accursed world—without the purlieus of the Jewish sanctified economy—without the camp of Israel—without the city of Jerusalem—on Golgotha the scene of the death of the excommunicated and cut off from ancient Israel.—Here Paul has shown us that Christ trode the winepress alone, and that of the people there was none with him.

Neither is our view of the subject idle speculation. It illustrates in a wonderful manner the absolute purity of God, and his perpetual jealousy of his honor; it shows us that the practical ceremonies of the Jews, as well as the prophecies, proclaimed, that the Messiah respected in his office, not any particular nation, but the world at large; and it leads us to trace the free dispensation of mercy, its offices, and its blessings, to the point in history, where we see Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, elevated above the temporal, and shining by the spiritual promises that God made to him; promises that of

themselves were worthy of God, and justified the propriety of enacting and establishing those that were temporal emblems, and subservient to their manifestation. In a word, it frees the New Testament dispensation from that influence which the economy of circumcision is so apt to exert over the spiritual body of the redeemed. In respect to the external character of the New Testament church, we are taught that we are to regulate it, rather by what prevailed previous to the Mosaic economy, than by the usages and practices of that subservient and evanescent dispensation; that as Melchisedec blessed Abraham as the temporal ally of Sodom and in the open air, so our New Testament churches need no consecration like positively separated materials of ceremonial worship; nor is the kingdom of Christ to be viewed as necessarily connected with those temporal supports that upheld, on a particular spot of our earth, for a limited period, and for a subservient purpose, the material fabric of ceremonies that adumbrated it.

DISCOURSE V.

THE PEOPLE SANCTIFIED BY CHRIST'S BLOOD.

HEB. 13:12. *Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.*

THE second thing, my brethren, that in the explication of our text demands our attention, is “the people” to sanctify whom Jesus suffered without the gate. Who are those that are here called “the people?” We are still presented with typical language, and language that is immediately drawn from the Jewish economy. Because of their separation to God and of their enjoyment of his institutions, the children of Israel were called, in contradistinction to all other nations, the Lord’s people.

When Abraham was called to sojourn in a strange land, and when this land became his own by the charter of a divine promise, a seed, to spring from his loins like the stars in heaven for multitude, was planted upon it; this seed was guarded through the generations of Isaac and Jacob; and both from their original separation, and this guardianship to preserve them from intermixture with others, did the Israelites enjoy the appellation in our text. Afterwards by God there was given unto them a law which still more particularly distinguished them, and separated them from all other nations. Not only did the rainbow of a faithful promise silently surround and enclose them, and a law incorporate the variety and singularity of their privileges; but miraculous providences further pro-

claimed their character; while living prophets, correcting their tendencies to deviation, and stimulating their endeavors to maintain that eminent and happy station above all people to which God had been pleased to exalt them, uttered, from generation to generation, the most unequivocal voice. Hence, on the records of the Jewish nation we have evidences that while all other nations are considered, not as the Greeks and Romans viewed people of other regions under civil barbarism, but under a religious degradation; they themselves are the chosen and sanctified people of God. Thus Isaiah, when prophesying of the Messiah, says, I will give him for a covenant of the people, and a light of the Gentiles.

The name, Sons of God, however, was known in our world long before the promise of a holy seed was made to Abraham as the father of the Jewish nation. The worshippers of the true God obtained this appellation even in the antediluvian world. Hence, when the promise of a seed was made to Abraham, it was that he should be the father of many nations,—intimating, that as he alone was particularly chosen as the person in whose family the worship of God should be preserved, and from whose privileges the visible church should derive her character and deduce her history; so this character and history, although eminently characteristic of his own literal offspring for a time, yet would at length diffuse themselves over a wider field, and show that the God who had chosen Abraham, was the same God, who had spread the rainbow of his promise over the sons of Noah. Yes, Abraham, as has been demonstrated, is blessed, not by a messenger who resides within the circle of his own family, but by the priest of the most high God as he dwells in the world at large. Hence, all the prophecies and predictions that are made to the children of Abraham according to the flesh, lead them to remember, that, in the great plan of God's mercy, of which at present they display the only visible part, they are only a very subor-

dinate wheel, which, in performing its revolutions, will necessarily bring into view the rest of the machinery that is all compacted and jointed together with it. Consequently Rahab and Babylon, Tyre and Egypt, Philistia and Ethiopia, are, though present enemies, yet received in the mouth of prophecy, and hailed with the lips of praise, as people of the future joyful privileges of Zion. The wilderness and solitary place change their appearance before the Jews and grow into the richest verdure. As the sun of righteousness arises, they invite the kings of the earth to advance, and behold his glory.

On this principle Jeremiah, a prophet of the Jews, declared, After those days I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant which I made with your fathers, when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; but this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. True Israelites were under the Jewish economy purified and sanctified by the spirit of God, as well as saints are under the New Testament dispensation. Hence this prediction, which our apostle quotes three times in this epistle, was not intended, in its primary and literal acceptation, to teach, that in New Testament times, God would sanctify men internally, nor is it applied for this object in a single instance in this epistle. The object of it, defined and interpreted by our apostle, is, to convince the Jews of an ulterior and spiritual dispensation to which theirs was introductory, and in comparison with which it was material: a dispensation before which theirs would vanish away, and which in its own attributes would ultimately and permanently sit down the genuine form of the worship of a spiritual society. After the apostle, in the preceding chapter, has illustrated the priesthood after whose order Christ is constituted to his sacerdotal office, he, in the eighth chapter, produces this prophecy, to teach the

Jews, from their own scriptures, the designed abrogation of their former dispensation, and the inspired fact of a new covenant: and while the names of Judah and Israel are still used in speaking of this new dispensation; yet, these titles, so endearing to the ears of Israelites, obviously widen their embrace and exalt their dignity, by designating the spiritual instead of the literal seed of Abraham.

Thus the people for whom Jesus suffered without the gate are they who enjoy the privileges of the dispensation of mercy. Their character is relative to the priesthood of Christ, who was formally typified by Melchisedec, that priest of the most high God who blessed Abraham, and through him the Jewish priesthood and people; and after their subservient economy, the people of every kindred, tongue, and nation, that are called to be the spiritual seed of this great progenitor of the faithful. It would be the common, but a lame view of the subject, to suppose the objects of mercy under the New Testament dispensation interested exclusively in the happy character of those people for whom Christ suffered without the gate of Jerusalem. The Jews, while ceremonially distinguished from the people who enjoy the happy privileges of the new covenant, or dispensation of the gospel, yet, had under the cover of their ceremonies, spiritually and morally the very same offers and calls of mercy that we enjoy. Their ceremonies, we have already remarked, were merely methods of instruction; and implied, as obtaining at that time, a spiritual and moral dispensation, of which they were the material external expressions. When we answer the question then, who are the people for whom Jesus suffered without the gate? we must reply, all that have enjoyed the dispensation of his grace since the first promise on which it was founded, and all that ever will enjoy it till the end of time.

But here we must ask, did Christ suffer promiscuously for all to whom an offer of his gospel is made? And let me observe, that we are expressly informed that there is one God and

one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. This decision of holy writ shows us that the character of mediator is relative to mankind sinners, and not to the sovereign and immanent acts of Deity. Many divines in order to establish the definite satisfaction of Christ for those only who ultimately obtain salvation by him, have appeared, either to shun, or very slightly to pass over, all that the scripture declares respecting the formal relations of our Mediator's character. Instead of considering it as correlative to sinners of mankind, they have put out of sight the law to which he was made subject, and have expressed themselves as if the decree of election were the rule formally of our Saviour's obedience.

But many passages of scripture make it obvious that it was human nature that Christ took upon him, and that it was to the law of this nature he yielded his obedience. "Verily he took not upon him the nature of angels, but he took upon him the seed of Abraham." Every gradation of intelligent being has a law founded in the comparative principles of its own nature in the great scale of existence; and this text of scripture demonstrates that while it was the law of God that Jesus obeyed; yet, it was not the majesty of Deity, as it appears in a law necessarily concreated with the angels and suited to their gradation of being, but this majesty, as it appears in that law which was concreated with man, and founded in the peculiar principles of his nature. Hence says another passage enstamped with the same authority, He was made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

If I understand many divines, they consider Jesus as acting under a law peculiar to himself as Mediator; correlative to the supposed dignity of his person as God-man. They reduce the form of his character from the dignity of Deity, and elevate it far above humanity; whereas, if I understand the scriptures, the Mediator supports two forms of character,—the representative of God towards us, and the representative of man towards

God; but, in no instance, are these distinctive features of his character confounded in the discharge of his office, any more than are his natures in the constitution of his person. No, the person of Christ is one, and can in relation to its actions be viewed two ways only—as God, or as man. As God, however, it is obvious, he can be the formal subject of no law. Hence it must be as man, that he is considered as our acting Mediator, in the achievement of the work of our redemption. The form of his character is that of man; that he may represent man, and that he may reindemnify the rule of justice that man had broken. It is, indeed, a truth that the Mediator is God as well as man, and that both the nature of God and the nature of man, meet essentially in the constitution of his mediatorial person; but the light in which the Son of God the Father's servant, not by a delegated authority of headship over all things, in which sense he is the Father's representative majesty and glory to us, but as he is viewed a subject of law, of the law founded essentially and immutably in the principles of our nature, and as he is viewed under the authority of this law accomplishing our salvation, he is the man Christ Jesus.

Now relative to this view of the Mediator's character, it is obvious, that the satisfaction of Christ must be viewed as indefinite. Omniscience is not the prerogative of man, nor a perfect knowledge of the secret purposes of God. Accidentally to the character he is now actuating, the Mediator may indeed have a restricted and definite intention in his death; but to make the formal object of man's Mediator, as he sustains the character of a creature composed of flesh and blood and limited intellectual powers, to be the stamp of an immanent eternal purpose of God, and not the penalty and precept of the immutable law of man's nature, is to invert the unequivocal language of the Spirit, "Secret things belong to God, but those that are revealed to us and to our children." Neither does it alter the matter to say his divinity might have made revelations of the particular persons that were to be saved to his

humanity; for we are not now speaking of the natures of Christ, and what his human nature might have been accidentally endowed with, but we are speaking of the character which in law the Mediator sustained, as by suffering and obedience he achieved our salvation.

From what I have said it would be inconclusive to infer that the satisfaction of Christ was absolutely indefinite. It was indefinite in reference to the voice of the law that called for it, and in reference unto the aspect of the character which the Mediator, as man's representative, turned to this law: but he who planned the universe, and knows the end from the beginning, is concerned about the business of our salvation, and we must not only consider it as correlative to the character of the Mediator, but as related to the omniscient and all-perfect Creator. Now here, it is undoubted, that both in the mind of God the Father, and of God the Son, who is the first-born of every creature, by whom are all things, and for whom are all things, as well as he is our Saviour, there are and must be, among those under the dispensation of grace, a definite number in whose stead Jesus stands. God sees the end from the beginning; and as in revelation we are expressly informed, that there were a certain definite seed, whom God the Father gave to his Son in the covenant of peace between them both, to be redeemed by him; so for this seed and this only, did Christ, as before the eye of his Father, suffer. That God thus knew the end from the beginning, and that he left many to perish from an act of his sovereignty, were, we further remark, subjects of revelation, and objects of man's knowledge: hence Christ as Mediator knew that there was an election that was to be saved, and that he as their Mediator represented this election—that it was their curse that he endured and for them alone that he obeyed. These are things we know; but we do not know the particular persons whom God placed in the election; neither is this the prerogative of the Mediator—in any view of his char-

acter as Mediator, far less as man's representative;—but his prerogative as he is the great and omniscient God. Prescience and omniscience are not predicates of man or of man's representative, but of the eternal and omniscient first cause of all things,—as he is viewed, too, as this first cause.

Nor does this view of the subject militate against the death of Christ being considered as a procuring cause of particular redemption. Christ's death is definite—first, in relation to the divine purpose—secondly, as it is an estimated price by suffering, for them whom God hath chosen, and who are known to himself;—himself who cannot subject to a greater or less degree of ignominy and affliction, than his sense of justice and knowledge of all things and their qualities, will lead him, in the station of righteous judge, to express: and being definite in these senses; it is so, both as related to God as his mind views the subject in his purpose or intention; and as it is a price of redemption given to him—given as he himself a righteous judge exacts and gathers it till justice is satisfied: but it is not definite as related to the preceptive will of God, and as the divine intention runs along the line of the law which prescribes to him his duty, and guides God's Son, in the character of his Father's servant, and as our obedient and suffering surety.

! An attention to the simple distinction now made, we think, would necessarily, among all who allow of the absolutely perfect character of God, and his absolute knowledge of all things, put a stop unto disputes about the definite or indefinite nature of Christ's satisfaction. Viewed simply in relation to the character of man's representative and Mediator, it can be no more definite, in the nature of moral relations, than man can be supposed possessed of them, and suited to exercise the prerogatives of prescience and omniscience; but viewed in relation to that mind which from eternity has had an absolutely perfect view of its works, their properties and relations; and

viewed as a price estimated by God, and taken by his own hand that must do right, it is as absolutely definite, as God's character is perfect, both in knowledge and holiness.

We are aware that the view which we have just taken of the people sanctified by the blood of Christ, has been considered as destroying that freedom of will which, it is supposed, all the commands, promises, and threatenings, of revelation necessarily presuppose. But it ought not to be forgotten that the character of God is of that perfect kind, which, while it necessarily involves a mystery in its connexion with all its works, yet is never to be robbed of its essential and unalienable prerogatives because of such an inscrutable mystery. Matter is extended, and its different globes roll at immense distances from one another, and God is coexistent with all of them—he is present every where; and yet, he who is a pure spirit, in this omnipresence, certainly has no relation to our ideas of extension. No, here is a mystery, respecting the divine nature, equally impenetrable with the mystery of self-existence itself.

The connexion, however, between God and his rational creatures no less overwhelms our capacities of comprehension. We cannot know how the absolutely perfect God sustains our minds every moment, and comprehends all their motions and actions in his infinitely wise plan from which all things have originally sprung, and of which the least atom or its movements form a definite part; but we must acknowledge that it is equally possible for God, mysteriously indeed to us, to connect himself so, according to his character of absolute perfection, with immaterial and rational agents, and yet to leave unimpaired the distinctive properties of their moral nature, as it is possible for him to be every where present with material creation, and yet to leave to it the properties of extension and figure. That we act freely is a dictate of consciousness, and that we are accountable for these free actions, is a dictate of conscience—the highest authorities from which our reason can

receive testimony; but how we are as necessarily dependent creatures, to reconcile this freedom of action and this accountableness, with the relation in which the all-perfect, intelligent first cause, stands to us, is a matter that we can no more account for, than we can account for God's ubiquity, and coexistence with figured and extended matter: and it is equally unphilosophical and unreasonable to dispute the former as to deny the latter. From everlasting God in absolute perfection looked through the whole system of his creation, and saw all things in themselves and their relations; beheld every wheel turn, and the influence it produced on every other; saw all acting, and each in its own sphere and on its own points of contact;—till both in material and immaterial things, the great drama of nature, which God had planned, even to the least particle that enters into its composition, or ray of intelligence that illumines the dark material pillars of the great fabric, closed its actings.

From what we have said, it is obvious, that under the expression, "the people," in relation to the external covenant which subsists between God and man by the great high priest of our profession, and as sprinkled with his blood in the privileges that invest them, all those, as already remarked, to whom the call of the gospel has come, must be supposed included. The blood is the blood of Jesus an high priest, not after the order of Aaron, but after that of Melchisedec; this high priest of Jews and Gentiles is the Mediator between God and sinners of mankind; and the offer of the peace that is by his blood, must comport with the nature and relation in which we are led thus to contemplate his character. The proffer of the waters of life must be, Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters and drink.

But this general dispensation of his grace must, like all the other works of God, be traced to God himself, and tried by his perfect knowledge of the end from the beginning; and as we undoubtedly know that under the general cover of offered mer-

cy many are left utterly to perish; so God the judge of all the earth that will do right, must, in the character of the author of his secret purposes, and of righteous actings, be viewed as definitely ordaining what takes place within the happy circle of salvation; and this as justly connected with that person to whom he hath sworn, and who by sufferings and punishment hath achieved our redemption. In the spirit of true philosophy and sound reason, we must view an expression of the sovereign will of God, that teaches the properties of the creature, recognizes their nature, and does justice to their capacities of acting, called by divines his preceptive will; and we must also acknowledge an intelligent, energetic will, that looks through all parts of his vast works, and as the first cause directs and moves them; and though, in relation to the former of these, the proffer of the gospel is to all indefinitely as people separated by the appointment of God to have the blood of the great sin-offering of Christ sprinkled towards them; yet, in relation to the latter, the people must mean, those that Christ was appointed in the decree of the covenant of redemption to represent; whose debt he actually paid to justice; and who, in a subordination to this decree, and as the fruit of this purchase, believe in him. The righteousness of the antitypical and real passover is to all Jews and gentiles that hear of Christ's name; but it is upon all them only who believe.—Yes, my brethren, we may be called saints because of our privileges issuing from the sufferings of Christ; but unless we be united to him by faith, unless we believe the testimony of God respecting his Son, and from the matter of this testimony, which sets his obedience unto the death before us as the foundation on which our hopes of eternal life are to rest, we receive him, never can we be entitled unto the high and interesting character, which the spirit of inspiration sets up, purified and washed, in our text, and, as the antitype of the holy people of God of old, calls them, “the people.”

From the view taken, it is evident, that the first promise to Adam and to his immediate descendants, comprised the matter

of a covenant respecting salvation by the Messiah: that the covenant made with Noah, a preacher of righteousness, exhibited the faithfulness of God under the same solemn aspect: that Abraham's covenant began to withdraw from them the light that in faint rays had previously wandered through the world at large, and to direct them into a more bright but contracted incidence on his own posterity: that the covenant with the nation of Israel actually enclosed them upon the people and spot of the earth, which, during the Mosaic dispensation, were peculiarly separated and sanctified by them: and that at the end of this dispensation, when the sun himself arose, the same hath taken place with respect to all that he hath yet visited in his progress over our world. The almighty God considers himself bound by his promise and oath, to give eternal life to as many as believe in his Son; and he condescends to present himself in this character to all to whom he proclaims his gospel. His voice announces, "he that believeth shall be saved."

I would remark further here, that it appears that Christ, in suffering for those whom according to the purpose of God he represents, did not suffer to an abstract relation of the law. While we cannot enumerate the variety of their transgressions, nor estimate the different shades of their guilt; yet God must perceive the sins of all men, and decide at once on the amount of their desert; and as he must calculate the just and immutable demands of his law, so, when he imposes upon man's surety, what, in moral reckoning, his absolute knowledge perceives, and his holiness detests, it must be the exact weight of punishment which the balances of his holy sanctuary have adjusted.*

*The Hopkinsians assert that justice is satisfied so that, in moral reckoning, were it not for the decrees of God, all men might be saved; there being put into the cup of the death of Christ all that justice for all men could prepare. But in opposition to this, the justice of God here is kept immaculate, by his omniscience presenting to it the amount of the desert

To speak of an intrinsic merit in the punishment of Christ, of itself sufficient for the salvation of all men, is both to mistake the attributes of punitive justice, and the nature of Christ's substitution; as well as to involve the extent of Christ's satisfaction under the grasp of that decree of God which appointed the Mediator to his office, and which connected him, as an effectual means, with the end of salvation to be obtained. If Christ was appointed by a decree of God to his office; if this decree, in laying out the extent and formalities of it, contemplated, in its bosom, merit for the salvation of all men; and if this means is connected with its end, which, in the nature of things, can be only conditional or absolute, then it will follow, either according to the view of Armenians, that Christ died conditionally for the whole world, or according to the view of some others, that he died absolutely for all mankind.

The intrinsic excellence which fills us with admiration as we contemplate Christ, was not in the cup of his death itself appointed by God as the specific indemnification of his law, but in the dignity of his person, which, had it been so appointed by God, might have satisfied for a thousand worlds; and in that exuberance, which, from this essential dignity, made the death of Christ of immeasurable value. The mistake of many on this subject is, they forget that the death of Christ with respect to its merits, must always be estimated by the judge who inflicts it, and that whatever his sense of justice

of the sins of all men, and by this justice laying no more of it upon Christ, than the weight which belongs to the persons whom he represents. The method of a settlement on general terms with justice originates in the absolute weakness of men; and reminds us of the views of mankind formerly respecting the constitution of material things. It was supposed that in the bodies of matter the elements were huddled fortuitously together; but modern science teaches us that through all nature the elements unite together on the principles of absolutely definite proportions.

imposes as the punishment due from the penalty of the law, that, and that alone, whatever be the overflowing excellency of the person, can be denominated the merit of his achievement by suffering. The surety of the elect could give no more than justice exacted. I came not, says he, to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

The decree respecting the appointment of the Mediator to his office, and which must decide the extent of object contemplated in his death, exhibits itself, in scripture, in two aspects—the first respects his relation to mankind sinners, and the second respects the individuals whom, from amongst these, God had sovereignly chosen, and in this decree of the Mediator to his office, had united to him; and whose punishment, as thus represented in him, he had adequately and justly to endure. “I lay down my life for the sheep.”

The offer of the gospel is not founded on a physical sufficiency in the death of Christ for the salvation of all men; but in the relation of the Mediator's office to sinners of mankind; nor can it be objected to this view of the subject, that since men are called by the gospel promiscuously, it would be inviting those who are not interested in the death of Christ by the intention of God, to partake of a feast which had not been prepared for them. The call of the gospel simple and undefined, does indeed address every ear, it sounds an alarm to every description of sinful character, and proffers the blessings of life to it: but it ought never to be forgot, that the present subject of our discussion always presupposes an inquiry on the part of the persons addressed; an inquiry invited by the known prerogatives of God's sovereignty, and a knowledge of the distinction between his secret and revealed will—whether all men are to be saved, or part only; and here the minister of truth must repeat what God himself hath said on this very subject, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.” Hence Jesus, who is the great prophet of his church, stood himself and cried,

“If any man thirst let him come to me and drink;” he commanded his prophets and his apostles to do the same; and yet Jesus said, in the ministry of the same office, “I know whom I have chosen.”

Again, we would still further remark on this clause, that our view exhibits the Mediator as officiating between two parties—representing God to us—and us to God. His two natures meeting in the constitution of his mediatorial person, occasion actions sometimes to be ascribed to the one nature which logically belong to the other. Feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood;—God can neither suffer nor die;—God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world by that man whom he hath ordained: It is not the prerogative of man to try the heart and reins, and decide eternally upon their qualities. Hence we must remark that Jesus as Mediator has a twofold headship in heaven; a headship as the representative and forerunner of his people, in which character our title to heaven is realized in his person; and a headship over all things and relations extrinsic to his church, and by the authority of which he makes all things work together for her present and eternal welfare. To the first of these stations he hath made his way through the perfect discharge of the duties of the law of man's nature. Qualifying himself for it by the assumption of humanity, he merited it by obedience and suffering, and now possesses it as the strict legal issue of the work which he performed. But to the second he hath been appointed, as a free and honorary reward sovereignly bestowed as he is the representative of his Father in the glorious dominion which has been disposed to him. Hence in this character he directs all things; will judge the world; and, when the drama of the universe is wound up, he will retreat from the immediate station he now occupies—that, in this sense, the Son himself, who had in his humiliation to say, My Father is greater than I, may, in his exaltation, be subject to the Father.

We may just add one other remark, connecting the preceding, and the present discourse, and the members of the present among themselves,—that the first born of Israel were the life and lords of their brethren, and so when Christ is connected with every creature as its first born, he is viewed as the Creator and Lord of it; when again he is connected with the redeemed as their first born, he appears before us as the origin of their life, and the sovereign of their conduct; and when as Mediator he has a name given him which is above every name, it is the majesty of Deity that shines upon the robes of his character, and makes every knee in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth, bow to him.—As God then, my brethren, Christ is our Creator; as God's vicegerent in the kingdom of the universe, he is our guardian, in life, in death, and in the state of the dead, and as he is our proper representative, he is our life itself,—having begotten it, and preserving it—distilling the dew of grace from his own fulness to increase and ripen the field of his saints, till, as a holy nation, a peculiar people, a royal priesthood, the image of himself, they sit down on his throne in the highest heavens.—Oh! Jesus, we are thy people by profession; make us thy people, not by the will of the flesh, nor by the will of man, nor by the blood of our privileges, but by the water and spirit of life

DISCOURSE VI.

SANCTIFICATION FROM GUILT.

HED. 13:12. *Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.*

HAVING explained, in the two former discourses, the two clauses which communicate separate and distinct ideas, we come now, my brethren, to show that Jesus sanctifies "the people" with his own blood. This is the most interesting part of our undertaking, instructive of itself, reflecting light on what has preceded, and connecting the whole into a magnificent and solid structure.

It must be remembered that the sanctification which is effected by Christ, according to the import of the word sanctification in this epistle, comprises purification from guilt, a title to the possession of heaven, and internal purity conformable to the high pretensions of this title. The Israelites were purified ceremonially by their passover, from that sin the wages of which is death; they passed through the wilderness living upon manna, heavenly food; and they never rested till they entered into their promised land. Hence, when the true Israelites are sanctified by their great high priest, there are three relations in their purification. Yes, as Christ is anointed with the spirit, justified in his resurrection from the dead, and ascends into heaven; so his people are anointed, justified and glorified. "For both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one."

In entering on the illustration of this momentous portion of our work, we premise, that Christ who sanctifies the people with his blood, and whom we have, in all our preceding reasonings, presumed to be peculiarly connected with them, is strictly and properly, by the appointment of God, the representative in law of his people.

The principle of representation, though, in this case, opposed by many, is yet recommended to our belief, by its practical interpretation in all departments of natural and human operation. Every company transacts its business by agents, every nation has its ambassadors, every people organize and carry on their affairs by representatives; the planets, in their respective orbits, bear along, under their immediate attraction, their respective satellites; and philosophy says that the solar system itself describes a slow path, in the boundless regions of space, around an unknown and distant centre, felt by the sun, and tacitly submitted to by his attendants. The angels are ranked under orders of precedency; the messengers of darkness appear in legions, and their mighty captain to whom they look gives his commissions and receives congratulations; and the race of men make way for succeeding generations, through that dreary state which is abhorrent to their nature, and which scripture informs us is an entail from the unhappy purchase of our common father.—But this truth, thus formally stated, will interweave itself, and glean strength to its character, sometimes more and sometimes less perceptible, throughout all our subsequent reasonings.

We are to prove, to-day, that, in sanctifying them, Christ purifies his people from guilt.

This is evident, in the first place, because Christ suffered, and his sufferings must have obtained the forgiveness of the sins of his people. Jesus, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Jesus, in his estate of humiliation, suffered hunger, cold, thirst, watching and care, slander and reproach, every kind of temptation,

agony, and death. Standing the substitute of that man whose history informs us, that, as all objects attract or repel one another in nature, so, even malign intellectual beings are permitted to interfere actively with his concerns, Jesus fulfilled all righteousness by satisfying the law of man, in those trying circumstances, where this his foe could make the most dismal attack. The legions of darkness carried the waters of bitterness into the soul that was holy, harmless, and undefiled, but which was pierced with the sharpest arrows that ever inflicted a wound. The sons of men, who look upon appearance only, dipped in malice their shafts, and reached the heart in the instance of the Son of man. They rejected his title, they condemned him for blasphemy, they pierced his hands and his feet on the accursed tree. And God, in his character of holy judge, met with him in Gethsemene, and wrung his frame in agony, and his soul with exceeding sorrow even unto death; and at death, when all truly righteous martyrs, in the heroism of their minds, and from the ardor of their righteous cause exclaim, that they would not exchange their situation for a thousand worlds, Jesus, on the cross, in the mystery of his suffering, stood alone, and exclaimed, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!

Now, did providence inflict these sufferings on one that was free from personal fault, and also imputed sin? Could God thus bring every kind of misery, cruelty, and death itself,—an accursed death, upon him that was personally sinless, and separate from sin in every respect?—The realization of this supposition would give us a strange and an unfavorable idea of that supreme and guardian intelligence, whom reason pronounces every way just and righteous. What injustice, in the view of reason, to inflict, in an unparalleled manner, those very sufferings which we suppose a consequence of sin, and which on all hands are allowed to be what are to punish it, on him that is absolutely innocent; or how does this agree with what God hath declared in his own word? Is it ever there said that God may punish such

innocence? Is it ever there said, that however inoffensive, however holy and harmless one may be, yet, he will not spare this one, but will exceed his ordinary course to punish and afflict him—snatching off the martyr's joy when all leave him but his God? Against this scripture and reason remonstrate.

But, my brethren, it is not more impossible to account for the singular sufferings and death of Christ, without supposing them all to take place in our guilty room, than it is possible to reflect upon them in his instance, and not perceive that they must be a real sacrifice for sin. If Christ voluntarily undertook to satisfy for iniquity; if he had a right to do so, and did voluntarily subject himself to man's obnoxious relation to the law of God; then God the Father could subject him to all the sufferings he underwent. As the wages of sin is death, he could pour into his soul all the bitterness of it, and produce on his body all its immediate effects. This was what equity on the supposition of a substitution authorized and required, and could not but inflict.—Are Christ's sufferings, then, we ask, the real demolition of it, as well as the effect of guilt?

Christ, my brethren, is God and man in one person. We would not at present prove but presume this; asking if any language could be supposed so unguarded as that of scripture respecting Jesus, if he is not to be viewed as a divine person? He is called God in climaxes of language where the mind is led to the belief of the most exalted acceptation of words; the name Jehovah, peculiar to God in the vocabulary of Israel, is given to him, and affixed upon him by interpretations that attempt to show us the true mystery of this peculiar name; his agency in the creation of all things is exhibited as a subject never to be questioned; providence is in his hand as in that of one who, not like a creature, but the omnipotent preserver, continually manages all its concerns; worship by angels and men, is, in its highest attributes of praise presented to him; he possesses, in the field of revelation, the natural and moral attributes of Godhead; and, what no other is deemed able to

perform, he saves the souls of men, and at judgment will judge their most secret thoughts.

If Christ be the true God, for himself in this character he is under no law, and in the same act in which his Father sovereignly appoints him to undertake it, he must be supposed equally sovereignly to accept the work of our redemption; hence his human nature, which is personally united to the divine, is justified, in its moral acquiescence to suffer for us, from the dignity of the union to which it is admitted, from the promises of assistance and acceptance in the work to be accomplished, and from the glorious reward of it, heir of all things, and judge of the world, to which, in the person of the Son of God, it is exalted.

Now what end must be supposed accomplished by this personal glory and dignity, mixed with those sufferings and death, which this son of God underwent?—The moral works of God have all an end correspondent to the dignity of the means which he employs to accomplish them; as is clear from the perfection of his nature, and wisdom of his plans. How, then, could such glory be obscured by such ignominy, could such life be supposed subjected to such an accursed death, could such innocence be involved in the deepest consequences of guilt? Is there within the scope of human imagination an end that will justify this dispensation of the Almighty; but that great and singular one which justice and wisdom, in the absolutely perfect progress of their procedure could not attain, but by the death of that person, who could both die, and, in the dignity of his character, give infinite value to the act of his death? No! The sufferings of the Son of God, in our nature, were what the expiation of guilt demanded, and the excellence of his character perfects this expiation. The word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of his Father, full of grace and truth. When we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.

But I remark, in the second place, that Christ must have by his blood obtained the remission of the sins of his people, from the contrast which is stated in the scriptures between the purification obtained by the sacrifices under the law of the Jewish economy, and that purification which they ascribe to Christ.

That the sacrifices under the Jewish dispensation did make an atonement, according to the end for which they were appointed, is indubitable from the whole voice of scripture. The unanimous voice of the innumerable passages which mention the Jews' sin-offerings is, that, in one respect, a ceremonial, they make an atonement; and their burnt-offerings, which were the first transcript in their positive economy taken from their sin-offerings on the great day of atonement, and were distinguished from them only by producing a sweet smelling savor unto God, in all their history among the patriarchs, where they were alone simple as the first passover, and in the Mosaic economy, where they spread out into a great variety, are uniformly said to be an acceptable atonement unto God. Whatever is the pollution or vice, the transgression or offence of Israel, these sacrifices purge them by their blood.—To this view, there is not the shadow of an objection, in the fact, that there were some sins in Israel, such as murder, adultery, and idolatry, for which no sacrificial atonement was appointed nor allowed. The perpetrators of these sins, as soon as their guilt was ascertained, and the unhappy character into which they had entered appeared, died, and absconded from the name and privileges of Israel. We speak of Israelites as the sons of Jacob,—purged and preserved till the circle of their emblematical economy is filled up and evanishes.

This atonement, however, which was made for ancient Israel was typical and ceremonial only; and Christ is the substance of which these sacrifices that so undoubtedly made it, were a shadow.—In many places of the New Testament, and indeed in the whole of this epistle to the Hebrews, is Christ oppo-

sed to the Jewish sacrifices, and exhibited as the antitype of them. Remembering that particulars are included under general views, we see, that the whole of the Jewish dispensation is contrasted with that of the Christian; particularly in Paul's epistles to the Galatians, the Ephesians, and the Colossians, and the subservient, introductory, and typical nature of the former, clearly and incontrovertibly established. In particular, as evidencing a typical relation to Christ, the great antitype that gives virtue and efficacy to every dispensation, it is said, in almost interchangeable expressions in all these epistles, that Christ by his death exhibited the body of which the legal sacrifices were a shadow, and abolished in his flesh the law of commandments contained in ordinances. He blotted out, says Paul expressly to the Colossians, the hand writing of ordinances that was against us, and which was contrary unto us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross. Indeed, the whole of the writings of the New Testament conspire to the establishment of this very point. Christ came, say the gospels, to destroy the Jewish temple, and to raise it up again, in its spiritual character, in three days. What the law, says Paul to the Romans, could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God, in sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, hath performed. Before the Corinthians, Christ is the passover sacrificed for us, and the rock smitten. And in all the speeches recorded in the Acts of the Apostles—the sacred orators, in the solemnity of persecution and death, review the promises of the Fathers, and the privileges that were once so discriminative of the beloved of God, and proclaim that their reign is terminated, and that the kingdom of heaven, under the Prince of Life, whom they had crucified, has now appeared amongst men.

But for the establishment of this momentous truth, the manner in which the spirit of inspiration conducts this epistle, affords us the most clear, decisive, and irrefragable proofs. The whole scope of this epistle is to establish, from the Old Testa-

ment scriptures, the divinity of the New Testament dispensation, and the superiority of this dispensation to that which was introductory to it. In the beginning of it, its superiority in regard to its author in his official character, as the great prophet and high priest of our profession, is elucidated; and then comes before our view the shadowy and ineffectual temple and sacrifices of the priesthood of Aaron, compared with the substantial and efficacious sacrifice of him, who, by the oath of God, had been constituted a priest after the order of Melchisedec. In particular, in the ninth and tenth chapters, the inferiority and typical import of the Jewish sacrifices, and on the other hand the effectual and all-prevalent virtue of the sacrifice of Christ, is proved beyond the power of sophistry to bestow the least coloring on a contrary opinion. Here the chain of nervous and close reasoning, of appropriate and unambiguous expressions, will neither yield nor be mistaken. For the law, having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never make the comers thereunto perfect; but (it is spoken in immediate contrast) Christ, by the one offering of himself, for ever perfected them who are sanctified.—In a word, two priesthods are, from the fifth chapter of this epistle, obviously compared; both are ordained for men in things pertaining to God; both offer gifts and sacrifices; the sacrifices of the one may satisfy to the purifying of the flesh, but cannot purge the conscience—their economy therefore waxeth old and vanisheth away: the other purges the conscience by being once offered, ceases to be repeated because the end of perfection is attained; and it is the whole and only offering of the priesthood of that moral dispensation where the character is cleansed and the heart is purified. If the sacrifices of the law, those sacrifices that made an atonement, were not types of Christ and he their formal antitype, contraries ought not to be contrasted, shadows ought not to be either compared with them, or to be distinguished from their substances.

If, however, my brethren, the sacrifices under the law made a typical atonement, and if Christ be the antitype of these sacrifices, it will follow, that he made a real atonement. For does not the very notion of a figure and that which it represents establish this part of our inquiry? Are not the sign and the thing signified relative concerns; and the reality found always in the principal, the appearance of which is exhibited in a portraiture of representation? Is the image reflected in the mirror without the reality presenting itself before it? Is the shadow of the forest on the mountain's top seen waving in the breeze, and forming with surrounding objects a beautiful landscape in the lake below, without the existence of such a mountain and forest really in nature? No, every shadow must bear a relation to a substantial object, every figure to a reality; and the types which under the Old Testament dispensation by ceremonial expiations prefigured Christ, and which only prefigured him, must present him to us as making a real atonement. Yes, if the whole of the language of scripture and reasonings of the apostles in stating a contrast between the Jewish dispensation and its sacrifices; and the christian dispensation and its great sacrifice, which sprinkles every page of its law, and every person of its spiritual Israel, be not beyond parallel unappropriate and unmeaning, we have a second demonstrative argument that Christ has purified his people from guilt.

But I observe, thirdly, that it appears that in sanctifying his people by his blood, Christ procured remission of sins for them, from the attitudes and stations which his death is represented to assume in the field of revelation.

In the first stay and prop of fallen man, the words which are both prophetic and promissory, present Christ as combating Satan the old Serpent, as wounding and being wounded, and thus achieving our salvation. The seal of that promise of God to Abraham which begat his faith and preserved

it, distilling joys and consolations, as he wandered a pilgrim on earth without any fixed habitation, was a sign of blood in the flesh of Abraham, which taught him that the joy and consolation which he experienced, were not from the simple exercise of faith on the promise of an absolute God, but of that faith which feeds upon its peculiar object that is afterwards to be revealed as bearing the cup of salvation filled from its own blood. When the first born of Israel were dedicated to the Lord, as a type of the seed of him who is the first born of every creature, they were sanctified by the blood and death of those victims, which we have already shown to be figures of the real sacrifice of the Son of God. When the psalmist is about to predict that a seed shall serve Christ in every age, he previously surveys the dismal scene on which he purchases the honorable prospect; and beholding the dark clouds that gather around him, and the tempest they pour upon his head, about to write it in a song of mourning for the church, in the very first words, he anticipates the expressions of the expiring Jesus, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Isaiah looks into his endless kingdom, and sees in Christ's hand the grand plans of infinite wisdom advancing; he sees him prolonging his days, and the pleasure of the Lord prospering in his hand; but just before this grand prospect arises to view, the spirit has been leading the prophet to see him as a lamb led to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so opening not his mouth. Daniel who saw kingdoms rise and fall, saw, among the rest of his illustrious visions, that holy city and its walls, for the present restoration of which he so successfully prayed, after it had been built and had stood for ages, yet overturned and its sanctuary destroyed, —he saw the sacrifice and oblation of Israel cease for ever; and yet he sees an end made of sins, reconciliation made for iniquity, an everlasting righteousness brought in, the vision and prophecy sealed up, and the most holy anointed;—and all

this at the moment when Messiah is cut off, but not for himself.

The prophecies reach their fulfilment on the page of history, and the morning star that ushers in the clear day of New Testament privileges appears:—the voice of one crying in the wilderness, says, “Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight:”—the children of Israel assemble around John the Baptist, and believe him a prophet:—he solemnizes them by preaching the doctrine of repentance:—he fills them with the wonders of faith, saying, I baptise you with water unto repentance, but he that cometh after me, is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:—heaven marks this great and expected character by a sign, and a voice, saying, this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased:—and, after all this preparation, and amidst all this solemnity, John, the harbinger, says of this Son of God, as he advances towards him, and has attracted his eye among a great crowd of spectators, “Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.”—On the passover where the lamb was sacrificed that occasioned this beloved Son to be thus called the Lamb of God, Jesus and his disciples attend, when all things are ready for the Son of man going as it had been written of him; and with a certain prospect of his death just before him, he takes the cup which contains the wine of the paschal feast, and abrogating the Old Testament institutions by virtue of the introduction of a new and better testament, he says, “this cup is the new testament in my blood shed for the remission of the sins of many; drink ye all of it.”—Miracles, my brethren, of various kinds, and of a stupendous nature, did Christ perform, and into glory was he transfigured; but although some of the former might have been selected, and made to be the admiration and praise of the church to the end of time, had Jesus’ death been an evidence only of his divine mission, and not our sanctification from the guilt of sin; and although the latter shone the

brightest of the marks of his history, if his honor only had to be kept in perpetual remembrance; yet, we see, that when Christ is to summon the world around him, and to enlist all their admiration and praise towards his character, he does not show himself with the dead rising at his call; or the sea subsiding at his reproof; or in the glory of transfiguration, where his countenance is like the sun, and his raiment like the light of the sun; but he singles out the sign of the prophet Jonas, the death that he is now to accomplish at Jerusalem, on this event he hangs the whole glory of the New Testament dispensation, and to it he turns the admiration and praise of his followers till the end of time,—Do this in remembrance of me. The saints in the heavenly Jerusalem have attained perfection; their knowledge is unclouded, their halleluiahs need no more the incense of intercession; and yet by the laws of their glorious abode and as the natural birth of their attained perfection, they, looking on the Son of God as a Lamb that had been slain, exclaim, “unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and to his Father, be honor and glory for ever and ever, amen.—Great God! can any believe that the death of Jesus, which is the burden of Old Testament prophecy, which, in the inspirations of the New Testament, throws into shade all the miracles and glory of Christ, which stands alone as the great object of wonder and sacred praise to all his followers, and which the triumphant church still alone celebrates, is intended for no higher purpose, according to the opinion of some professing christians, than an evidence of sincerity in a great prophet?—as the death of Paul, and of Peter, and of all martyrs is an evidence that it is truly their belief they delivered to the world? Is not the cup of the new testament in Christ’s blood, filled with the blood of a real atonement, the blood shed for the remission of sins?

Let us look around through the wide prospects of revelation: If it be the sanctification we have pointed out, those scriptures

which address men in all circumstances and conditions of life, and which borrow language from all the scenes of their joy or mourning, will not leave us without gathering illustrations from all quarters to this momentous topic. Throughout the whole world at the time that Jesus suffered, and when his disciples described in writing the nature and end of his sufferings, there were sacrifices offered, and it was believed that those whose blood was shed were sacrifices expiatory of guilt: But while the offerers might have been mistaken as to the particular attainment of the victims which they led to the altar to render their Gods propitious to them; under the spirit of inspiration, the language which expressed their belief, is borrowed by the apostles and applied to Christ's death, without explanation or hesitation; and they distinguish it from all sacrifices of thanksgiving in this pointed manner, "He was sacrificed for us, he is the propitiation for our sin, through whom we have the atonement, but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."—But the world long oppressed in misery, cannot be mistaken respecting the language which describes the redemption of those captives whose definite character, and substantial ransom, ancient warfare had so long established. Is Jesus' death called a ransom? is it so called without hesitation? is the language repeated by the spirit of inspiration and still supposed sufficiently clear?—Be assured, it is not intended, by this artless but impressive use of the instrument of conveying human thought, to steal unawares the chains of falsehood upon the disciples of the religion of Christ, and to immure them for ever in the darkness of error. No, I see the light of the Sun of Righteousness and feel his warmth, under a cloudless sky, whenever I read these expressions and such like, "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity: In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins: He was made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."—

Moreover, a sense of property is a principle that has ever operated in human nature, it has operated by leading one to view his own stock, and to compare it with the stock of thousands around, and then to seek to transfer the least desirable in his own possession for what he esteems more highly in the possession of his neighbors; and the words to buy, to purchase, never floated, in the atmosphere of human society, vague and undefined, but in all ages comprised the discriminations which human interests ascertain and so often review; and when metaphorically applied to moral subjects, the analogical meaning which truth and justice affix to them is equally strict, and equally recognizes a change of relations on the principle of a standard of equity. But Christ hath bought us with a price, he hath purchased to himself a people, he hath bought us not with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with his own precious blood.—Hence I am forced to conclude that though the love of God to us be the spring of our salvation; yet God is so holy, and so determined to show his perfect equity to all his intelligent creatures, that, in his character of moral governor of the universe, he will not part with a sentence of pardon for the robbery that has been committed on the prerogatives of his holy law, till, in moral reckoning, the last farthing has been paid to punitive justice.—But, in a word, we are sinners, God, as scripture declares, has been offended by us; and our reconciliation to this offended God has been effected by the death of Christ. When we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his son. Collect, my brethren, your powers of reason around this view of the sufferings and sacrifice of the son of God.—Reconciliation to God is not said to be accomplished by persuasion, by peculiar words that dropped from Christ upon the cross, and which appeased an offended Deity, and turned the hearts of sinners towards him. Throughout revelation, it is the act of Christ's death itself, that is represented as the cause of reconciliation, and in numberless forms is shown to our eye, as the only object, that God will admit to

be honored with the renown of this blessed achievement. Truth never flowed so sweetly from the lips of the speaker as from those of Jesus, and never were such incontrovertible evidences of this truth being delivered by a messenger of heaven, as shone in the miracles, which, during his life and at his resurrection, took place; but the excellence of his instructions, and the omnipotence of his miracles, lie in undisturbed obscurity, and not an object does the spirit of God, in this great and joyful business of reconciliation, press on our sense, as the noble cause of accomplishing it, but the sufferings and death of him who is the Son of God. Why, oh! hearers, has murder been condemned by the eternal law of righteousness, why has the murder of the innocent been considered an aggravation of the crime, why has the murder of the prophets, and holy men of God, been branded with marks of his hottest displeasure, if the death of the apostle and high priest of our profession, is, thus viewed in the light of simple death only, an odor of a sweet smell unto God? This death of Christ reconciles all things in heaven and in earth unto God; but if this be not, by being a satisfaction to infinite justice, reason is bewildered; eternally bewildered, in reflecting upon God's passing by all wonders of providence, and all other points of the miraculous history of Jesus, and fixing the eye of men and angels upon this one event as the only means of reconciliation of sinners to himself; this event which is so abhorrent every where else; this event, the ignominious nature of which would have made his historians, had they considered it as a violent natural occurrence only, seldom advert to it, whilst every page would have teemed with the splendor of his miracles, and the glory of his resurrection; this event which stands as a mere account of murder between God and ancient infidel Israel, who imbrued their hands in his blood, that Israel, who for this daring crime, are, in their children, under a rod of vengeance to this day; the event which, however, distinguishes the believing Israel, throughout scripture, with that adoption which is a complete contrast to this

miserable rejection of the Jews; the event which stands and will stand on every leaf of the New Testament, the joy and exultation of those apostles who saw it once as the death only of their master, and all forsook it and fled; but who received the promise of the Father, and then received it, as the redemption, not by the power of their Messiah's life of temporal Israel, but by the atonement of his death, of that Israel with whom is made the new covenant in his blood.

But I have not yet done with my elucidation of the scriptural station of the death of Christ. Christians, the apostles and prophets were inspired in all the messages which from heaven they bore to men, and the truths which they uttered were the uncontaminated favors of infinite wisdom. In vindication of their sincerity in communicating the impulses of the spirit only, they submitted to every hardship, and to death itself; they were stoned, they were sawn assunder, they were slain with the sword, they were crucified; but wonderful to tell, revelation has passed over, after giving long histories of their lives, all these memorable exits of apostles and prophets, as if their death, after they had served their generation, were not worthy to occupy a line of revelation, or a thought of immortal man. Moses was a prophet and legislator; but what says the spirit of his death? His life is minutely described His birth, his exposure, his flight, his marriage, his circumcision, his miracles, his grief, his divine conferences, his intercessions; but his death is out of the view of men, and is reckoned unworthy of a single letter from the pen of inspiration. Some have said that Isaiah was sawn assunder. Who knows? Is Isaiah's death of any interest to the world? He was a holy man; but his death is less taken notice of in inspiration than the path of the raven which Noah sent from the ark, and which went to and fro till the waters were abated. Of Peter it has been said that he was crucified, and with his head downwards at his own request. But is this a certainty? Ancient history states it. But whether it was so or not is a matter of no more moment to us,

than what became of the blossoms of Aaron's miraculous rod. Of Paul it is said that he was beheaded. It may be so. Is it any matter to angels or men whether it was so or not? His exertions may have had a greater influence on the condition of mankind than those of any other man; but his death has no more connexion with their welfare than have the particles of the dust of his body which lie in total unconcern to mankind till the morning of the resurrection. But the death of Jesus—this is portrayed in every page, this is declared by God to be the cause of reconciling the world to himself, this borrows illustrations from all the practices and ways of men to recommend it as a real satisfaction; it is called a sacrifice, a sacrifice for sin, an atonement, a propitiation, a redemption, a price, a value of purchase;—this is made the great centre around which the songs of the church militant and triumphant for ever ascend and swell into the highest anthem;—this appears in all the visions of the prophets as the cause of all things dedicated by blood. Oh! my hearers, this is the event which arises amidst the rise and fall of empires, to connect into a focus, the scattering rays of providence amongst the nations, where God's goodness had been known by rains and fruitful seasons only, or where it had shone brighter in emblems of the unspeakable gift of God; this is the event that brings heaven and earth into perpetual fellowship and one eternal family. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell, and having made peace through the blood of his cross: by him to reconcile all things to himself, by him, I say, whether they be things in heaven, or things in earth. Col. 1: 19, 20.

Oh! my brethren, what an empty concern engages the attention of the righteous inhabitants of this universe, if the death of Christ be not the price which eternal justice has set upon the release of our immortal souls! The creator, by his words, by the usages he hath appointed, by the prophecies he hath uttered, by the descriptions which he hath given, by the ordinances which he hath instituted, by the heavenly exercises which he hath lighted

up among the angels and the spirits of the just, is making a chorus as when at the birth of creation the sons of God shouted for joy:—And for what is it? I intend no impiety by what I state.—It is to afford a complete contrast to the wisdom of the morning stars when they sang together. Nothing is more sublime and beautiful than this expression respecting the devotion of the heavenly host when the foundations of our earth were laid. But now the creation tunes its harps, and not for a morning, but for eternity, to celebrate a fabric that is made mighty and grand by false colors only; as if the Deity had become weak, and yet still wanted his renown.—My brethren, I believe that if the death of Christ had not been an atonement, the creator of this universe would not have spoken of it from the beginning of time, and in every page of the New Testament, as he has done; but would have given a different character to the whole of his revealed will. Had not Christ been his eternal Son and his death the redemption of the world, I believe he would have put another subject into the mouths of immortal beings and especially those who are immediately around his throne; I believe he would have given them something worthy of his wisdom and omnipotence to celebrate;—if it had been only his sweeping off, in the last and most perfect of his dispensations, the refuge of lies into which, in some sense, the whole world, in its expiatory sacrifices, had entered. Yes, God ought, my brethren, to have banished not only the superstition of the Gentiles and the ceremonies of the Jews from our world; he ought to have set his mark of reprobation on the very language which had become so sacred and so deceitful by its use on the most solemn occasions.—But while the sun and the moon endure every thing will be the very reverse.

For, my brethren, I must be permitted a word further in support of the atonement of Christ, from the solemnities of the offering of this day. This is the day of our great New Testament festival. Some have supposed that there are many days of sacred commemoration, if not instituted, at least authorized

by God; such as solemn memorials of the resurrection and ascension of Christ. But I must state my belief to you. Had God appointed a commemoration of the resurrection of Christ, or of any miracle wrought, in confirmation of the truth of our holy religion, as he has appointed the solemnities of this day, I would tell you, that though the expressions of revelation and innumerable views in it, seem to proclaim the truth of the atonement; yet it wants that singularity of elevation to which, on the supposition of its being the price paid on the table of eternal justice, I would anticipate that it would be exalted. Elevate any thing else; the brightest of divine operations which can be the evidence of the heavenly origin of our hopes into the station of a commemorative ordinance to which God binds our conscience, I must believe that there is a singular worth and substance in it exactly proportioned to the dignity to which it is supposed elevated.

Had God commanded, my brethren, the children of Israel to keep up the memorial of Abraham's standing beside the three angels while they feasted at his table; had they been directed to commemorate the passage of the Red Sea, or the manna which supported them forty years in the wilderness; had christians been bound in the temple of the Lord, to commemorate the power of Christ when he said, Lazarus come forth; had they been bound to commemorate his ascension, or the descent of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, I would have said that the divine ordinations place many things on a parallel, and the design of the one must, in the estimation of God, be equal to that of the other.

But, my brethren, the scriptures from beginning to end are astonishingly cautious on this head. They will exalt nothing to the dignity of a commemorative ordinance, but blood. The manna will be allowed its little pot, the Red Sea will have a historical record; but circumcision and the passover are the solemn sacraments of the Old Testament.

And what is the sun of the New Testament dispensation, which presents to our eye heaven's unequivocal appointment of an ordinance where we dare not eat and drink unworthily without being guilty of the body and blood of the Lord? Ah! my brethren, remember what Moses and Elias came from heaven to speak about; remember what the angels desire to look into; remember your Saviour with the bread and the cup in his hands; and hear his voice,—this is my body broken for you, this do in remembrance of me—and this cup is the New Testament in my blood, shed for the remission of the sins of many, drink ye all of it,—and you will see that in divine reckoning there is an event which has a spirit and substance in it above all others.

What an ordinance, my brethren, is this which to-day we are to celebrate? It illustrates divine justice; interprets the ritual of Israel; it is a key to the predictions of revelation; it introduces God as a wise teacher speaking plain and intelligible language to his children about the death of his Son; it justifies the solemnity of our religious assemblings to hear of the blood of sprinkling, and it shows us that there is some meaning in this song of the triumphant church, “Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.”

This blood, in the cup of our new covenant, is the blood of sprinkling; but, ah! my brethren, is there any unholy and impious communicant? He will be sprinkled as with the drops of metal from the glowing furnace; for our God is a consuming fire. He that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to himself. But a worthy communicant! what is said of him? He is sprinkled with the spirit of promise and of assistance; and will appear, after a little, in heaven, among them who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.—Yes, my brethren, for you are called in scripture priests of the most high God, and you are called the

temple of God; and you see the exquisite propriety, from the whole tenor of the ritual of the Old Testament, and from the fundamental principles of the New Testament, of God's bestowing upon you these appellations.—Aaron was called of God; but the call was given to him through Moses; and the authority of it was not expressed in all its formalities till Moses sprinkled him, and every part of his garments, with the blood of sacrifice. In this manner he was dedicated unto the service of God; and it is as you are sprinkled with the blood of the great sacrifice which was offered up through the eternal spirit without spot unto God, that you are purged from dead works, to become a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people unto God.—They were not the materials of the temple considered in itself, not even the ark of the covenant, and the law and the mercy-seat, which made it a holy fabric of divine service; the book of the law, the ark of the covenant, and the mercy-seat, and all the furniture of the tabernacle, were all sprinkled with the blood of atonement, and thus they were dedicated unto God; and so, as you are God's temple, there is not an inward recess of your nature, nor a plan of holiness in your heart, nor a form of it that appears in your life, but which, in the estimation of heaven, is dedicated to divine acceptance by the blood of Christ. “And almost all things are by the law purged by blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was, therefore, necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.”—Yes, ye firstborn, whose robes are whiter than any fuller can whiten them, the destroying angel may pass around us; but as we are God's Israel, our names are written in heaven, and the angel has received a command to mark the door-posts and the lintels of our door

on which is the blood of sprinkling. As he passes, he must utter the declaration, Behold the blood that cleanses from all sin. There they eat, and drink, and are satisfied; and start with their loins girt and their lamps burning to the possession of their promised land.—Yea, I hear the angel of the covenant himself speak; what says he? Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Amen.

DISCOURSE VII.

SANCTIFICATION TO LIFE.

HEB. 13:12. *Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.*

THE next thing, respecting the sanctification of the people by the blood of Christ, to be demonstrated, is, that Christ purified them by that perfection of obedience, which bestows, in the eye of justice, a claim upon them, to the holiness and glory of the heavenly state.

There are some who have imagined that the atonement of Christ, or his sufferings relative to the penalty of the law, was all that justice could demand in order that eternal life might be enjoyed by those in whose stead his sufferings were sustained. Many, otherwise correct in their sentiments, assert that the law of God is fulfilled by punishment only. They aver that punishment is, in moral reckoning, a reparation of the law, restoring to it, through its penalty, every iota of which the transgression is supposed to have bereaved it in its precept; and so, say they, it must be esteemed a full completion of all its demands. Sin, say they, is exactly the counterpart of the duty that was to be performed, and the sufferings of Christ were exactly answerable to the demerit of the sin for which he suffered; therefore, they conclude, the law of our nature must be fulfilled merely by the sufferings of Christ.

Were this to be granted, it ought to be remembered, that if from scripture we could establish to a moral certainty, that the

virtue of the sacrifice of Christ, viewed thus more simply in its nature, did establish the rights of his people to heaven on a foundation of holiness, then, the issue of our inquiry on this part of our subject, would be the same, as if his obedience did divide into another and kindred relation.

But the reasoning we have repeated, in our view, evidently embraces an ingenious sophism. The law of God requires direct and uninterrupted obedience from his creature, no less when suffering for his offences, than when in an innocent state; obedience, too, not only in voluntarily suffering the punishment due to it from the immutable majesty of justice; but obedience to the primary precept of the law which imposes our duty upon us just as creatures of God. The remunerative obedience that encounters and satisfies punitive justice, is performed, in another moral habit of character, and to another view of the law, than that which lays hold upon us, and with an attribute of immutability correspondent to the perfection of God's holy character, of which it is a transcript, leads us forward, through the lines of our existence, just as the moral and accountable creatures of God. It ought never to be forgotten that the original relations of the intelligent creature, subject it to a necessity of direct and continual compliance with the primary laws of its nature, into what state soever it may accidentally precipitate itself by its own transgressions. Hence even in a state of suffering, deemed satisfactory for the offences for which the person has been subjected to it, there must be, in the form of duty, positive obedience, distinct from this voluntary and penal suffering, in order that all the relations of the law of God may be fully obtemperated.

Nor, let me remark, can this relation of the law be fulfilled, as some others would appear to think, by that faith, which under the dispensation of mercy, is presented as the means of uniting us to Christ, our representative; and who is supposed to have satisfied the penalty of the law for us. The mind that would rest in this view of the subject, that would consider

faith under the gospel dispensation as substituted for the original duty of man, never has investigated them, and thoroughly misunderstands the fundamental laws of morality. Christian faith, indeed, as soon as ever the relation in which the Mediator stands to sinners is made known, becomes a moral duty, and man is bound to the exercise of it, no less than to that of the duties which spring out of the original relations of his constitution; but it can never be said that it is substituted in the room of these duties, and that faith in Christ is now the primary law of the creature. What! can God free his creature absolutely, and in every respect, from those original laws by which its moral nature is constituted—which give it, morally considered, its very existence? No, faith under the gospel, as it is a duty, presupposes the moral character of the creature, and the law which governs it; the infraction of this law, and its reparation by our surety; and then it enjoins a dependence upon him for salvation; but faith in the Mediator, never can be considered formally a part even of the original law of our nature. The perfections of Deity, while they enjoin always a circle of obedience that is as wide as existing moral relations, yet, could never enjoin the exercise of faith in a Mediator, in those relations, the moral voice of which excluded the exhibition of a mediatorial character. We are not now speaking of faith in God, as he is our Creator; and that faith which in the dispensation of grace, God enjoins, by an expression of his will purely moral, (since, it is obvious, he could no more appoint his eternal Son to be our Mediator without requiring faith in his mediatorial character, than he could create an intelligent creature without requiring faith in himself as Creator,) this faith, we say, thus morally founded and enjoined, and the actual exercise of obedience relative to which, scripture informs us, is a pure grace, embraces Christ, its object, as a complete Saviour, who, in order that the sinner might be saved, hath fulfilled the law, in both its claims of punishment and obedience, which it had upon the sinner, and it tells that his salvation comes, not

by the works of the law, but by the free grace of God; but this faith, on the scale of moral relations, can never rise to a higher station than this, nor a greater end.

I am aware, that against the actual purchase of heaven by the merits of Christ, and particularly by his positive obedience, as we presume it necessary to be, there have been especially two prejudices entertained. Some have maintained that the actual purchase of heaven by that price on account of which the law must proclaim it to be ours, militates against the free and gracious origin of our salvation; while others say, that it destroys, by laying a moral claim upon God's justice, the duty and necessity of believers, during the course of their life of faith, pleading sincerely and humbly for the blessings of God's mercy.

But, have not the former forgot, that a sinner's salvation, can be, by an absolutely perfect God, only relatively free? The origin of our salvation is the offspring of mercy, unmixed as the purest ray that shone on Eden, and the application of it to us as miserable and wretched criminals on whom the axe of justice is falling to destroy, is as much the sovereign grace of God, as Israel's manna that came from the chambers of the dew; but as we are represented in Christ, our salvation is strictly the reward of the duty that had been appointed to us, and which we, through him, do perform. The promises of God are all unmerited, primarily viewed; but none of these promises are made to us but through Christ; and while the promises themselves have all the character originally considered we have ascribed to them; both the promises to the Mediator himself, and also to us by him; yet, the blessings which are the realization of these promises, we aver, are strictly, in moral reckoning, the reward of obedience perfectly performed. If they be not, why is heaven expected for Christ's sake? Why are we begotten through a lively hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead to it as incorruptible and undefiled? Why does Paul, in his reasoning in his first and second chap-

ters in his epistle to the Ephesians, not only set us in heavenly places in Christ in the spiritual dispensation of the gospel, but in the conclusion of his admirable reasoning on this subject, personally with Christ in the heavenly inheritance itself?

In relation unto the other objectors, I would ask, is it from a doubt or disbelief of any part of the law of our nature being fulfilled by Christ, or of the rights of our eternal possession being settled in the court of heaven by our advocate within the vail, that they imagine, that the propriety of a christian's pressing his humble petitions before his sovereign Father, is to appear? Does not the christian pray, and become animated with importunity, that his interest in Christ may be secured, and that God's glory by him in this relation of dependence on Christ, may be promoted? Does the christian in his prayers actuate the character of a creature purely, or is it that of a redeemed one, and a new creature? Opens he his eye under the absolute throne of the eternal, or as he would behold the face of God reconciled to him by Jesus Christ? By Christ as the way he approaches; on his name, as the foundation of his hope, he takes his stand; and he believes that he is to obtain mercy, and find grace to help him, by this confident method only of access to God. Heaven, then, may be secured to the elect by a title that justice will infallibly protect; and yet, at the same time, the members of the visible church of Christ, so weak, so tempted, so ready to forget God, have a foundation for prayer equally disencumbered here, as the duty of the creature is, compared with the immanent acts of Deity; and, as we should expect it to be, bearing a striking analogy to that mysterious relation.

That Christ did fulfil the precept of the law, and in fulfilling it procured actually that title to eternal life which is the subject of our inquiry, is clear from the following considerations.

First, the precept of the law of God must be fulfilled previously to any creature coming to heaven. If we have been correct in our analysis of the original relations of the creature,

and of the unalterable voice of the law in its primary feature of obligation, it is impossible, that this creature can be admitted into heaven and happiness, unless the law of his nature be fulfilled, either by his own obedience, or that of an approved substitute. The law of God, founded in the relations of the creature, is of eternal obligation, and must, if God be just and righteous, ere this creature enter into the enjoyment of the holiest of all, be entirely clothed with perfect obedience. Hence, say the scriptures, heaven and earth may pass away, but one iota of the law never shall fail.—This precept of the law, indeed, reaching to the heart and reins, and regulating all the movements and actions of life, man himself, it must be acknowledged on all hands, never could array with the beauties of perfection. It is not in man so to direct his steps as to strike out that lustre of universal and animated obedience, which, on the solemn day of God's adjusting accounts, will command his approbation; and may for ever after do honor to the lineage which has filled the heavenly inheritance. But, could the Mediator, the beloved Son of God, be made under this law, could his essential holiness and activity, be viewed as subjected to it, without magnifying and making it honorable? No! the Son of God was made of a woman; made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, That we might receive the adoption of sons. The word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

Is it supposed that the law of our nature, in its penalty and precept, might be fulfilled; and yet, since the law of faith has a moral foundation, and comes into operation in the christian dispensation by the appointment of the Son of God to be our Mediator, that a title to heaven by the obedience of Christ cannot be supposed absolutely secured for sinners;—since it may be argued, that the dispensation which is founded in the relations morally constituted by the appointment and offer of the Mediator, call for the discharge of a duty the matter of which

is extrinsic to the primary circle of duty that encompasses and binds man as a creature merely?

This inquiry is seasonably made, to lead to its own answer, and also to assist us in illustrating the true relations of christian faith. It is obvious that the mediation of Christ can be viewed in relation to this duty only two ways; either as a foundation on which God addresses us as in general reconciled to mankind, and from which he offers us salvation on condition that we believe; or as a means intellectual and moral by which, in a consistency with the principles of our nature, and the offer of Christ in the divine testimony, we may be actually united to him as our representative head. Whether with those who assert the gospel dispensation to be a new law to man of obtaining life, on a condition whose realization must ultimately be resolved into the determinations of our own natural powers; or whether this dispensation only authoritatively prescribes the duty of faith as a means of effecting our union to Christ, must be ultimately determined, by an induction of evidence from the scriptures. They are the sacred records that develop the plan of our salvation, and which will lead us to conclude whether we are to consider Christ as a star with which we are to connect ourselves by independent appetencies of faith; or whether, in the heavenly places where Christ and his people are joined together, God has made them all one planet, where the great central body describes the path that all the attendants follow, and follow, too, by the fundamental laws of their union; whether faith, in a word, has the power of self-direction, or whether it be only a simple dependency on him, in whom our individual character is legally lost—till the last judgment is past, the mediatorial kingdom surrendered up to the Father, and God himself is all in all.—For, my brethren, if Christ could fully satisfy the law of our nature in all its demands; if he did do it, and if, in doing it, he did acquire a title actually to heaven for his people; then it will follow, if God is to ratify this right for his Son's sake, that their faith to whom it is rati-

fied forms a part of the plan of their salvation; and that, though it be extrinsical to the obedience of the law of their nature, yet its operations are as infallibly secured, as the perfection of Christ's obedience is supposed necessarily to be approved of. In this way, indeed, of union to our head, the moral justification of man takes place purely for Christ's sake on the original law of the creature, and the faith and every grace of this creature come to him through Christ, and it grows up itself unto the measure of the stature of a perfect man in him: while the despiser of the gospel will be condemned, not for the want merely of internal grace, but for rejecting and contemning a method of salvation, and neglecting an exercise, both of which are so suitable to his state and intellectual condition.

Can any thing, my brethren, be more clearly proved from scripture, than that the economy of grace secures, by the moral value of the obedience of Christ, the title of his seed to heaven; and that the life of faith is begotten by his spirit's gracious operations, not to co-operate to the same end with Christ's merits, but to fit and qualify for the enjoyment of what they provide?—But our way is not yet prepared to see clearly how our views of this subject evolve from our general method of illustrating the obedience of Christ. The relations of faith cannot spring up clearly and forcibly, till our proofs of Christ's positive obedience, and his purchase of heaven by it, collect their materials, and are about to finish with a full display of all their strength.

I remark, therefore, secondly, that it appears that Christ prepares a title to heaven for his people, from all those passages of scripture which prove that Christ purchased his church to himself, compared with those that teach, that through him she obtains eternal life. The passages which show that he purchased the persons of his people, are, taking the word purchase as a general term answerable to all those that are equivalent to it in scripture, very many. We shall select a few only, where the words are most express and decisive. "Feed the church

of God which he hath purchased with his own blood." "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand:" "He hath purchased us to himself, a peculiar people, zealous of good works:" "He has bought us with a price." If the church be not the body of Christ, why is he the vine and she the branches?—why is he the foundation and she the building?—But if he did purchase her, from what state, and to what end, did the exchange take place? Without doubt, he redeemed her from the captivity of sin, and reinstated her in the privileges of that liberty, which he himself had provided for his bride, the Lamb's wife. Every one of the foregoing quotations, and all passages of scripture that are similar to them, incontestably aver, that this church, thus purchased, is Christ's own.—But for what could he purchase her as his own? Let the following scriptures answer this question: "That he might present us as holy and unblameable before him, namely, his Father, in love:" "That he might make us kings and priests unto God and his Father."—But could Christ thus present us before his Father, or, which is the same thing, put his people, free from all sin, into the possession of heaven, and this, too, under the notion of his own property and purchase, if he had not obtained a right, in the court of eternal justice, to introduce them into that holy place, and this, too, in such a relation to himself? No: these considerations, that they are said in scripture to be introduced into glory by Christ, and to be introduced as Christ's own body, make it incontrovertibly certain, that his people possess their title to the mansions above, in the right of Christ's obedience. Hence it is expressly said in scripture, "your life is hid with Christ in God, and when he who is your life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."

We observe, thirdly, in order to prove that Christ procured a spotless title to heaven for his people, and puts them in possession of it, that this appears from all those passages of holy writ

which declare that Christ is already in possession of heaven in their name. When one receives possession from the proprietor and disposer of an important situation, as a forerunner and representative head, it is granted, by him who bestows the exalted blessing, that all the representees have a right to enter, in their contemplated order, upon the enjoyment of it. This truth as naturally and necessarily evolves from the notion of representation, as heat does from the glowing furnace.

But many passages of scripture declare that Christ is entered into heaven in the capacity of our representative head, and that this is only in consequence of his having obtained a title to the distinguished eminence, by the performance of that obedience which had been assigned to him upon earth. To be sure, Christ even as man, might have been, in a private capacity, exalted to heaven, and immortal glory, as soon as ever the human nature was united to the divine. For this, the union of his humanity to divinity, and its own spotless innocence, undoubtedly laid a foundation. But he could not be elevated to it as the representative head of his people, till, by his death, he had sanctified all whom he represented, for entering, legally and virtually in him, and actually in due time, in their persons, into that pure and holy place, which exceeds all others and is less so only than its maker. The high priest of the Jews could not enter into the holy of holies, until he had sanctified himself and all the people whom he represented, by the efficacy of sacrificial atonement; and no more could Christ, as the representative head of his people, enter into heaven, till he had prepared his way, and obtained a title to it, both for himself in this capacity, and all those who were represented by him. We do not say, that Christ purchased heaven for himself, considered merely as God and man in one person; in the sense we have just now said, that even his human nature had a right to it, as soon as united to the divine; but, we say, that it was only in this way, that the Mediator, possessing all prerequisite reasons in the dignity of his person, could be exalted unto it, in the capacity

of representation which he bears. Hence Christ is said to be sanctified with his own blood. And hence the scriptures which speak of Christ only in this relation of our representative head as seated at the right hand of God the Father, always connect together as reason and consequence, the humiliation and sufferings of Christ upon earth, and his exaltation and glorification at the Father's right hand in heaven. Were it necessary we could quote many passages pertinent to this purpose. Let the following instances suffice. "The God of our fathers hath raised up Jesus whom ye slew and hanged upon a tree; him hath God exalted with his own right hand to be a Prince and Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. Acts 5:30,31. But we see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man: For it became him for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. Heb. 2:9,10. Looking unto Jesus who is the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured his cross, despising the shame of it, and is now set down on the right hand of the throne of God. Heb. 12:2. And being found in the fashion of a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore, God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name. Phil. 2:8,9. These passages put it beyond a doubt, that, to allude to his own words, it behooved Christ to suffer, and then, as a consequence of his sufferings, to enter into his glory.

Is more proof, however, of his entering into heaven, as *our representative head*, demanded? The whole language of scripture, and the whole connexion of the system of divine truth, proclaim, that when Christ did enter into heaven

through the merits of his sufferings, it was in the capacity of our representative. What is the meaning of Paul's reasoning in the epistle to the Romans, where it is shown that we are planted together with Christ in the likeness of his death, and raised together with him in the likeness of his resurrection, that we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ? what is the meaning of his reasoning in the fifteenth chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians, where it is demonstrated that "Christ is risen, the first fruits of the resurrection from the dead, and that if we rise not," so close is the connexion, "neither is Christ risen?" what is the meaning of his reasoning in his epistle to the Colossians, where it is shown, that we are buried with him in baptism, and risen with him unto newness of life? what is the meaning of all that reasoning in this epistle to the Hebrews, where, in language that almost defies a misinterpretation, he is said, not only to be our forerunner, but to be our forerunner entered into heaven for us? in a word, what is the meaning of almost all the scriptures, if Christ has not entered into heaven, and this, purely in his own right, as the representative head of his people? The scriptures are addressed to the common reason of mankind, and intend not, on the most important of all subjects, to beguile; and the following particular passages sum up the scriptural doctrine upon this interesting topic; "He is the head of the body the church, who is the beginning, the first born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence." In whom we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated, according to the purpose of him, who worketh all things according to the council of his will. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead; to an inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you. If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."

But, in a word, I observe, that it appears that Christ purchased heaven for his people, and that they come to the possession of it only by him, because his spirit is expressly said to seal them as the spirit of promise, Eph. 1:13. From what the metaphor of sealing is here borrowed, appears, notwithstanding the views of some eminent interpreters, capable of being ascertained to a moral certainty. This epistle is obviously greatly indebted for its particular language, to the Old Testament dispensation; and above all, is it indebted to it, in the immediate context. There was a promise made to Abraham that the land in which he sojourned should be given as an inheritance to his seed; and of the certainty that this promise would be fulfilled circumcision was given as a seal. Had any questioned the truth that the children of Israel, at the end of the four hundred years mentioned to Abraham, would be redeemed from that country into which their great progenitor foresaw they were to descend and where they would be afflicted, the Israelite had only to call to remembrance the mark of the flesh of his foreskin, in order to return an answer, from the covenant of God, ratified in the vivid evidence of blood, to show the impossibility of his not enjoying his promised inheritance. In the same manner, a covenant in which heaven is promised is supposed made, in the moments of the christian's union by faith to Christ, between him and that God who proclaims by his oath, in the offer of the gospel, that whosoever believes shall be saved; and this passage shows, that, in the economy of grace, the spirit is dispensed from God, by Christ, to answer, with respect to the christian, in relation to the heavenly inheritance, the same end, that circumcision did to the Israelites, in their bondage and expectation in Egypt. The sons of Abraham, if God be faithful, must be redeemed by power, and actually set on their heavenly places of divine promise; and the spiritual seed of a greater one than Abraham, and whose sign of sanctification is in his own blood, must come to their heavenly Canaan. Hence the spirit here as a seal, is called the spirit

of promise; and hence his relation to us by Christ is thus exhibited, in varied but exegetical language, in the subsequent verse. "Who is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession." Hence the water from Christ, by this Spirit, is living water springing up to everlasting life. How happy, oh! christian, that he who hath begun a good work in us, will carry it on until the day of Jesus Christ.

Thus, it is unquestionably the doctrine of revelation, that Christ who could not but magnify the law of our nature, in both precept and penalty; Christ who was voluntarily active in yielding obedience wherever the law demanded it, and ready to submit to the degree of punishment which justice could inflict, hath, in obeying the law unto death, the original law of our nature, not only redeemed us from the fetters of guilt, but hath also infallibly secured our title to heaven: and hence the relations of faith must now appear in their true colors.—Faith is not connected in a meritorious co-operation with the obedience of Christ in procuring heaven; but it is an exercise necessarily enjoined by the preceptive will of God in the dispensation of the gospel; and its actual manifestation in a reliance on the divine testimony is the mysterious ligament which, though Christ be in heaven and we upon earth, God himself uses to unite the members to their own head.

But if this be the case, faith must grow up amongst the other precious productions in the garden of our intellectual sanctification, and this internal sanctification must all flow from Christ as our representative. The body would have a contingent member engrafted upon it in any other view; a hand, for instance, living and operating whose movements originate not in the unity of personal existence, but which is connected with it in respect to origin and vegetative life, like the mistletoe with the oak. But faith has the same source with every other grace, and issues from that cistern which represents all the streams of life, fills them with their copious abundance, and which through

them sends forth that refreshment which keeps green and flourishing the fields of new obedience. By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.

But this brings us to the last of the three things that we were to demonstrate respecting the sanctification of his people by the blood of Christ, namely, that he separates or sanctifies the principles of their nature inwardly from all pollution and contamination; and this we continue to illustrate in the present discourse, as forming a component part of our present subject. Here, my brethren, let me premise that the excellence of the mediatorial character of Christ, his being God, as well as man, was a thing absolutely requisite to give dignity and worth to all his actions; but it is not a consideration that formally makes any part of that sanctification which purifies us for heaven. The excellence which entitles him to adoration and worship, and by which he performed what the most exalted creature could not achieve, all resides in his divinity; and the spotless holiness of his humanity, all terminates in the suitableness of the constitution of his mediatorial person. The righteousness which is imputed to us for our justification, and the holiness which is communicated to us for our internal purification, were either wrought out by the energies of this glorious personage, or communicated to him from the original fountain of our free salvation; and they are not his natural or essential holiness or righteousness, either as he is God or man. This internal holiness of ours, after which we are inquiring, must, indeed, manifest itself in the person of Christ, as he stands our representative; and the estimate that infinite holiness makes of it in him, in the business of imputing his righteousness to us for our justification, must, in equity, be correspondent to that internal defilement of ours, which, by communication from Christ, it is intended that this holiness shall dispel. But this holiness is not the holiness of the person of the Mediator; it is the qualification of his office; for it must all be transferred to the happy representees, when they enter into

that pure and holy place, into which nothing that is unclean in its properties can enter. In heaven the joint heirs with Jesus Christ will not have a relative perfection of nature in their head; they will be the spirits of just men made perfect; the water of life will fill them to the brim; each one will walk in his uprightness; the new creature of grace shall be the perfect man of glory: and yet Christ, even when he has finished this mystery of grace, and has delivered up the kingdom to his Father, and God is all in all, will retain the perfection of his divine and human natures. The simple apprehension of the Son of God's assuming human nature is, on all hands, allowed not to be a formal part of his humiliation, but a prerequisite to both states of his mediation; and the constitution of his person, in the perfection of both natures respectively, is only a personal prerequisite to the accomplishment of our salvation, in both its branches of justification and sanctification.

By the holiness of our nature manifesting itself in Christ, as just mentioned, it is not meant, though it be not the essential holiness of either nature in him, that it is the same as holiness of obedience, or the effects of volition. This is the anointing of the Mediator which we consider as the cistern in him, from which our holiness flows. The high priest under the law was consecrated not by blood only, but also by the oil of anointing. The one signified his legal separation, and right of actual ministration; and the other was a sign of a concomitant qualification, fitting him for the discharge of his duty; and so Christ is anointed with the graces of our inward holiness.

Some divines would appear to think that Christ was anointed merely to answer to the type in the Levitical priesthood. Nothing, however, can argue less reflection, less acquaintance with the language of scripture, less knowledge of the attributes of justice, or less extensive views of the harmony of type and antitype, than this method of stating the subject. Christ's relation to his people required that he should be sanctified in

reality; and as every shadow under the patriarchal and Mosai-cal economies arose into being, to reflect and give some idea of the great substance from which they sprung; so Christ must be considered as the original character, for the sake of whom they were invested with whatever they did display. The priesthood of old was anointed to prefigure Christ's anointing; but Christ himself was anointed, because the eternal relations of justice, in the station which he occupied, required it. Standing our great high priest while the sacrifice of himself received infinite value from the altar of his divinity which sustained it, Christ, anointed with all grace, the grace of the internal purification of his people, showed to the eye of eternal justice, that the salvation which he achieved surveyed all moral relations of sinful man, and provided his recovery with honor to these relations. The penalty of the law he repaired, and the precept of it he magnified;—but every being which has properties to be estimated, has a substance in which they inhere,—every intellectual existence has a moral being previous to his actings,—a being which may be affected by natural deformities, and which, if tainted with corruption, must be healed, not by obedience nor suffering, but by a communication of principles, that will insinuate themselves into our moral existence and renew its nature. Hence, when Christ offered himself to divine justice, it was not the sacrifice of himself simply, infinitely valuable as it was, that he presented, but this sacrifice through the eternal spirit; and thus he offered himself, not only a sacrifice of a sweet smell unto God, but this same sacrifice purges our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

When the spirit descended, at his baptism, on our great high priest, the visible form which he assumed was a sign of that anointing above measure, which at that moment was supposed diffused on the Mediator to qualify him for his office. What, indeed, was the essence of this anointing, whether a substance or a modification that, in moral reckoning, answered to real existence in the natural world, is a subject equally mysterious

in whatever way we consider it; but notwithstanding, we lose sight of absolute justice as the meridian line of our reasoning, if we do not include the fact of Christ's unction to the moral amount we have stated, among the elements of our moral representative perfection. In the eye of strict law Christ has in his Mediatorial person a holiness which is ours in him, of which he is only the depository for a time, and which from him to us must be communicated. Hence he is said to have been anointed with the Holy Ghost above measure, and hence it is said that out of his fulness we receive and grace for grace.

This holiness in Christ it is not necessary to consider, as a suffusion at the moment of his baptism only:—his baptism was his visible inauguration into office; and yet in one respect he always acted as our Mediator; but, as this transaction was viewed as a formal declaration of his official character to angels and men, so, though the graces of the spirit always in some respects resided in him, yet, this was the moment that, as it were, summed them all up, and brought them to a perceptible and visible character; and which, setting aside all shadows, presented to man his Mediator, the *Christ*.

By this anointing of our Saviour,³ however, he was not completely qualified to do the distinctive office of a great high-priest; or rather, as all the rest of the priesthood who could all slay sacrifices of every kind, derived their office by filiation from the Jewish high priest, in whom the whole family of priesthood had the fountain of their rights and privileges, but could not enter into the holy of holies;—so Christ is not fully consecrated to discharge all the parts of his office by this anointing alone. As he bears before the eye of the eternal into the highest heavens, the names of his people, he must conjoin with this holy oil of the spirit's unction, the blood of his eternal separation unto God. We know that Christ from his first appearance on the stage of our earth, and even in all his ancient seers and prophets, acted in virtue of his right to exercise mercy and power, as this right was acquired by his own death:

—but these were only anticipations in acting, on a foundation that, in truth, was always sure, but which, in fact, was laid only when he was sanctified by dedication, and his people by redemption, through his own blood.

The character of Christ's priesthood is, in our day, so dressed up in the language of a technical phraseology, that it is difficult to penetrate to a just view of its scriptural simplicity, and particularly as explained in this epistle. In the second chapter of this epistle, Christ is called the captain of our salvation made perfect through sufferings; and this is an intended view of him subservient to that contrast with Melchisedec and Aaron, which the apostle comes so soon to draw. In the machinery of thought which starts from this point, which is contemplated within the circle of the apostle's views at it, and which diverges into those lines of illustration, which are so suitable to the people to whom he is writing, it is difficult, without the most strict attention to the fundamental principles on which he rests the whole weight of his reasoning, to advance with him to the eminent conclusions in which he rests.

Some professing christians have said that Christ is not to be considered as acting in the character of a priest, or as offering a sacrifice, till after his ascension he appeared in heaven, where he pleads from the wounds of his flesh, not as the strokes of a victim, but as the affecting signs which may command the compassion of Deity; as the pains and tears of a child command the sympathy of his father. But it is clear, that the apostle in this epistle, distinguishes between priesthood and sacrifice; he states distinctly two priesthoods; but while both of these must offer both gifts and sacrifices, what, it may be asked in the language of estimation, was the value of these sacrifices? Are we to view them as in form a variety, or a unity included under the same character? We speak of expiatory sacrifices only; for we have already remarked, that the burnt offerings of the Levitical priesthood were a transcript from the sin-offerings on the great day of atonement, and that all the other offerings

were transcripts from these;—hence as the sin-offerings were only a remembrance of the passover, which, though offered by many hands, yet must, in relation to Israel as a body politic, be considered in denomination only one sacrifice, it is obvious, that the value of all the Levitical oblations was unity. But from this unity Aaron derived his investiture of priesthood, and all the variety of offerings whose blood was shed at his consecration, and afterwards in his office, were in value simple as this original seed, that thus in its growth spread into so many opening branches. The end for which Aaron was consecrated to minister in the priest's office, and for which he filiated the right of priesthood to his sons that assisted him, was nothing more than to carry on by the emblems of sacrifices, an instructive course of religious services among a people already redeemed;—redeemed, however, only ceremonially and to a typical inheritance; and who consequently are still to be taught by the most impressive symbols which may remind them of their twofold relation in which they stand to God—ceremonially redeemed, and yet morally sinful. Thus the Aaronical priesthood offered daily, without, in their own view, as, at least, from the nature of their ordinances, they ought to have considered the subject, making the comers thereunto perfect.

But the whole services of the Jewish economy, and even the original sacrifice of the passover, were founded in it, and included in the blood of the covenant of circumcision; and to understand fully the apostle's doctrine respecting priesthood in this epistle, we must trace the typical blood of sacrifice up to the period of the life of him, in whose loins, Levi, as the father of the Aaronical priesthood, did homage to a greater and more venerable priest than ever were any of his sons. At the time when the great circle of circumcision, which distinguished the Jew from the Gentile, was described, lived Melchisedec, Melchisedec whose very office as priest of the most high God, supposed that he had offered an expiatory sacrifice:—and taking his standing into our calculations, we have two priesthoods,

inclosing the same general line of typical oblation.—Hence though Aaron's character of office supposed as he exercised it, that the sacrificial blood which was the foundation of his right to officiate was already offered, and to the eye of heaven spread abroad in the passover; and consequently that he could resemble Christ as a priest, as he would be supposed clothed in heaven, with the office of priesthood, after his blood, which gave him a right to it, was shed, in the Egypt of our world; yet the apostle, in his beautiful compound reasoning, will not fall into the solecism of calling Christ's death a sacrifice, without a priest to make the offering. On the other hand, Christ's sacrifice is viewed, all the time that it is contrasted with Aaron's sacrifices, as appended to its true priesthood—that after the order of Melchisedec; and hence though this was in the heaven of the Jewish economy, in the place where the holy law and original mercy of God reposed in arms of reconciliation, it was yet in the world of our accursed nature. Christ, then, was a priest upon earth, a priest by the oath of God, and offered up the one offering of himself, perfect as was this oath by which he was constituted; and hence he is said to have now entered into the true heavens, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

But Aaron's economy is intended in this epistle, to give us particular information especially in two points. As he is the representative head of the people in the heaven of their promised land, he presents a sacrifice for them; and among their family, as a holy people, and the sons of God, born of blood and water in Egypt and at the Red Sea, he himself is comprehended. He ventures, too, to go with blood beyond the borders of their peculiar land; into the mystery which contains secrets that whisper into his ear, that the Israelites, by faith, should leave their present transitory inheritance, should go beyond the borders of their present abode, and should seek another that is yet to come. Yes, Aaron under a cloud of incense entered with the blood of atonement into the holiest of all; at his hand it was there ceremonially accepted, but morally re-

jected; and the sin of the sons of Jacob was sent away to dwell in the wilderness of our earth, till a more hopeful sacrifice should bear it into the regions of death;—and Christ who did offer the sacrifice of himself in the kingdom of our corrupted nature must carry from the scene of his death, in the outer court of our world, his blood to sprinkle and consecrate the mercy seat that is eternally within the veil. Hence, it is said, that “he is able to save to the uttermost, all them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

But, my brethren, what is this intercession of Christ? It is not his literal blood that Christ exhibits in heaven; it is the value of his death;—but it is not simply this as it is estimated and accepted of by God;—it is this as heaven has been given to Christ as our forerunner, who hath merited it for us,—and as God, in all the perfection of his nature, is supposed promising to Christ the possession of heaven indubitably to all his representatives.

If, however, this be a just representation which describes his intercession by the strict legal relations of his character as our forerunner, then it will follow, that Christ, who dispelled all shadows, those under the law, and those in that great line up to Melchisedec and the first promise from which they sprung as branches from the same stem,—and who was alone morally the priest of sinful man,—must, in the very act of dying, have consecrated himself, with his own blood, to an everlasting priesthood, and obtained for the whole body, head and members, the possession of heaven. This was undoubtedly the case. As every priest according to the scriptural nomenclature must be dedicated by blood, it appears, that in his own death, Christ actually became a priest; and though he acted in his priestly character, and was the lamb slain from the foundation of the world, this was only symbolically and by anticipation.—The death of Christ is the luminous point from which diverge all the rays of glory to himself as our Mediator, and of felicity

of heart or dignity of character to his followers. From this point he started to his glory as head of Zion, and head over all things, animate and inanimate, angels and archangels, for her welfare; from this fountain he sent forth all his seers and prophets, and spake himself the will of God to sinful men: and from this sun before it did itself arise to view, he sent all those reflected rays of the morning of priesthood that crimsoned our world with a garment as dyed in the wine fat.

Some have said that Christ was actually a priest from all eternity, and that he really acted in the peculiar robes of his office from the era of the visitation of mercy. But a fundamental principle of the apostle is, that every high priest must be taken from amongst men; real human nature must be put on, before the formalities of the priestly office can be displayed; and hence though Christ in substance supported by anticipation his sacerdotal office, and revealed it to the world from the earliest notices of redemption; yet it was only in the moment of his dying that he stood recognized by God, angels, and men, as our great high priest, sanctified by blood. Imagine him then in all the relations of his acting in this moment of offering up the one sacrifice of himself. To this moment we carry forward his anointing; and by his own blood, and the oil of the spirit, we see him now standing, under the hands of consecration to an everlasting priesthood—his blood flows, and the work is done,—his people are redeemed, heaven is eternally purchased,—from this chamber issue all the twilight rays before the day arises,—and when it does arise, every shadow flees away; and the great temple of the Lord, comprehending all that are in heaven, and that are in earth, stands resting upon this foundation of the oath of God, the death of his Son, the grace of the Spirit,—as all conspiring to perfect for us a priest and a sacrifice for evermore.

But if this be a just view of the subject then all the language of this epistle concerning priesthood must be consider-

ed as descriptive, and intended only as a means of guiding the mind into logical principles, which might be stated in other language: and then Christ our representative being consecrated to be a priest for evermore by his own blood, will mean nothing else, than that he purchased heaven for himself in this character of representation, and for all that are represented by him. This accords delightfully with the contrast in which the language of this epistle stands to that of the rest of the writings of the New Testament; and, indeed, to the logical statement from which, in this epistle itself, the apostle sets off into the illustration by typical representations of his logical conceptions. In the second chapter the apostle says that Christ is the captain of our salvation made perfect through suffering; and in almost every other place of the New Testament Christ is spoken of in plain terms, or in such as must be converted into the same import,—as dying and saving us by his death:—or which is the same thing, possessing heaven in our name on the footing of his perfect obedience to the law of our nature.—Had Christ had any defilement of his own he could not have purified others; hence in his obtainment of a station “eternal in the heavens,” there could be no respect, in relation to himself, to a satisfaction; but as his character espouses, as bone of its bone and flesh of its flesh his people, their redemption on their part, in the language of priesthood, must answer to his consecration on his, as heaven is respectively and certainly in the contemplation of them both. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one, wherefore he is not ashamed to call them brethren.

That this holiness which is the anointing of our great high priest, and which thus co-operates with the blood in his consecration; which was poured upon him at his baptism; but which we have carried forward to be contemplated in its efficacy at the moment of his death; must have appeared in the representative character of the Mediator, is clear from the

fact that he as our consecrated high priest has already entered into heaven as our forerunner for us. When, my brethren, it is said if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, it is to be remembered, that this attribute of righteousness presents our advocate, as one who has the pledge of the success of his advocacy in the station which he occupies; who must be hurled from his glorious and well merited throne, before the cause of his people can be ultimately unsuccessful. All the relations of the Mediator in heaven recognize him as the vine planted by the throne of God, and which will shoot forth its branches, till it shall cover paradise with the whole of the ever-living fruit of the tree of life.

Every individual who is thus represented in heaven, it is known, is by nature depraved and the inward beauty of his nature defaced by sin. The image of God consisting in the moral rectitude of our nature, the adequacy of our knowledge to our situation amongst the works of God, and the invariable direction of our desires and affections according to the dictates of the understanding, was lost on man's first disobedience to the divine law. Justice, however, rendered it impossible that Christ should enter into heaven as the representative head of his people, without displaying, in his Mediatorial person, all the brightness of that image of God which was the constituent glory of our natures, and which we had entirely dissipated by our apostacy. The strict law of God necessarily excludes from the gates of bliss the admittance even representatively of sinfully imperfect creatures; representation in law being the same as personal appearance. Is it said, that this is a great mystery, that Christ should have treasured up in his Mediatorial person, all the holiness that is to purify and sanctify his church throughout all ages? We grant it is. It is that inconceivable subject to human capacity of which the apostle Paul says, "this is a great mystery." We cannot comprehend the nature of it, any more than that

of any other mystery, whose dark side only is revealed to us; but this much we must assert respecting it, that the contrary doctrine is opposite to pure law, and morally impossible in an all-perfect dispensation.

But that Christ is really anointed with the graces of our sanctification, is evident from all those passages of scripture which, presuming it to be in him, present its streams as issuing from him and flowing into his members. If our union to Christ be described as that of nourishment from him, as the branches are nourished by the root; if it be portrayed as that of vital connexion and direction, such as subsists between the head and the body; if it be compared to a sustaining influence, like that of the foundation to the building; and if these representations do respect, even inclusively, our internal holiness,—then, does it not follow, clear as the eye of the morning, that he both possesses our sanctification in his Mediatorial person, and communicates it unto us? The root has first the vegetative juice which its laboratory prepares to invigorate the branches; the understanding has first the plan of operations which the hands may put in execution; and the foundation is first laid correspondent to every intended part of it, and then is reared the superstructure.—But does not John, the beloved disciple, describe the union between Christ and his people at great length, and in language which principally has a respect unto a vital connexion, when he speaks of Christ as the vine and we the branches? Does not Paul teach us the same truth, when he says, that the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love? Does not Peter paint his beloved master as the living foundation stone, disallowed indeed of men but chosen of God and precious; and one to which believers, coming as unto a living stone, are built up a spiritual house? We cannot receive liter-

al descriptions of things purely spiritual; but could expressions be better contrived or similitudes be better selected, to convince us, that in the dispensation of grace, there is an internal sanctification, that we, who are morally depraved, receive; and that the lines of this sanctification are all to be traced into the person of our great representative head, the anointed high priest of his people? No! "In him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are complete in him." "The word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us, and we beheld its glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth; and out of his fulness we all receive and grace for grace."

In one word, it is undoubted, that Christ is anointed with the graces of the Spirit, and that his people receive an unction from this holy one, from those passages of scripture, which show to us the relations of the sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost. This Spirit does reside in us as in his temple; he works in us both to will and to do; he distributes to every one grace, and gifts of free favor;—but he only takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us.—When Christ ascended into heaven the first fruits of the resurrection from the dead, every lineament of moral perfection, which the eye of heaven could approve as the qualification of the full harvest of his people, in every ear that shall grow, in any age or nation, tongue or kindred, till the end of time, appeared in him, or was on its wing in the hand of his Spirit to those saints that lived upon the radiations from his fulness, or shone in those spirits of just men made perfect that bow to him who is made higher than the heavens themselves.

We have now, my brethren, advanced to a station whence we may take a retrospective view of the road we have travelled in these discourses, and see how appositely the most exhilarating reflections arise, from the disentangled course the path we have laid out pursues. Looking to the prominence from which we

started, we perceive, that there arise beyond it, the original state and fall of man. In the former of these Adam was created, with the perfect law of God impressed upon his nature, promising endless happiness in case of obedience, and threatening endless misery and death in case of disobedience. Thus stood Adam as on our earth fresh from the hand of his Maker. Into paradise, a garden to be dressed, and the emblem of social abode, the man of the earth was by the kindness of his creator conveyed; and all things were sovereignly put under his feet; neighbors such as the world could afford were marked out by God, a tree of knowledge of good and evil, and a tree of life; and in this state of society, the law of his nature, which before was a covenant of life and death for himself only, now became, by God's appointment, a covenant for the family of mankind. Society was organized not upon mere principles of nature, as the relation of Adam and Eve the parents of all living, but upon sovereign and representative relations;—a warning voice opened to its lord from different quarters of that world whose welfare he represented, and to dress his tenantry in which was his positively appointed employment.

The trees of the garden are in a little hid from our view by the brandishing of a sword of fire turning every way to guard the tree of life. Adam is driven from paradise; the gold of his creation is dim, the most fine gold is changed. But though he be driven into his native earth, and sees its briers and thorns springing up from his fatal change in paradise, is there no hope for him who was so lately the glory and head of the new born world?

Faint, yet genuine, is the color which streaks the horizon to show that the hopes of the human family may one day ripen into perfection by efficacious means of restoration. The robe of mercy mantles our first parents, and it is put upon them by the hand of a kinsman's redeemer, whose flesh is supernatural seed from the woman, and whose power is divine to vanquish

every foe. The hope of life by this Mediator arises, sometimes here and sometimes there, among the posterity of Adam, till, in the days of Abraham, he and his posterity are inclosed within the circle of the covenant of circumcision, and mankind become distinguished into circumcision in the flesh and uncircumcision. The former are the adopted sons of God, and the latter are without God and without hope in the world. In Egypt the respective states of the two people is brought to a perceptible bearing—light is on the one, and darkness on the other; death reigns on the accursed, and life from the chambers of mercy alights upon the redeemed. Sprinkled with the blood of their covenant the sons of promise enter upon their holy land and enjoy a holy habitation—till a better is provided for Israel by the Mediator of a better testament established upon better promises. At this period of time the genealogy of Jew and Gentile is lost in the object of the divine dispensations; and circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian and Scythian, are all one in Christ.—The Mediator, who has been collecting his followers from among a particular people, and the nations at large, and who now again collects them out of every kindred by public and external means suitable to an indefinite and general call, has, as related to the eye of omniscience, the church invisible, whom, in the office of his mediation he represents. Of these the punishment he exhausts, the duty he fulfils, the purity he provides—and whilst they are called promiscuously with others, yet the mercy of God pardons their sins for Christ's sake, his grace gives them a title to the heavenly inheritance, and his spirit of grace imbues their hearts and natures, with the inward principles of holiness.—Jesus, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, is their forerunner made higher than the heavens, and they are fast arriving, in their respective generations, without spot or wrinkle, at the immaculate glory of which their

head is in possession.—Oh! that we could make our calling and our election sure—We are not our own we are bought with a price.—Blessed God, work in us both to will and to do of thy good pleasure; that when he who is the life of his people shall appear, we may also appear with him in glory.—Amen.

DISCOURSE VIII.

HE WHO IS BORN OF GOD SINNETH NOT.

I. JOHN 5:18. *We know that whosoever is born of God, sinneth not.*

THE objects, my brethren, of religious knowledge are very various. The books of creation, providence, and revelation, afford, each of them, many striking and important lessons on which the thoughts of man considered as a religious being, may be employed to the greatest advantage. In creation the power, wisdom, and goodness of God exhibit themselves to the most inattentive in no less a clear than diversified a manner; and if any be more careful to search more narrowly into its various departments, the more bright and more numerous displays of these attributes continually present themselves to his view. Providence also, while by its undoubtedly suitable and continued disposition of things towards their proper and laudable ends it has a tendency to confirm and establish us in the belief and the better understanding of these same important objects of religious knowledge, has also a tendency to acquaint us, either in a less or a greater degree, with others no less momentous and interesting. Some faint idea of our own weakness and depravity, of the patience and forbearance of God, and of his justice and mercy, may, by an attentive perusal, be perceived in the book of God's providence.

Narrow, however, at best, as well as obscure and indistinct, would be our knowledge of divine things were it confined to these two sources. True, indeed, they contain much objectively considered; but many of the truths lie at too great a distance, or are too much concealed under the thick cover of seeming perplexity, for the weak and unimproved faculties of the greater part of mankind ever to acquaint themselves with them. Neither in fact, although they should, do they contain in themselves all that knowledge that is necessary to conduct us, in our presently depraved condition, to an approvable discharge of our duty. To accomplish this is the prerogative of supernatural revelation alone. They are the scriptures of truth which bring forth the hidden plans and purposes of God respecting the recovery of a sinner to his acceptable obedience. The book of nature might be read all over, creation's hidden treasures laid open, and the mysterious procedure and involved connexions of providence unravelled and clearly explained; and yet the least intelligence in this important affair never could be attained. It could never be said, we know, it is by being born of God. We know, saith our apostle, that whosoever is born of God, sinneth not.

We see in this text, a person standing in a peculiar and distinguished relation, one born of God: we see an endearing line of conduct which he leads, expressed negatively, he sinneth not: and we behold our apostle's confident declaration with respect to this attribute of this son of God, he knows it. Three important inquiries, therefore, occupy to-day our deliberations. —What is meant by being born of God? What is the import of the language, whosoever is born of God *sinneth not*? and what are the reasons which lead the christian to exclaim for himself and others, we know, that whosoever is born of God sinneth not.

First, What is meant by being born of God? In divinity there is sometimes an advantage obtained from adopting the form of theory for the sake of perspicuity of arrangement; and

believing that this method will conduce, in the present inquiry, to the most satisfactory result, we beg leave to present you with an answer, to this particular inquiry, in the form of a definition. By being born of God, it is presumed, is meant, that after his natural birth there is a real change produced by a divine operation in all the faculties of the soul of man, by the implantation into it of a spiritual and supernatural principle of life and action. It will not admit of a doubt that these expressions of scripture, born of God, born of the spirit, born again, born of the spirit and water of life, do all imply some great change which passes upon a man after he is supposed in natural existence, and is exercising the natural powers of his mind.

To procure assent to our definition as a proposition of divinely revealed truth, we are aware, that the inquisitive mind calls for some remarks explanatory of this spiritual and supernatural principle of life and action, presumed to be implanted into the soul; and then for proofs of its implantation,

We remark, in the first place, that this principle is, in its nature and manner of implantation into the mind, truly mysterious. Here we know not the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb. This new birth, near as it is unto us, and apparently under our observation, is yet as the wind which beateth our outward frame and roareth in our ears, but is that of which we can give no account. The wind bloweth, saith our Saviour, where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

Not to acquiesce, however, in this, as well as in many other mysterious cases in nature, would be highly unreasonable. We know no more, perhaps, far less, how our minds, the nobler part of our constitution, actuate our gross bodies, than we do of this new birth. The true christian, though from its spiritual quality, and from the instantaneous direction of his thoughts to the objects which the change fits him to perceive, he be able to

say little as to the precise nature of the change itself, can yet, both from his knowledge of the word of God and his own happy experience, say a good deal both of its gently but powerfully operating cause, and of its pleasant and comfortable effects.—Which brings us to remark,

Secondly, That this is a principle implanted into the mind by the agency of the divine Spirit. It is this great teacher who, not by constraint, but willingly, leads and conducts the christian into the genuine knowledge of the truth, and makes him feel its real efficacy and power. True, indeed, we are said to be born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God. The word is the unerring rule by which, in all cases, the Spirit operates; and is with regard to adults what is termed the moral cause. It inculcates the necessity of regeneration; it points to the true efficient of it; and it exhibits the glorious privileges and advantages that are consequent upon it. It is, however, an instrument only of which the Spirit makes use. To the Spirit himself, in scripture, is attributed the real effectuating of the change. “According to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.” “Who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

But we remark, lastly, That this is a principle, which, being implanted, restores the whole soul, in a certain degree, to that state of purity and holiness in which it was originally formed. In man’s primeval state he was constituted in perfect rectitude after the image of God. His understanding, his will, his affections, and indeed every power he possessed as a religious and moral being, were free from the least taint of corruption or weakness, to disable him for acting his part in the sphere which was assigned to him. This was the happy state in which he knew perfectly the rule of his duty in every occurrence of life, and delighted to comply with it. Now this spiritual principle recovers him to this state; though not perfectly,

but somehow as a child is to a full grown man. He sees, though his view be not a little indistinct, objects in their native colors. Whereas in his original state he knew, as far as concerned the nature of his situation, on every object which God had made, or relation which he had instituted, the impresses of divine authority; so now, in some degree, he recognizes the same dignified and interesting points of knowledge. Whereas he then knew that the creation, animate and inanimate, and the law of obedience, proceeded from God; so now he knows that the scriptures, which no less than the works of creation and providence, are enstamped with impressions of divine authority, spring from the same original. God hath shined, as the scripture saith, into his heart to give him the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, that his faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

But it is not divine light alone of which, by being born again, this man is made a partaker. As in his original state he not only knew but delighted in his duty, so now he has not only his understanding enlightened to perceive it, but his will, and every active principle of his constitution, perverse and alienate from the life of God as they were before, are, in this day of God's power, altered and restored, in a great measure, to their primitive order and ability. His desires, his affections, his sense of right and wrong, or conscience, are all purified; and while the two former are put under a happy regulation, and directed to suitable objects, the latter is restored to its rightful authority and dominion in the soul. The man is now no longer constrained to obey merely from the commanding voice of the law without him: this is the day in which it is put into his heart. By the new birth he has an inward feeling of his obligation; a knowledge how his duty is to be performed; and a principle prompting him to the performance of that which is holy and upright. But we cannot sum up the state into which his mind is put by regeneration, so well as

by saying, that, in truth and earnest, he is begun to realize the words of our Saviour: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself."

Having made these remarks on the principle itself, we come now to adduce the proofs that, in the new birth, this principle of life and action, whatever be its nature or manner of implantation, is infused into the soul.

There are many who allow of the necessity of an operation of the Spirit on the mind in order to accomplish regeneration, who, notwithstanding, deny that there is any real change which takes place intrinsically in the faculties of the mind itself. They say that to deny an operation of the Spirit on the mind, would be to obscure and unstring all those clear and nervous passages of scripture, which we find so pointed, and so often repeated on this head. But at the same time that they allow this, they deny that it is of any other nature than what is extrinsical and moral in its effects: that is, the Spirit operating externally on it influences the mind to attend to the word, the rule by which the man is to be reformed, but he produces no change on the nature or in the quality of the soul itself. Indeed we willingly allow that there is no change produced in the essence of the mind, or in its necessary and physical modes of acting. These are still the same, and cannot be altered while human nature is human nature. But we assert that, considering the mind in a moral point of view, and with regard to the qualities of its actions, it is, as a principle from which these actions spring, greatly changed; and this, by the implantation of the spiritual and supernatural principle we have mentioned.

Our first proof is from the nature of the change itself. Here it will be necessary to glance a little at the state of man, as represented to us in scripture, previous to regeneration. Not to make much research, nor to adduce many passages, we have this clearly depicted in the two following apposite ones, from

the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians. In the beginning of the second chapter he says: "You who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in times past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air; the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Again, in his fourth chapter and eighteenth verse: "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." Here the understanding, the will, and the conscience, not only the leading powers in the soul, but powers which either presuppose or comprehend in their exercise all the rest, are represented in indeed a very disordered and perverted condition. Is it said that it does not sufficiently appear from these passages that it is the mind itself that is enfeebled and morally corrupted; but that they only evince that they are the exercises of it which are disordered and perverted? We might, granting this, (what the words quoted will not allow us to do, without the most violent distortion,) reply and urge with our Saviour, that a tree is known by its fruit. But we shall turn the argument into another channel.

At man's first appearance in the world he was unquestionably furnished with moral endowments far superior to what by nature he now possesses. He was then in the image of God. God created man, it is said, in his own image; in the image of God created he him. It is not the soul as acting, nor the exercises of it, to which there is here a respect, and on account of which man is said to have been created after the image of God. It is the frame and constitution of the man previous to his acting. *He is created in it.* But though he was created in this state, mark what is his natural condition now. He is born as the wild ass's colt; his frame is shapen in sin, and conceived in iniquity; his heart, the moving principle to action, is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Thus, it is clear, that previously to regeneration, not only the exercises

of the soul, but the soul itself is spiritually enervated and morally depraved.—The consequence to the establishment of a principle of grace implanted in regeneration into the soul is undeniable. Regeneration reverses the state of man, and whatever was deficient in the soul by sin, must be supplied by grace.

Secondly: This truth is confirmed from all those passages of scripture which ascribe actions to the renewed man as really his actions, but which, in his natural state, he has no ability to perform. Here it may be laid down as an undoubted truth, that an action can never be ascribed to a person as his action, if he has no capacity in his nature suitable to the performance of that kind of action, but is carried forward to it merely by an external impulse. It is an absurdity to say that it is in any respect his; the intent, matter, end, and consequences of it are ascribable to the external agent only who operates upon him. Indeed we willingly allow that we are dependent upon God every moment of our existence, and even for that particular disposition in which our minds are when about to act or when acting; but then we assert that we have within ourselves a fitness or capacity suitable to the performance of the actions which are termed ours, and on account of which they are so denominated. Now, the new man performs spiritual actions; he compareth spiritual things with spiritual; he eateth spiritual meat, and he drinketh spiritual drink; he prayeth in the spirit, and he singeth spiritual songs. Previous to his regeneration, however, he had not a fitness or capacity congruous to the performance of these actions. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Here his inability is plainly declared, and the reason is assigned—spiritual things are spiritually discerned. There is, on the perception of spiritual objects, a new simple idea in the mind, which, in its unrenewed capacity, it could not receive. Thus, if we allow not of a spiritual principle of life and

action implanted into the soul, capacitating it, or should it be better expressed, giving it a fitness of nature for the performance of these spiritual actions, the inevitable consequence will be, that the actions which are ascribed to the renewed man are not at all ascribable to him, but to the Holy Spirit who operates upon him; a consequence which will overturn the very fundamental principles of morality and man's accountability; and hence the true account of the inhabitation of the Spirit is as we have presented his operations.

Other arguments might have been drawn from other general considerations, such as regeneration is termed a new birth and a new creation; but passing these, we shall only mention, and consider a little, three passages of scripture, which will admit of no other explication than what clearly and pointedly coincides with this opinion.

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” That the spirit here, which is said to be produced by the Holy Ghost, can be referred to nothing else than a supernatural principle of life and action, is clear from the carriage of the context, from the opposition in which it stands to the flesh, and from the character and circumstances of the speaker. If this language denotes not this principle, why did the Saviour lay such emphasis on these words? If by being born again were meant a reformation only of the exercises of the soul, could the teacher sent from heaven, and who was in heaven, find no more clear and perspicuous method of expressing himself to the laudably astonished and inquiring mind of Nicodemus, than by asserting that the change was spirit; a word always used to denote some real substantive existence. In the preceding verse he had stated the absolute necessity of it to salvation; and by his solemn asseveration, he must have thrown the mind of the man into the greatest anxiety and solicitude; and are we to suppose, that notwithstanding this was a case in which doubts were the most easily resolved, and views the most easily rectified, that however

Christ, in this very verse, the only one where he professes to explain himself, used language which, to Nicodemus, conveyed nothing but the contrary idea to a common reformation of life, and which, to all men, must convey the same?

Again: The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other. That by the flesh are here meant inclinations to vice and wickedness, is obvious from the common acceptation of the word flesh in the New Testament; but especially from the description given of it in the immediate context. In the same soul, however, in which are these inclinations, there are others of an opposite nature. The spirit lusteth against the flesh, as well as the flesh against the spirit.—It cannot be said that the lustings of the spirit here are the twinges and strokes of natural conscience, considered merely as a natural faculty of the mind, enlightened by the external word, to a perception of its duty. Though it be allowed that this faculty, after that the mind by the aid of revelation is led to understand, in a good degree, the distinction between right and wrong, often exerts itself in severe reproofs of the conduct of the natural man; yet, it would be a fond interpretation indeed, to understand its exercise for what is here termed the lustings of the spirit. A person is said to lust when he indulges those principles of his nature which are incentives to action, and which show themselves previous to the operation of conscience, and the proper or improper indulgence of which is the subject over which conscience exercises its authority. Hence the spirit here must be some principle in the soul, or some seat of the affections, which, from its very nature, exerteth itself as a new creature, against the lustings of the unsanctified part of the soul, which is here termed the flesh.

But lastly: That by these ye might be made partakers of a divine nature. It cannot be asserted that this divine nature of which we partake is that of the Deity. This is incommunicable to any creature. If it be any thing inherent in us at all,

it can be only some divine and supernatural quality graciously and freely communicated to us. But that it is this is obvious. For, why should it be called a nature, a permanent and an abiding thing, if it were not some real inherent quality? Nature denotes not any adventitious and extrinsical connexions, but always the internal state and properties of any subject. It may be termed a divine nature, because it assimilates the christian, in some degree, in the correctness of his understanding, the uprightness of his intentions, and the holiness of his desires, to God, whose nature is truly divine.

The second general object of inquiry in our discourse was, what is meant by the language, "Whosoever is born of God sinneth not?"

In what sense we are to understand the phrase, sinneth not, is a matter about which there has been some difference of opinion. Some have said that all that is intended by it is, that the persons who are here said to be born of God, cannot commit that sin unto death, which is the subject of which the apostle has been immediately speaking, and which is mentioned in the sixteenth verse. But since it is here used as a part of a general and an unlimited proposition, and since the same mode of language is used in a preceding part of the epistle, evidently from the connexion in a greater latitude of meaning, we think, that though it be past all doubt that this sin is not excluded, the phrase, however, must have a more extensive signification. On the other hand, it is obvious that it cannot be understood in an absolute and unrestrained sense; so that no one who is, as here said, born of God, can commit any sin. Scripture in innumerable instances, and the experience of the best of saints, in all ages, declare against this view of the subject. Job, a perfect and an upright man, one that feared God and eschewed evil, cursed, in impious ingratitude, the day in which he was born, and the night in which he a man child was conceived. He asked in earnest

impious questions, why died I not from the womb? why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly? David, a man after God's own heart, perpetrated iniquities, and often laments over them. "Mine iniquities have gone over mine head as a burden too heavy for me to bear." And Peter the most zealous apostle of our Lord, sinned, till he wept in repentance; for he had denied his Lord and master. "If," says this apostle John, in this very epistle, "any man say that he has no sin, this man deceiveth himself, and the truth is not in him."

To answer this inquiry, therefore, we would remark the following things:

First: That he who is born of God doth not sin, inasmuch as he has a settled disposition of mind to guard against every means that may have a tendency to urge him to the perpetration of iniquity. In this respect, as is added in the following part of the verse, he keepeth himself. Satan's temptations, into however enticing and seemingly advantageous forms they may be thrown, are all detested by him. Conscious of the justness of the exhortation, resist the devil, he strives to oppose him, although he should appear as an infuriated lion, menacing to deprive him of every thing which men count valuable in this world, should it be even life itself; or should he appear, not in this terrifying aspect, but in that more mild one, in which he often traverses the world, exhibiting vices under the semblance of present interest or advantage, or as a means to obtain some future apparently valuable end. With what is called the world, he is also no less unwilling to yield a compliance. Whatever may be its urgencies, or whatever arguments it may use to support and render current the evil customs, habits, and practices, which but too often and too powerfully prevail in it, his mind is continually set against them, and earnestly expresses itself to be kept far from the wicked. Gather not my soul with sinners, saith the Psalmist, nor my

hands with bloody men. But they are not external enemies only that make assaults on the interests of the soul of man. The worst enemies whom he has to contend with are those of his own house. Even the person who is farthest advanced in sanctification, has a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and about to bring him into captivity to the law of sin. Now to guard against the machinations of this restless and wicked foe within him, is what the true christian has an established resolution always to do. It is the language of which his heart approves, I would do good, though evil be present with me.

But, secondly, He who is born of God does not sin, inasmuch as he does not commit sin with deliberation and premeditated device. The natural man is not only off his guard with respect to the ensnaring enemies of his soul; but it is characteristic of him, that he often lays, with all the depth of his penetration, schemes by which he may accomplish some great wicked design. Should his pride, his vanity, his malice, his envy, his ambition, his revenge, or his avarice, create to him a desirable object, for the attainment of this, he is often seen to introduce into his system of practice, every species of iniquity; no murder, no perjury, no profanity, no acts of impiety, appear too great for him to be guilty of. But he who is born of God cannot sin after this manner. He is one who keeps the ways of the Lord; who does not so wickedly depart from his God; his judgments are ever before him, and he puts not away his statutes from him. He may appear indeed at times to perform a blameable action, which apparently has its origin in evil intention; but this is to be imputed rather to the imperfection of his state, or to his ignorance of his obligation in that particular instance, than to any premeditated and settled design of doing evil. This is the case in which is exemplified in his character, the truth of the saying, that he is one who fears the Lord, and obeys the voice of his servant, and who yet walks in dark-

ness, and has no light.—When to will is present with him, but to perform that which is good he finds not.

But, thirdly, He who is born of God cannot sin, inasmuch as he does not perpetrate evil actions with affection and love to them. The unrenewed man not only deliberates how he may accomplish a wicked action, but he even executes wicked designs with eagerness and delight. He works all uncleanness with greediness. To slander and despise just and sacred authority both human and divine, to interrupt and mar the happiness of others, to bring into disrepute and render useless the best and most momentous concerns, civil and religious, are undertakings in which he often embarks with the greatest alacrity, and which by one step after another he pursues with increasing joy. But the renewed son of God has no such affection towards evil deeds. On the other hand, this kind of sin is the burden of his soul. He crieth when he feeleth this law in his members, these corrupt affections of the old man, warring against the law of his mind, and about to lead him into captivity to the law of sin, Oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death! The idea of proceeding to a wicked action with delight shocks his frame. His bones quake under it, and the blood altereth its course in his veins. It is to him an oppressing and an overwhelming burden; it ends his peace, it stuns the man, it is upon him the weighty and insupportable body of death. Oh! wretched man, said Paul, that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!

But, fourthly, He who is born of God does not sin, because he does not run on in a perpetual course of iniquity. The wicked not only deliberate about it, and enter eagerly on a wicked action; but the imaginations of their thoughts are evil and that continually. That end which dignifies the actions of men, and that authority of an upright rule which stamps their worth upon them, are, in actions which often have a specious

appearance, really neglected. A man may be industrious from self-interest; patriotic from ambition or natural feeling; ostensibly religious from habit or a desire to obtain a devout reputation; a scholar may traverse the fields of science from mere curiosity; and a legislator may be just purely to fill the circles of society with encomiums upon his conduct. And, as it cannot be denied that men may often act thus, so we may aver, that conscience, were her dictates alone to be recorded, would represent all the world that lieth in wickedness, by those specious but unapproved lineaments of character. Day and night their thoughts weave schemes over which the genius of interest, curiosity, ambition, or instinctive patriotism, presides. Not a dictate of conscience is revered purely for its majesty, nor is a glance of the great end of human actions, the glory of the Creator, permitted to rule and govern them. They are all gone out of the way; they are altogether unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no not one.

Than this conduct, however, the christian maintaineth, in regard to the rule and end of his actions, a line of life much more amiable. He is one who can say, though not in an absolute sense, I was upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity. Yes, this man about whom there is much sinful imperfection, strives to rise above his infirmities by all the operations of sincerity; by the spur which every failure gives to his conscience; by redoubling his resolutions; and by pressing forwards toward the mark of perfection. "I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do; forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."—I cannot but weep here over some on whom a trembling observation has been suspended, and for whom agitations have increased. Have the motives, my brethren, of the unsanctified, the thousands of earthly and carnal conceptions which sit brooding on their minds and generating the labyrinth of their schemes, and which send

forth in life and vigor so many renewals of them, been the parent of your morality and religion? Ah! what a corrupted heart under a profession so honorable!—Wo unto you hypocrites, for you are like to whited sepulchres which appear beautiful outwards; but within are full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness.—This is the doom of the wicked; but happy is the righteous; for I remark,

Lastly, That he who is born of God does not sin, inasmuch as he does not commit that sin which, in the tenth verse, is said to be unto death. By this sin is meant either the sin of total apostacy or the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost; of which our Lord speaks, Mark 3:29. Whichever of these it be; or should it be both; for it seems somewhat difficult to determine, whether a person can make a profession of the gospel for some time and then finally apostatise, and not be chargeable with blasphemy against the divine Spirit; and certain it is, that there cannot be this blasphemy, without at the same time final apostacy; we say, whatever be the nature of this sin we do not determine. Suffice it to say, that it is certain, that it is a sin for which there is no forgiveness: and that as our text says, he who is born of God cannot be guilty of it.—Which brings us to our last inquiry,

Which was, lastly, What are the reasons from which he who is born of God exclaims for himself and others, we know, that whosoever is born of God, sinneth not. Various are the considerations from which we might show you the christian adopting this language with respect to the sin unto death, so awful in itself, and so prominently included in our text: but we look for arguments and demonstrations which will not only secure against this final catastrophe; but which will inspire us to adopt this language in regard to the other sins, which we have asserted the saint has, in these words, before his eye. Desirous to maintain as far as possible the same line of thought unbroken before your view, we recur to the spiritual and supernatural principle of life implanted into the soul; to a

review and amplification of its relations; to the sure influences which water it; and to the parental care of him who is the head of these influences.

We remark, in the first place, That this principle of life and action, proved to be implanted into the soul in regeneration, ever abides in it, and is never eradicated from it. True indeed, the fruits and effects of it, the exercises of the habit of faith, love, and every other grace of the christian, may fade, and fail of giving either examples to others, or comfort and assurance to the person himself. The phrase "sinneth not," does not plead absolute exemption from iniquity. But though this be the case, the habit of grace in the heart does not lose its seat, nor the seed of life the germinating quality of sending forth a beautiful and fruitful produce. The artificer, when he lies down to rest, loses not the knowledge of his art, nor the capacity of putting it in execution. Neither does the seed, though during the cold and inclemency of winter it lie dormant, and discover no inclination to break the clod, fail, when the genial season and warming influences of the sun return, to send forth that verdant and flourishing vegetation which, in the spring, adorns the face of the earth. The same is the case with the christian. Though he may be so fatigued and overcome, not indeed with the delightful task of making christian attainments, but with the wrestling and war, which, with innumerable enemies, he has to maintain, as to desist from his laudable employ, and to lay himself down for a time to take a culpable and an ill-timed rest; though he may be in the winter of desertion; though that enlivening influence which sent forth in its vigor the growth of the seed of life which is in his mind, may have withdrawn itself, yet the habits and principles of the man are not lost: on the other hand, when the day alters, and the time of the Lord's visitation draweth nigh, the seed which seemed to be dead is quickened, and the man who had resigned himself to a forbidden rest is restored to his former glorious exercise. Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body

shall they arise; awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs; and the earth shall cast out her dead. Is more proof of this important point asked? Are not the gifts and callings of God without repentance? Is it not said, the truth dwelleth in us, and shall be in us? And that whosoever is born of God cannot commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God?

But we observe, secondly, that this gracious principle of life and action which is implanted into the soul in regeneration, and which always abides in it, gives to the mind of the christian such a peculiar turn and disposition, as fully justifies, respecting him, the assertion made in our text. His understanding is truly and correctly enlightened to a considerable degree, in those momentous matters which present themselves as injunctions or motives to universal obedience; and in those instructive points that are to direct him both positively how to maintain his duty, and also how to avoid the implicated and ensnaring cases of human life. He is sensible of the authority of God, and knows the obligations to gratitude; he sees, by the penetrating eye of his faith, in their own aspects, the future endearing objects that are to meet obedience; and he remembers the awful nature and threatened consequences of vice. He knows, too, the promises of God, and how richly they are provided with every thing suitable to his exigencies; he is acquainted with the ordinances and institutions of his worship, and he cannot be forgetful of the need of circumspection to escape the entanglements of a circumventing world.

Having thus his understanding properly enlightened, is it possible that he can forego this genuine knowledge of his, and deliberately persevere in a line of conduct which his own mind reprobates? Can he, for instance, notwithstanding the proper impressions he has received, deny and condemn the authority of God; reject from his view the most inviting, delightful, and invaluable objects; or live careless of the known and direful consequences of iniquity?—But why do we insist upon his

knowledge? The active principles of his mind are no less renewed than is his understanding. His affections sweetly and powerfully incline him, as a dutiful son, to receive and obey the equitable commands of his righteous Father; his desires prompt him to the pursuit of the glorious objects which his faith discovers; and, as an encouragement to him, his conscience intimates to him the present pleasures of godliness. The saint is of the same turn of mind with his Saviour, and desires to adopt the words, which, as uttered in prophetic vision, he used: "I delight to do thy will, O my God; thy law is within my heart."

Thus, though because his knowledge is not absolutely perfect, he may take some unwary and forbidden steps, or because he has a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, he may at times yield to the importunities of the former, when he should be going along with the dictates of the latter, he is not, however, without grieving for his indiscreet rashness in the one case, or his too easy compliance in the other. He is not like the dog that returns to his vomit again, or the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. He commits not this sin, for which, as Peter insinuates, there is no forgiveness. Neither does he, like the dissolute man, abandon himself to work all uncleanness with greediness. But he is like a man who has some desirable object in view, and whose inclinations go all out after it; but who, in the rough and perplexed places through which he has to travel, or from the false information which envy, malice, or enmity, may suggest to him, at times, notwithstanding all his caution and circumspection, deviates into by-paths that are prohibited and unlawful to be trodden, but who, however, deeply laments over the unhappy situation into which he has fallen, and longs to be recovered to the right road again. Hence says the royal singer of Israel, mine iniquities have gone over mine head as an heavy burden, they are too heavy for me. I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart; Lord all my desire is before thee, and my groan-

ing is not hid from thee; make haste to help me, O God, my salvation.

But while we feel a principle of life, and while this principle inspires confidence; and prompts, by the light and fervor of its operations, to the adoption of the language in our text, we must remark, my brethren, that this new creature is not an independent existence; but the relation it daily bears to its author, and the connexion in which it stands to the exalted and glorious head of the new creation of the saints, have further to bespeak the reasonableness of our confidence. Which brings us to remark,

Thirdly, That it is not to be thought that the believer actuates his graces without the immediate agency of the divine Spirit. Man is not more dependent upon God for his preservation in natural being, or for the physical support of his powers in any action, than is the believer on the Holy Ghost for the exercise of his graces. Though he may say with Paul, in all his labors, "It is no more I that do them; but grace that dwelleth in me;" yet the Spirit is he to whom, as the great supplier of Christ's presence, he must add, "Without thee we can do nothing."

To perform this the Holy Ghost is represented in scripture as dwelling in the hearts of believers. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Holy Ghost dwelleth in you except ye be reprobates." The Spirit of God is as really, not with regard to what we have termed his graces only, but with regard to personal operation and efficiency, in the mind of the renewed man, as God with regard to operation and efficiency pervades all his works. We do not say that the essence of Deity is any way more peculiarly in the saint, than in any other thing, or any other part of space. This is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, and can never undergo the least alteration, whatever events take place among the works of God without him; should their intrinsic natures be changed, or their qualities either for the worse or for the better. But we say that there are peculiar effects which take place in the mind of

the saint, by the Holy Spirit residing in it, in a peculiar manner, with regard to power and efficiency; as a person of the Trinity employed on a particular work, in a particular economical character.

Now, since the Holy Spirit dwells in the saints, and since it is appointed him as his work, (for sanctification is the work of the Spirit,) to operate upon them, and to lead forth their graces into exercise, is it to be supposed that he will fail of performing this office? Are we to suppose that the love of God contemplated salvation, and that Christ paid a full price of redemption in order that his people might attain it; but that the Holy Ghost failed in the essential work of sanctification;—that he resigned some to the sin unto death, and others to drink iniquity like waters? Though for wise ends he permits at times the man in whom he dwells to taste of iniquity, yet surely he allows not thus his affections to be altogether alienated, nor his intentions to become thoroughly perverse. That all the graces of sanctification may be exercised, in the mystery of his operations, he permits, at times, ground for the exercise of repentance. By this, under his direction, the character of the christian, while it forever remains sensible of the necessity of humility in its own estimation, is led to be more mild and gentle in the sight of others. This is one way in which the Spirit brings good out of evil, and makes all things ultimately to conduce to make a perfect man in Christ. But though the Spirit may permit the christian to proceed thus far, he efficaciously forbids him to proceed farther, and to falsify the language contained in our text. The renewed son of God is kept by the Spirit, even in his worst condition, in the same state in which the spouse of Christ was, when she said, I sleep, but my heart waketh. Hence the true reason of that saying in Isaiah, “I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it; I will keep it night and day.” The flowers in the garden of God fade, in some seasons greatly languish; but they never die.

But this Spirit, as dwelling in us, is the representative only of Jesus Christ, the head of the mystical body the church. Hence we observe,

Lastly, That the intercession of our great head, in his glorified state in heaven, secures the realization of the language in our text; and urges, the more that his relation to us is surveyed, the more earnestly upon us the repetition of it. To the office of our high priest, Jesus, my brethren, was appointed by these solemn words: "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec." When God thus addressed his Son, what immutable promises, in this solemn transaction, must have been made by the Father respecting them who stood by representation in Christ! Under the oath are surely comprehended all qualifications for the discharge of the mediatorial office; all support during its accomplishment; and all adequate rewards of his meritorious work.—When, then, Christ our head pleads thus qualified, and on the infinite merits too of his satisfaction—satisfaction estimated and approved, for the reward that is due to him: yea, when he presents, in his glorified person, that right which all his followers have to the inheritance he preoccupies in their name, must it not appear, that this language, and this alone, can convey the truth: "This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day?" When God shall alter the word that hath gone out of his mouth; when he shall alter this to his own Son; when he shall alter it to deny him his reward promised in eternity; promised with his oath; promised as an encouragement to him to submit to his agony and accursed death; then may the christian desert his confidence, and seek a new key to many passages of scripture; passages which present Jesus standing over us, and pouring into our minds the water of life which issues from the throne of God and of the Lamb.—Jesus, thou Son of God, this is thy language, and it must be fulfilled. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I

shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. I am confident that thou who hast begun a good work in me, wilt carry it on unto the day of perfection." Yes, the relation of thine all-prevalent intercession to my eternal welfare; the emotions I experience, not of might, nor power, but of thy Spirit, taking of the things that are thine, and giving them to me; the glorious views which this grace creates, and the affections which it inspires; the permanent nature of the principle of life and action which the Spirit keeps for ever alive and growing in its season—all—all make me, amidst the temptations and evils of this trying world, though oppressed with weakness, yet breathe this paraphrase on the text. "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus my Lord."

My brethren, many of you are weak; but the subjects throughout all nature swell not into perfection in a moment. On the other hand, they grow imperceptibly, and arrive at perfection under the operation of many elements, which in their changes and ultimate settlement are never perceived. So says the language of scripture respecting you: "I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall grow as the corn, and flourish as the vine, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon."—And is any of you at present mourning? Hear these words. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but in great mercies will I gather thee; in a little wrath I hid myself from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindnesses will I have mercy upon thee; I am the Lord, thy Redeemer." Yes, christians, you are the sons of God; and if sons, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ—of heaven and of glory. Amen.

DISCOURSE IX.

THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

MATTHEW 16:3. *Oh, ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, but can ye discern the signs of the times?*

It has been the common topic of declamation amongst those more zealous for the welfare of mankind, than they are observant of their principles and informed of their history, that their own generation is the deepest sunk in depravity. The world, however, has been on the whole nearly equally depraved in every age; though sometimes it has been more veiled by the similitudes of virtue than on other occasions. Never were men better pleased with themselves, nor had they ground to be so, where likeness passed for reality, than that generation whose era was denominated the fulness of time; and which our Saviour addressed in these severe words: "Wo unto you hypocrites, for you are like unto whited sepulchres, which appear beautiful outwards, but within are full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness." These Pharisees, with whom the Sadducees at times associated against our Saviour, were particularly careful to make clean the outside of the cup and platter, and to maintain, according to the letter of long established and venerable institutions, the fairest characters. Had a disinclination to innovation, and a scrupulous regard externally to what God had once instituted, been the criterion of man's duty in their days, little ground for blame would have been found amongst them.

But whilst the world, under various attempts to cover wickedness, is nearly the same in all ages in the substance of her character, the scheme of God's grace has actually been advancing, by the operations of his providence, with a steady and frequently an imperceptible pace, to its final accomplishment. From the beginning of the world each age has been distinguished by its own peculiar marks. From the obscure and twilight view of it in the first promise, it advanced, distinctly marking on the great dial of time every degree, until it arrived at the fulness of it; and every intelligent and attentive observer could be at no loss to calculate the precise character of his own days, and the relations they bore to a hopeful futurity.

This scheme is still opening; and its particular character, were it not for the prevalence of a pharisaical disposition, might, in our own age, if not accurately estimated, admit of an approximation. Our Lord, we apprehend, does not, in these words of the preceding context, "When it is evening ye say it will be fair weather; for the sky is red: and in the morning, it will be foul weather to-day; for the sky is red and lowering," purely have a regard to the innocent observation of the complexion of the heavens, which, indeed, is at times even the useful director of the husbandman. But it is his intention to apply it to that discommendable disposition which, in the advancing kingdom of God's grace, would forget its improving tendency, and consider it, in the very midst of its progress, as if it had settled down into that unvarying aspect which marks the usual appearances of nature.

The sky, my brethren, exhibits the same appearances in all ages; but the times, in a moral point of view, have a varying and an advancing stamp upon them; and particularly as they respect the great scheme of salvation. How many, in every age, fall into that reprehensible state in which our Saviour here reproves the Pharisees! Many sincere and pious shepherds of Israel will read the history of the church, and consider the signs of other times; but the criterions of their own, they appear, at

least, in the sense in which our text requires us to consider them, afraid to state in their own colors.

Our text presents before us the glorious period of the arrival of the long promised Messiah, and calls us to mark it, not so much by the signs of depravity, as by the wonderful development of the glorious means of salvation. Perhaps a fear of not being severe enough on the prevalent sins of the age, or a tenderness in interpreting too forwardly the great lines of providence that are bearing on their wings the coming of Christ's kingdom, may be assigned as part at least of the reasons why the watchmen upon the towers of Zion have been more forward to record and proclaim her dangers than to hail her brightening prospects. Had we, however, lived in the days of our Saviour, as far as our fears were influenced by Pharisaical mistakes, and our tenderness helped on by our indifference, the language of that merciful and just one to us would have been, "O, ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, but can ye discern the signs of the times?"

To mark the signs of the present times, in their cheering aspects, would require a judgment matured for drawing general results from a detail of particulars in the history of past years, and which bear a comparative relation to the present day; a conception stored with all the facts that are living in the system of providence, and operating with much probability to the advancement of Christ's kingdom; and a perception into the departments of prophecy that will seize the line of termination to which the progress of the kingdom of grace will at last arrive. It is comparatively easy to mark the face of the clouded and lowering sky of usual errors and common vices; to tell, as has been done of old, that socinian, arminian, pelagian, and latitudinarian errors, are prevailing.—The draught of the state of the present age which we will attempt to offer, will be some very general and imperfect outlines; from which the attentive may form some just idea of the character of his own times; and which, we hope, the better informed will clothe with his

own reflections and remarks, to approach as near as possible to what is his incumbent duty.

From the nature of Christ's kingdom, we must expect that, in our age, very forward advances are made to its ultimate perfection. A tree that is perpetually growing, however imperceptible its progress in barren seasons may be, yet, in the accumulation of ages, exhibits a trunk and boughs that bespeak firmness and strength, and show the marks of the long and steady influences of heaven. The traveller who has been long on his journey, though he may have many an impassable mountain around which to form a vastly retarding circuit, yet is considerably advanced towards the grand object of it, although at the moment of reckoning, his face, in his winding way, may be partly turned backwards. The river is considerably advanced, even in one of those great doublings which send some of the greatest rivers on our globe, at hundreds of miles from their source, much farther from the spot of the earth where they disembogue their waters into the ocean, than when they started. —The church has had a stream of vast length in our world; and by this time it must have gathered much strength, and be considerably advanced on its course to its highest attainable perfection. The vine which our heavenly Father hath planted, must be supposed spreading forth now many a promising limb of undoubted fertility.

This church had its origin in that promise which secured her privileges and foreboded her future prosperity: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent." In after ages, she kept a steady pace of that mysterious advancing, which, whilst her changes afforded occasions of laying the most solid foundation, had evidently striking marks of a rapid progress. When the world was swept of its wicked inhabitants by the deluge, though the numbers of the church were necessarily restricted to a very few, yet there was a character, in the brightness of typical representation, given to the church, which, in no previous age, had she at any time displayed. A cloud

covered her countenance in Egypt; but whilst her character lay in a manner buried in that oppressive and idolatrous empire, there were the most rapid preparations making, under the hand of a mysterious providence, for bringing her forth in a far more advanced stage of her existence, than that in which she had ever before appeared, and of clothing her with a brightness, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners. It has been remarked by some zealous and candid defenders of the truth, that their ingenious opponents, by the edge of their opposition, did more to lead to the genuine results of things than they themselves did; and while this was far from an encomium on their depravity, it may tend to illustrate the mysterious ways in which the church of Christ has been advancing to the highest possible perfection of her character, whether she has been among the hands of her enemies or those of her friends. The destruction of the temple of Jerusalem, and the desolation of the land of Juda at the Babylonian captivity, were events which equally reflected condemnation on the ambition of the Babylonians, executed vengeance on the guilty Israelites, and advanced the interests ultimately of that society around which the wheels of providence continually play. An era was now marked for the commencement of the glory of the second temple, and for fixing, under arithmetical numbers, the period when the long promised Messiah was to be cut off, but not for himself; for arranging the rise and fall of empires, to introduce among their own peculiar circumstances the last times of the world; and for summoning the expectation of mankind to look for the arrival of the desire of all nations. The appearance of Christ himself was at a period when great darkness seemed to cover the church; but this was nothing more than another of those mysterious steps, which, while man's wickedness appeared enormous, was to mark the steady development of God's well ordered covenant of grace; and hence, by the adjustment of the previous courses, and this rich flow, the river of life now stretched over its former banks,

and blessed the fields of the gentiles, as well as those of the Jews. Happy indeed was the state of a great part of the world in consequence of this great and mysterious event; an event which destroyed the wall of partition between Jew and gentile; an event which gave birth to the most striking miracles in confirmation of the true religion; an event which interpreted the great chain of prophecy; and an event which led to an immediate effusion of the Spirit hitherto unknown.

Many have indeed supposed, that in the dark ages of popery which succeeded the primitive and pure times of the New Testament dispensation, the progressive scheme of salvation received a wonderful check.—That it was then working its way under a cloud, raised too in the most discommendable manner, by its professed friends, cannot be denied. Yea, the mystery of iniquity was then in the power of its operations. But to conclude from these appearances that there really was a retardation of the operation of causes, which, on the whole, were best calculated to subserve the ultimate designs of the church, and which, though concealed in mystery from the eye of humanity at the time, were clearing their way to break forth, like a powerful torrent that has been obstructed in its course, into immediately happy effects, would be no less rash and unadvised, than injurious to infinite wisdom, and unobservant of its results. Was it not the occasion of the awful degeneracy of the church of Rome that the Spirit of God made the motive of determined opposition to her on purely scriptural principles only? And will not the corruptions of the mother of harlots be beacons which, on many critical points, will have settled, to every future age, the safe course which inquiring men are to take?

But to ascertain the character of our times, it is not sufficient to consult the history of the church, and to show how God has uniformly brought good out of evil—making all things to work together for her advantage; we must contemplate the actual victories which she has obtained. When there is a powerful

resource of new armies which may be still brought forward with some hopes of success, the state of any cause is yet far from the enjoyment of perfect tranquillity. The armies of errors, to be sure, that could at any time be mustered against the truths of the gospel, were feeble compared to the divine omnipotence of these truths; but where men are engaged in the contest, to produce victory, it is usually necessary that a conspicuous display of principle be actually made.

Many an advocate, my brethren, has pleaded with tenacity and zeal that either the whole gospel, or some of its radical tenets, should be given up; and the way in which the sovereign providence of God has been permitting these errors to be marshalled against the truth, and has always been overturning them, together with a statement of an approximation to the condition of the controversy at present, must be brought forward, to discern in any accurate view the particular signs of our own times.

The gospel, my brethren, has completely sapped the foundations of the pagan temples; and no man, who is in the least acquainted with the principles of the religion of Christ, will now venture the reputation of his understanding, by attempting to prove any system of ancient or modern heathen worship equal to that of Jesus.—A system, however, which boasts that it could procure the glory of the victory which the gospel itself, and that alone, did obtain over the polytheism of the heathens, but which would rob the gospel of this honor, and then dismiss it as unworthy of the wisdom of the human intellect, was made, not long ago, to dispute the field with our holy religion. The evidence of our religion is of itself divine, and of itself it produces the highest moral certainty. In this state of it, Christ and his apostles left the world possessed of the greatest treasure it could receive. But there was still a possibility that wicked minds would exert their ingenuity to enlist plausible pretences, founded in sophistry or the varying manners of mankind, to combat the sovereign truths of the gospel. Accordingly every

age has had its free-thinkers and its opposers of revelation; and particularly since the happy period of the reformation. In opposition to these Deists, however, men of genuine abilities and patient investigation have, by providence, been uniformly raised up; so that, in our day, demonstration is almost joined to moral certainty in support of the religion of Christ; and so feeble have their suppositions and surmises become among their hands, that these opposers of revelation scarce ever now openly and boldly take the field. Above all others does the following circumstance afford an evidence, that the most profound schemes of its enemies tend only to advance the reputation of christianity. A number of men of great and distinguished talents united their activity to their cunning, and their reputation as men of letters to the impudency of their promises of success, and flattered themselves that they were now much more powerful than the first propagators of christianity, and it was determined that they should subvert the whole of our religion! They were enthusiasts in the belief of the truth of their philosophical systems, and they bound themselves by the most solemn oaths, that they should efface the object of their dislike from the earth; but the fabric of our religion was too powerful to be shaken. Their complete failure, and their utter denial of their principles when exposed to trial on account of them, only add new evidence to it, by the contrast which their pusillanimity bears to the undaunted carriage of the apostles, and by the utter abortion of their deepest and best laid schemes. Many had before talked of their enmity to christianity; but till the time referred to, there never was an actual practical attempt most seriously made to imitate by co-operating powers, the propagators of our religion with a view to destroy it. This evidence in its favor in the awful light of contrast, God, however, did at last permit; and this where the most powerful geniuses of human nature were united, and where circumstances, as it was supposed, flattered still more the hopes of success. Hence while philosophy was

purifying unintentionally the doctrine of miracles, by showing the uniformity of the laws of nature, and consequently the impossibility of an agent inferior to the great creator altering them; and while she was separating testimony to the dignity of keeping the great post office of all past ages, and showing us that experience is a little runner among the lanes of our own observation and experiments only; we see, that the proud and bitterest enmity of her most gigantic opponents is made to contribute its share to the overflowing stream of evidence, enriched from so many sources, in favor of our holy religion.

The same holds good with respect to those malicious attempts that have been made against parts of our holy religion by men who are otherwise its professed friends. Arianism had once a general currency of which the christian world at large have not now even an historical acquaintance; but they have been pursued out of every lurking place of false criticism, and for shame they will be afraid ever afterwards to show such a barefaced audacity. Socinianism has been followed so hotly, and plied with such steeled weapons, that it has been driven to make so many scriptural criticisms, and all almost equally unsatisfactory to itself, it appears now to plead the basis of philosophy only; and to own that perfect inconsistency between a belief of revelation on the whole, and a denial of it by detail, that will lead its professors to deliver up their churches to the moles and to the bats: for, in fact, a conscientious preaching of the gospel, and a keeping of the Sabbath day, may be observed while they are stimulated and kept warm by controversial zeal; but when this cools off, all that seems to be gained by the sounds of words which in themselves always seem more favorable to an opposite creed than to their own, cannot, in these days of common sense in philosophy, long please their continually increasing philosophical taste. Arminianism, acknowledging the great principles of revelation, and supporting itself by allowing of a part of each topic for the whole, requires a greater acumen of distinction and nicety of investigation

than almost any other controversy; and while it has many abettors all must own that much is done in our day to settle this controversy, above what was before the public some centuries ago. Yes, my brethren, it may not be observed by the careless who look at their immediate neighbors in their own day only; but it is a glorious and a momentous truth, that the society of the church, which was weak at first and is advancing to perfection, has a steady and progressive increase; an increase precisely such as her character would require—removing every error that can spring up, that at last she may sit down, on the glorious seat of her most eminent attainment, as that sword of the Spirit, which has slain every enemy, and is to possess the brightness of the glory of the last days amongst intelligent beings, by giving them the pure results of truth tried on every possible touchstone, and universally found genuine. It is astonishing that so many please their indolence and want of reflection, by considering every opposition to the gospel as a means of postponing the most glorious state of the church, and expect that this state is just to arrive as a great and dictating prince among men. No, all things that we see and hear, however wicked many of them are from men, are yet preparations, from her own wise and mysterious economy, for the last and most glorious days of the church:—the thunders of her enemies tend only to purify her atmosphere that the day may afterwards shine more brightly.

But to obtain the object of our research, we must add to these promises from her character and history, and these evidences from the removal of all rubbish that would weaken or conceal her foundations, a slight review of the present relations of the church.—At the Reformation the doctrine of the scripture was most clearly stated, and the means of the salvation of the soul presented in their unadulterated purity. But the economy of grace advances gradually, and at that time, whilst the individual possessed all that he could wish for his edification and comfort, there were most heavy burdens that were oppress-

ing and bearing down the facility of the progress of the church to her last and most perfect state on earth. There is a great difference between the privileges of church members, and that pregnant crisis of circumstances which is to produce the most distinguished events in behalf of Zion. The progress of the economy of salvation is from the beginning to the end of time, and in the mystery of providence, God sometimes makes the greatest dearth of spiritual provisions to the individual, the most fertile source of operation to push forward the progress of the society to which he belongs.

A powerful principle on which to predicate the dissemination of christian knowledge and privilege in our day, and which had not come into operation in the first periods of the reformation clearly among the reformers themselves, and not at all among their opponents, is a recognition of the rights of conscience. The manner in which this seems now to be adopted, and the endeavors that are made to interweave it with the very manners of the people, augur prosperously for the interests of religion far above what the unreflecting are apt to imagine, and deserves particularly to be considered as a striking sign of our times. This principle never before was embraced by the enemies of the reformation, and when many of its principles were actually living among them to aid the purification of their former corruptions. But the providence of God seems now to put into the heart of every one some degree of the benevolence and philanthropy of this principle, and to open a door at which the righteous may enter. The way in which God hath in many places of the world established it, is truly wonderful; this bright sun of the most hopeful encouragement to the prosperity of the religious world having arisen out of indifference to all religion. But his wisdom chose this state of the manners of mankind, that the benign light itself might first break forth unimpeded by opposition; and then the seeds of the truth would grow up under the open and propitious day. Truth has a peculiar and a commanding character, and when a free inquiry after it is

permitted, though some may wander from its path by the vanity and waywardness of their minds, yet, through the divine blessing, the multitude are disposed to receive it:—and how hopeful now is the prospect, in those regions of the globe, where the inquisition and implacable persecution suppressed once the most promising buds of the reformation! To be sure, in several parts of the continent of Europe where even tyrannical and persecuting courts themselves thought that they had exterminated the seeds of the reformation entirely, there were thousands who met in the darkness of the night to worship, under the sweets of an approving conscience, the one God by the one Mediator between God and men. This was a plant which Jehovah was covering in the hollow of his hand, till the day of liberty should arrive; and hence the multitudes of protestants who are now found, daily increasing, in those countries, where, a few years ago, it was believed that superstition universally reigned. When the arm of man is long stretched, its tension naturally begins to relax and its grasp to become feeble, if there be little to reward by the gratification of passion; and hence the inquisition was in a great measure of itself failing to operate before it received any formal and legal check; but what an alteration in the prospects of the reformed world have we now by the revolutions, which, by the mysterious hand of God, have taken place throughout the extent of our continent! Previous to these revolutions the diabolical spirit of the inquisition throughout those extensive regions was indeed dying away; and books by some of the natives were written with impunity against it; but now it appears consigned to oblivion and free inquiry after truth invited to assume its place. This inquiry in many parts prevails, and we must hope that its results, in many instances, will be highly favorable to the pure religion of Christ.

The forms of religion, my brethren, which have obtained among men have been either vast fabrics of superstition, or

bodies clothed with some of the more refined coverings of it; and all nations, fond to protect what they enjoyed, have conferred dignity on certain tenets by a national establishment of them, and have thus given them, among the people at large, an adventitious aspect, as privileges which the fathers confer upon their children. People who are so eager to bequeath, under the sanction of law, their earthly possessions to their offspring, think, under the influence of their religious feelings, that they cannot consult their affections for future generations, without, under the laws which possess physical force in their execution, transferring also their tenets of religion to them; and hence those establishments.

The christian religion asks not, however, this aid; and is distinguished from all others, by its being the only system that ever ventured into a nation with the scrip and sandal only to adventure its hopes. If it be divine, this was noble, and a fair method of making, on such a momentous inquiry as the means of preparation for the eternal world, proposals to the sons of men. Every man has to learn for himself, and to decide, as in the presence of God, on that to which his conscience is to submit, and the christian religion being divine, assumes, in the last and most perfect dispensation, an eminence of fair and spiritual teaching which sanctifies and separates it, like the temple of Jerusalem, from all which would aspire after the name of religion. It is mighty to the pulling down of strong holds; but the weapons of its warfare are not carnal but spiritual.

Ever, my brethren, since the period of the reformation this primitive principle of christianity, which makes God alone, the Lord of the conscience, has been working keenly after an ascendancy among men; but these after days, on which providence has bestowed so many favors, have the pre-eminent honor of loosing from the shackles of confinement the heavenly offspring. The recognition of the rights of conscience so extensively in several parts of the civilized world, is not

an attainment of speculative inquiry ; but the result of the necessary progress of human improvement, under that rapid current, which, for a century and a half, in science, arts, and government, has taken place. Nor will it be overthrown or weakened, as speculative opinions receive currency for a time, and are afterwards altered or abandoned. The right of conscience, in modern christian society, is like Newton's discovery of the principle of gravitation ; which by honesty and ingenuity was opposed for a time, but which was afterwards universally adopted to account for all the harmonious movements in the universe. The rights of conscience, from the supposed dignity of ancient systems, will, in different parts of the world, meet with obstacles various and powerful ; but the voice of the improvements of mankind in every sense in which they can be considered, is, that they are an element which, accompanying originally the infant progress of christianity, now, when she verges towards her ultimate perfection, cannot but appear as a leader and divine vindicator of the progressive improvement of the human race.

Every nation indeed in modern times, when they established what they believed to be the true religion, professed also to establish the rights of conscience ; but their definition of these rights accords ill with the free air of primitive christianity, which boasted of living peaceably with every kind of idolatry that might be without ; and, before the present progress of human society, these views seem sophistical, and the practice of them, in every protestant nation, is almost entirely set aside.

There is a holy guile in the rights of conscience ; for while beloved establishments of false religions would never surrender their fortifications to a direct attack, the claims and arguments of these rights, finding no fault with existing errors, obtain the free discussion of every important principle ; and in a little truth alone is found to stand the severe trial to which every topic is subjected ; and ever afterwards what has been found to triumph on the fair field of inquiry stands erect and immove-

able. The principle of the rights of conscience will sap the foundations of popery; will overthrow the fabric of mahometanism; and will level with the dust the altars yet remaining of heathen idolatry. These things are certain; else the current of human improvement must forever run in a narrow channel, or its streams must be absorbed in a desert which neither our philosophy nor religion can believe to be before us.

But not only are the rights of conscience in the most influential parts of the world now recognized; the rights of man appear to be beginning to be universally respected. While one part of men professing the true religion, continue to plunder the other of the most valuable of the blessings of heaven, liberty and all its train of indescribable advantages, it may well be said, that it is impossible for the former to make many religious proselytes among the latter. It is a deduction from the most simple principles of our nature, that that religion cannot be from God which destroys man. But of late years wonderful are the efforts of providence to put a final and an universal termination to the iniquitous traffic in human kind, and to remove one great obstacle to the general spread of the gospel. Effectually to accomplish the grand object, it would be necessary that providence put into the heart of some great power, able to accomplish the design, the determination that emancipation shall be effected. This has been done. With more spirit and with more unanimity than is usual in that great body, has the Parliament of Britain decreed, "that to traffic in human flesh is contrary to the law of nature and nations, and that slave vessels, to whatever nation they may belong, or in whatever latitudes of the ocean they may be found, shall be captured as pirates and treated accordingly." This law and others of a similar nature, which in that and other nations have since the passing of it followed, are in the true spirit of our religion, and will still lead to further enactments—all of which measures will excite an inquiry among the formerly oppressed, and bereave them of every antipathy to that religion which has

effected such an universal change in behalf of oppressed humanity. The results of these regulations will necessarily operate, together with other circumstances, to stimulate prudence to provide, by some means or other, for those who are already domesticated in bondage. When the light of the sun, as Isaiah says, becomes seven-fold, and the glory of the Lord appears to all nations, not only will the images of superstition be melted down, but the chains of the oppressed will be dissolved.

But the horizon of the present age is brightened by other views than these we have presented before you. To the recognition of the rights of conscience and the rights of men, there are in our day made the most particular active exertions to disseminate the gospel. Providence, for some centuries past, has been insensibly, by the ambition of princes and the interest of the commercial world, making the whole regions of the globe subject to the knowledge, and in some respects familiar to the manners, of christian European nations and our own. This was an admirably preparatory and singular step, far preferable to all the ignorant crusades of men; though of itself it might have been too feeble to attain the grand object of ultimately making the kingdoms of this world the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. Hence, at the proper crisis, when manners were becoming somewhat common between us and these once entire strangers, and when a commanding commercial intercourse might have threatened to decline; God put it into the heart of men to prepare a translation of his holy word into its vernacular language, and to have it left as a legacy with every tribe and nation almost on the face of the earth. There may be some things respecting these bible societies we would desire altered; but certainly when we consider their assiduity and their success in making translations, the light which their endeavors throw on the christian world's prospects, and the ends to which God will ultimately make their endeavors subservient, compel us to record such peculiar traits of them, as a striking

feature of the christian world in our days. Long has the church prayed for the knowledge of the Lord covering the earth as the waters do the sea; and these means appear in some respects to grasp at the whole of the great circle which the faithful predictions of God's word have described. Many ages may elapse before the plants which are thus sent abroad into all parts of the earth grow up unto perfection; but as the book of the law found among the Israelites, produced, after a long oblivion, a wonderful revival of religion; and as the scriptures preserved among the papists, but almost forgotten in the dark ages, gave birth to the reformation; so may the holy word of God ornament, for many days, a library, as a monument of curiosity only, and then afterwards, by the blessing of God, be turned into its native utility. Yea, we may verily believe that these scriptures will make some converts wherever they are sent, and these living, as the first fruits in all lands, will secure the ensuing harvest.

But another sign of our times, favorable to the interests of religion, is the introduction and the establishment among men of the proper method of philosophising. In almost all ages of the world theory has prevailed, and that knowledge which is founded in facts was disregarded. In all the sciences, however, it is the method of reasoning from facts that is now established. No inquirer after truth in any department of knowledge considers theory as a sure foundation on which to rest; and till he is satisfied, nature herself must be interrogated, and her voice distinctly marked, in instances of proof which are permanent as the laws of the universe.

This general method of inquiry is highly favorable to christianity; for all its evidence resolves itself into facts, and all its doctrines refer through enlightened and candid criticism to the authority of its inspiration. Some men, indeed, have imagined that the facts which form the external evidences of christianity are not the pillars on which our belief of its truth is to rest, but weapons which are put into our hand to overthrow its

enemies. But we are rational beings, and it is in this character only that God deals with us; and the external evidences of revelation are as much arrangements of divine wisdom for the attainment of a particular end, as the supernatural system of divine truth itself is an arrangement of it for the accomplishment of its important designs. The rational evidences of christianity are as really divine, viewed as they ought, as the scriptures themselves are. They are not accidental traits or vague traditions, but marks placed by the great Architect in the very building itself, or growing out of it, in such a manner as to be inseparable from it; and they have as evident characters of divinity upon them as any of the works of God; and this too in relation to the very end for which they were intended. We might, in reference to our belief of a Creator, equally exclude the wisdom and signatures of power in the universe from having any legitimate influence in regulating our faith on this point, as we can exclude the wisdom of prophecy and the omnipotence of the miracles wrought in confirmation of our holy religion, from having any just influence in producing our assent to its truth.

There are on which to depend, the fact of its obvious superiority to all others; the fact of many prophecies contained in it, and many of these undoubtedly fulfilled; and the fact of miracles. The passage of the Red Sea, and the manna enjoyed for forty years, are evidences of God's presence and operation; an account of which, we may remark, we have in the very midst of the laws which regulated the politics and justice of a nation that was singularly separated from all others, and which had used the same laws ever since that very age which witnessed these miracles, and which could not therefore be mistaken respecting them.—The miracles of Christ, too, and of his apostles, are extraordinary facts which were not denied in the age in which they took place, and in respect to which the first propagators of our holy religion could not be mistaken—they were

facts for which we have more testimony, and this better tried, than respecting any thing else found in history.

In a word, my brethren, there is in the back ground of the cheering picture of our times the images of decay which represent all false systems of religion, and onwards to which these powerful principles which we have presented are moving, effectually to overturn them. The knowledge of the Lord, it is said, shall cover the earth as the waters do the bed of the ocean. The waters of the sea roll irresistibly; so the advancing progress of the church, and the improvements of human society, in the arts of government, in science, and in civilization, will roll on, reflux only in some parts, and for a little time, under a powerfully adverse wind; but at last they will overpower all opposition, in every bay and channel of the world, and will settle over the face of the earth in tranquillity. And providence, as presumed throughout our discourse, is prominently making way at present for this happy period. For while the religion of Christ always proffers peace on earth and good will towards men, it has in our day a vigor and a nerve in its arm, which show that it will flourish in perennial youth. Heathenism is mouldering to the extremities of the earth into dust; and imagination, in the present state of improvement, cannot devise a prop to promise aid. Mahometanism was originally built on the successes of the sword; but the glorious days of the reformation, and the light shed throughout Europe for three centuries past, have already, around all the borders of the prophet, palsied enterprise, and shown us how, even at a distance, the light of knowledge, the prerogatives of conscience, and the rights of humanity, will intimidate and destroy that power which is actuated by a consciousness of its own weakness and decay. And notwithstanding popery, by learning from the principles of the protestants, has silenced the inquisition; has guarantied in many places, in some degree, the rights of conscience, and has promised to keep faith with

heretics; yet, while she, in these enlightened times, withholds the word of God from the people and pleads the authority of tradition, she must meet with that fate, which a dislike in very distant nations to submit to an authority in a mouldering city among the ruins of an ancient empire, cannot but hasten more and more in every age. The very extent of the geography of our earth as at present known; and the elevation into independence of the minds of men, proclaim a certain and an entire overthrow to every system which is not suited with facility to that geographical extent, and which does not rejoice to go hand in hand with this manly spirit of men's independence. "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

But while the signs of our times are on the whole, as arranged by the providence of God, very encouraging; there are some amongst them which, in defining their character, will lead us to consider the economy of God's church, as requiring many great changes of providence to display her ultimate perfection. Indeed much of her flattering character at present consists of ripening prospects only; and these may have many a storm to shake some of them altogether from the tree on which we now see them, and there may be many a cold night to retard the mellowing into perfect ripeness the rest.

In the first place, there are still in the christian world many grievous errors fixed by a tenacious hold in the minds of men. We have intimated the wonderful ways of infinite wisdom, by which victory over error is in the christian world obtained; and both from the very nature of the christian dispensation, and the gradual steps by which the human mind will part with its prejudices, we are yet to suspect many grievous errors oppressing the church. Before these can be banished, every

hold of false criticism throughout the field of revelation must be completely broken; and to accomplish this many years are indeed required. And oh! that the Lord would pour out his Spirit as a Spirit of guidance into the truth; for our generation is particularly disgraced by talent and inquiry being discouraged in the great concerns of religion; and a striking sign of our time is the lamentable difficulty of reconciling this indifference about investigation, with the cold tenacity with which many move on in their former and unfounded sentiments. The scismatics of old were not more erroneous than their endeavors were active to defend by resemblances of proof the tenets they espoused; but their followers present little more in support of their schemes, than that they are so, and every thing else is absurd. This is a speck in our prospects of such an inveterate hue, that it is calculated to shun the common weapons of attack, and demands our warmest supplications to heaven, that the Lord himself would revive his work.

This indifference it is indeed not difficult to account for, even in respect to the most fundamental of religious opinions. Whilst the church, my brethren, is so greatly divided as it is at present, many of the tenets maintained by the respective divisions as characteristic of their distinct existence, are, in the general view of the religious world, held in very small estimation; and the carelessness of inquiry which is directed towards these points, aided by a dislike to that bitterness of dispute which they see so prevalent, leads insensibly those who differ on the most fundamental questions to consider their subjects of controversy as only the common occurrences respecting religious opinions. It is a maxim in logic that what proves too much is good for nothing; and the profusion of trivial disputes, among the few zealots who are to be found in almost all societies, tends to introduce into the general mind, the sentiment that religious truths are not subjects of

investigation but gifts of birthright or accident, and men generally submit to what is so easy and cheap a possession. In our own happy country, where the protestant phalanx is so completely broken up, popery in many places is viewed as only a common division among the different denominations of the christian world; and socinianism claims a brotherhood, because the most orthodox churches are as bitter against one another, as they can be against it; and it is to be feared that many an honest mind embraces it as little more at any rate, than one of the common sections of christianity. Which brings me to remark,

That another uncomfortable sign of our times are the divisions which prevail among christians. The devious errors into which many wander occasion the consciencious to shield himself under the arm of the Lord,—by assuming a singular but necessary station from the fundamentally erroneous; and by preferring the character of a sincere and faithful follower of Christ, to that of having the general approbation of men. But a spirit of division, my brethren, is contrary to the unity of the church; and that not only the beauteous graft appears separated from the corrupted stock, but that among the trees of God's own vineyard there should be a withering influence universally displayed from day to day, is certainly a great grievance in our time, and what both hinders the spread of the gospel in other parts of the world, and weakens its influence where it is professed. God's church will advance to her greatest attainable perfection; but surely, while every infidel can tell us that christians are endlessly divided among themselves, the state of their society is not of itself calculated to aid much in forwarding God's designs. It is a truth that the principles of natural religion of late years have been as much questioned, as those of supernatural revelation; that difference of sentiment on the very first principles of morals has abounded; and that an universal agreement of men in the principles of our holy religion in the present stage of the church's progress cannot

be expected: but whilst we can plead the difference of men's views on all subjects, as an apology for our difference in matters of religion, it certainly is our duty, not to run the race of division unsent by necessity, nor to widen the gap of separation by adding dislike and invective against those who may differ from us. Were the character of the true church left to be formed by men, each would make his own opinions the standard; but the pattern of the temple of the Lord is delineated in his word, and to it we are to conform; but self-love, an overweening conceit of one's own views of controverted passages of scripture, and a zeal unbridled by charity, may possibly urge this one to embrace an extreme of inflexibility, which but ill corresponds with the weak nature of man and his opportunities in many classes of society of improvement, the general tenor of scripture towards weak brethren, and the examples of the great in the purest periods of the church towards their brethren in Christ. A love properly manifested towards our christian brethren in other societies, and reciprocated generally, would be an antidote, in the spirit of our religion, to the cavils of its opponents, who differ more in their own systems, than christians in the interpretation of theirs, and it would be an effectually preparatory step to that future harmony and unity which must prevail. Loving friends soon see with the same eye and come to a unity of conviction respecting the truth; but enmity clothes itself in its own robes, and nurses an opposition where the very spider could scarce fix a line to effect her murderous intent. Our divisions then are another sign which make as yet very great deductions from the felicity of the prospects, which, in other respects, promise so fairly; and while these exhibit often a bitterness of party feeling which tosses with infidel disdain to a useless distance the new commandment of our Saviour, "Love one another," our only comfort is, that God may bring good out of evil, and that this will ultimately be the case.—For the time must come when there will be one Lord, one faith, and one baptism.

My brethren, I may just remark here, that some great men have thought, that though the churches may have something of externally different forms, and different churches may have different degrees of purity; yet, as long as any symptoms of life remain, and as long as our conscience dictates to us that they are churches of Christ, there should be, at all times, some practical circulation of christian offices and duties taking place. There is one passage in Durham on the Revelation, which, in feeling and sincerity of expression, excels all the rest of his admirable dissertations in that excellent work. The words flow so sweetly and the candor appears so triumphant, that one would think an angel had been a ministering spirit to him, and had suggested some of his thoughts. The dissertation is entitled, "The unity of the catholic visible church;" and in it he proclaims that there is one heaven, and one earth, and one Jerusalem the mother of us all; and this, taken in connexion with these words upon the same subject in another place, "there is an union and communion in the catholic visible church, which is one body, one city and house, one commonwealth, one bride and spouse," shows us that we might, in his view, as well stop some of the blood in our veins from visiting every member of the body, as absolutely break up all fellowship with the parts of the visible church which the great head hath thrown around us. This man lived in the very brightest period of Scotland's ecclesiastical purity; and as her greatest ornament was promoted to the most sacred station which her wisdom and piety had to bestow: and he and several others inspired into their own age a terror of separating, in the house of God, chamber absolutely from chamber, by holding up the seamless coat of Christ, and the breast of the one woman who, in the Revelation, gives milk to us all.

But another sign of an uncomfortable aspect in our time, is, many of the most influential characters of the world are indifferent about the concerns of religion or enemies to them. The latter day glory is to be distinguished by the kings and queens

of the earth becoming nursing fathers and mothers to the church; and while in the ages that are past the irreligion of many of these and other great ones has been obviously administering an evidence to the truth of that religion, which infallibly predicts that not many mighty are chosen; the fact that this is still the case with them is a proof that the church is only advancing, through very powerful difficulties, towards her ultimate perfection.

The causes which have to account to us for this prevalence of irreligion among the most influential men in society are, principally, the deceitfulness of riches, and the allurements of the world which they can easily command; but perhaps the present guardians of the church are not altogether blameless. It is our duty to be careful to keep our garments clean, and not to be partakers in any respect of other men's sins: but since the youthful education of the eminent members of society cultivates the taste, and enlarges the mind with scientific knowledge, perhaps, as a great divine remarks, the unnecessary homely style in which the great truths of salvation are often set before them in writing and speaking, and the undigested effusions of sentiment which are exhibited to them as their spiritual fare, are great part of the occasion of their irreligion and indifference. A minister's lips should keep knowledge, not only of the generally known doctrines of religion, but of that high quality that will make him appear a leader in every species of ornamental or useful knowledge. A simplicity of style is admired in all compositions: it shines in the best historians; it is the very dress that genuine philosophy will wear; poetry weeps when she is divested of it, and divinity is stripped of her indispensable ornaments when she is otherwise dressed: but to present that which disgusts in style and confounds in sentiment for simplicity, is a disagreeable usage, no less incongruous in the christian writer than hurtful and common. That seriousness alone will consecrate ignorance, and childish innocencies fit for the great office of instructing the human intellect, is an error no less prevalently adopted in some departments of

the christian world, than mischievous throughout a vast series of relations. The priest's lips should keep knowledge; and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.

Thus, without looking at the face of the sky, which presents in all ages the same indications of fair weather and foul, and which stretches behind the neighboring hills only, we have endeavored to catch the spirit of the exhortation of the great Redeemer of mankind; and as his church is increasing from small beginnings so as to cover the earth, we have attempted to mark, throughout the field she occupies, the signs which distinguish her. If the ideas which have been suggested tend to animate the prayer of a heart attached to the welfare of Zion, or to direct in lines which before were not contemplated, your time is not altogether lost. But the thoughts have been presented to them whose observation and knowledge can supply my deficiencies and correct my mistakes; to them who lead hundreds every Sabbath day to the throne of grace, to pray for the very object, the marks on the way to which we have been endeavoring to ascertain; and to them who are particularly related to the church of Christ and the management of her concerns.

My fathers and brethren, we cannot forget to lead the Lord's people under our charge into the knowledge of those prospects for the interests of Zion that seem to break upon our view, and to engage them to plead with him who is to pour out his spirit on all flesh, that he would hasten the period of his appearance. Though we be a small portion of the christian world, our exertions, if marked with prudence and determination, may be attended with happy results. An uniform and a fair vindication of injured truth is the province of every disciple of Christ; and an exhibition of the beauty of the temple of the Lord, in a pre-eminently holy life, may be a blessing to those around us and to future generations. Almighty Saviour, be with us always, that we being fellow workers with God, thy church

may be presented, in the ministry of thine ordinances, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, before thee at last.

Brethren, we are about to meet as the supreme ecclesiastical judicature in one branch of the divided church of Christ, in a land of vast extent, and in a period of the world pregnant with hopes to the cause of the Redeemer; and each one of us, to do his duty, should single himself out, under the dignity of the light of his conscience, from all accidental habits and associations, and ask, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, how am I now most prosperously to promote the cause of Christ? This is not to be done to break up our association; but to make each individual appear, as before himself and these heavenly witnesses, a good soldier of Jesus Christ, and to make him remember that the enemy may come in like a flood. Yes, my fathers and brethren, and he comes with the cunning of the serpent and the stilness of the pestilence. Saul could mark the enmity of the Philistines, and Ahab could prepare his chariots and his horsemen to go with Jehoshaphat to the battle from which he was not to return in peace; but it needed the divine knowledge of our Saviour himself to discern the torrent which, in his day, expended itself in hypocrisy, and zeal for the washing of cups and platters. "Oh ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye discern the signs of the times?"

It is usual with us, my brethren, to appoint a day of humiliation and fasting. This is well; but with us here it is the discharge of a duty which only prepares a form. We should endeavor strictly to ascertain what is the knowledge of the word of God which is among our people; what are their habits of religion; and what is the punctuality of their morality.

I charge you, my brethren, as stewards of the mysteries of God, that you be not imposed upon by the hypocrisy of men. Your people may look at the horizon that is immediately around them, and they may tell you of the collected clouds of error which they see, and of the boding aspect of the heavens in this and the other quarter; and you may be ready to accept of

this knowledge of external things for that religion which is pure, peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, without partiality and without hypocrisy; which denies itself, and is in all meekness and humbleness of mind; and which says, be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

In a word, my fellow laborers in the vineyard of Christ, remember that we ought to water with an equally tender and an attentive hand the whole garden of God;—we should water what is enclosed within our own apartment, and the souls that are about all its borders:—For the voice of Christ is to them that are afar off, and to them that are nigh, “Go preach the gospel to every creature, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and lo I am with you always:”—a saying incorruptible as the light of heaven, and which will let no man, that is a minister of Christ, think that he can possibly do his duty, without his prayers and his exertions being directed to the universal spread of the gospel. Amen.

DISCOURSE X.

ON THE SABBATH.

Exodus 20:8. *Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.*

WHEN, my brethren, there is any ordinance that universally and vitally enters into the movements of society, it is a delightful thing to be able to trace it to some certain origin. Of the religious observances on which men have attended, few, in the greater part of the history of the world, are traceable to any acknowledged source. The mythology of the heathen fabricated a genealogy for the gods, and the festivals which were kept in honor of them were ascribed to some feat in their life, which had as gratuitous an origin, often, as the divinity of the character in honor of which they were observed.

But the Sabbath, which is intended to maintain a station among all the days of existence, and to justify its origin and obligation by the relations which it assumes, and by the duties which it enjoins, presents itself as putting on its robes of sanctity in the very morning of creation. "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it."

This is the first precept which surveys the heaven and the earth and all the host of them, and which connects the creature, through the wisdom and beauty of creation, with its Maker. When the universe was formed, God could not consider the fabric as suited unto the residence of man, until after he had

surveyed all the steps of his creative energy, saw the spheres moving in their order, and the earth stored with the first generation of organized existences, having their seed in themselves. Then, however, he rested on that day, which was to return as regularly as time is measured by the perfection of the workmanship of his hand, and which to its end is to proclaim to man how solemnly the wisdom of Deity retires, on the concluding of its works, into its rest.

There was compassion in the appointment of this day of repose. For all things had been put under the dominion of man; and to give to those which were more immediately subjected to the labor of his command, a period of rest, which by heaven's command is their own, was kind in itself, and showed that even the lower creation have rights which we ought not to disregard. There is something that is pleasing to a benevolent and contemplative mind on seeing those companions of our toil, whose strength requires only our wisdom to direct them, in order to accomplish for us what otherwise could not be attained, set at liberty to pluck the herbs of the field, and to breathe the air of freedom, untrammelled by our arts or ornaments.

But the sanctification of the Sabbath respects principally man himself. The inanimate creation has retired into the rest of forms of crystalizations, or organized bodies which form their seed by the processes of vegetation; and while to these all days are alike, yet the very appendages of human society assume, as we have just seen, an attitude which bespeaks the voice of this day to man. On it, while his body rests, his mind is to pass over all that he can direct it to of those works of creation, "the heavens, and the earth, and all their host," which the eyes of Jehovah surveyed, and with which the Eternal was so particularly pleased. There is not a flower of the field but on that day might communicate to him some evidence of the exquisite wisdom which had been exercised, till the covering of our earth was mantled over so as to satisfy the eye of its Creator.

Not an insect which he sees on the wing, or creeping on the ground, but has members which he perceives can be fully understood by their Creator only. And before him all things flourish to bring forth food for man and beast, so richly and abundantly, that he is lost no less under a sense of amazing goodness, than in the contemplation of wisdom.—Yet man cannot be satisfied with all this. His mind must pierce beyond unto the original cause of all this great and marvellous fabric. Yes; for this day places him not merely in the building of the universe to survey its beauties, its riches, the lines of its order, and the extent of its dimensions; but it places him in it to hear the voice which breaks from every part,—the voice of the Creator, “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.” On this day, my brethren, the mind familiarizes itself with the character of him who himself dwells in light which is inaccessible and full of glory. It reflects on his eternity, his omnipresence, his infinite power, his wisdom, and his majesty of commandment.

But the Sabbath soon came to connect itself with the economy of man’s restoration from sin. The sons of God, indeed, in the patriarchal ages, were so few in number, and so separated by holy habits from the heathen nations among whom they lived, that the seventh day is not prominently presented to our view as a holy Sabbath, till after a whole people could put on its covering, could write its history, could bow to its sanctions, and could edify us by their examples of piety on the one hand, or of punishment for Sabbath violation on the other.

When Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt, God, who had originally instituted the sanctification of the seventh day, filled the whole economy of Israel with memorials of the Sabbath. The manna which came from heaven commenced the high veneration which God’s command enjoins, by keeping within its chambers on that day. Their fields had a rest spread over them every seventh year; and all prison doors opened to receive the refreshments of liberty on their sabbatical jubilee.

There is, indeed, no boasting about their primary Sabbath, the duties of which were inculcated by the voice of creation, and interpreted by the history of the sanctification of the Jews; for during the days of David, Solomon, and others of the kings of Israel, the silence of patriarchal times descends again upon the history of this day; and it is only by the spirit of praise which was so regular in its courses; the rearing of the temple according to the directions of Jehovah; and some incidental circumstances connected with the building of that sacred fabric, that we know that the memorial of creation was devoutly remembered by them who so fervently served the Creator as the God of Israel. The odour of the sweet smell from the sacrifice which was of double magnitude on the Sabbath, must indeed have ascended in these times; because the priesthood was regular and its character estimable; but it is the commandment and sanctification of the Sabbath, not its histories, that revelation particularly regards; and also the sanctions and punishments of this day. For, my brethren, though, during many reigns, God says little about how men are observing his Sabbath; yet, he comes forth at last, when Israel are in a miserable situation, and tells them, in anger, that his land shall enjoy her Sabbaths. "And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon: where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia. To fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths; for as long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years."

It was a comparatively light thing for other nations to be conquered and led into captivity; but for the Jews who had the ordinances of the true religion, and the protecting favor of the omnipotent God pledged to preserve them, to see their city destroyed, their temple overturned, its sacred furniture scattered among the heathen, and themselves made the subjects of derision and bondage, was an evidence of a tempest

from their righteous sovereign; which, though many other causes are detailed in their history, shows how deeply God was displeased with their neglect of the solemnization of creation, and of the most remarkable feature in their own privileges, when, at the end of the period of their punishment, he seems to forget all other causes of his displeasure, and fixes on this one of their violation of his Sabbaths. People and nations may think that God is as careless about the moments of sacred time, as their minds are thoughtless or their habits are regardless; but though he speak little of the history of national observances, and of individual duties, yet he views those terms on which he originally entered with the inhabitants of our world, with all the majesty with which the heavens and the earth and all the host of them were surveyed, and, on his part, he maintains, with all this solemnity, the covenant that was made respecting the seventh day. It may be late before he speak to nations of their dereliction of duty; but when he does speak it may be among those ruins and desolations which were little anticipated;—and the individual's fate, at last, cannot be light or easy. When Corah, Dathan, and Abiram, my brethren, rebelled against Moses and against God, he gave them a summary punishment, and his own hand alone prepared the instruments of execution; but when a man was found gathering sticks on the sabbath day, he was taken from the camp of Israel, he was followed by God's commandment and Israel's vengeance, and stoned, as one accursed, till, rejected by heaven and earth, he perished. “And the Lord said unto Moses, the man shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him without the camp. And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the Lord commanded Moses.”

But while the Sabbath connected itself with the introductory dispensation of the Jews, it was at the commencement of the New Testament dispensation, my brethren, that it became

more vitally incorporated with the economy of salvation, and took a higher stand among the relations of the kingdom of grace, and to benefit the world. It had, indeed, been lending an improving hand to the whole economy of circumcision, by its sacrifices, by bestowing at times its sacred name upon its most solemn festivals, by subjecting the people and land to civil arrangements which its influence suggested, and by the solemn warnings which Nehemiah and Isaiah presented to the heirs of the promises; but it was only when that dispensation commenced, which is to circulate to the extremities of the earth, and to continue till the end of time, that it condescended formally to modify its relations to creation, and to command its observances on the first, instead of the seventh day of the week.

There is an exquisite beauty in this change of the sabbath day. For it is only as we return to God by the preparations in the covenant of redemption, that we are considered God's acceptable children; that we can consider ourselves among the concerns of creation, as in the house of our Father; and that we can, in a conformity to our redeemed character, suitably employ our meditations on many of the most endearing subjects which revelation presents. On this day, as changed, we look back to the redemption of Israel, to their law as given at Mount Sinai, to their Levitical priesthood, to their sacrifices, and all their festivals; and we see them all incorporated with the sabbath days: because while their God is the author of nature, he is also the author of redemption; and while they adore him as the origin of their being and of all things, they remember that their ordinances and events in history are shadows of good things to come; and this redemption of the world itself of which we speak, is even more than the moving of the spirit on the face of the abyss; it is the renovation of spiritually dead men; it is the recovery of them from the regions of death, that they might enjoy the Creator of all, and the heir of all, in the same moments of time. By the New Testament Sabbath

we are presented to ourselves as coming forth from the regions of destruction; as opening our eyes upon the beneficent Saviour who leads us forth, as looking into all the relations of his character,—the previous figures of it, the great redemption which it achieves, the wonderful kingdom which under his government is to be maintained, and the glory of eternity in which at last it issues; and thus we appear again in the holy temple of the universe: and though the form of death may for a time cover us, yet of necessity this passes away; and we stand with God, immaculate, as was creation on the day of his highest satisfaction, and with his Son who is on his right hand forever more.—Surely men think little of the annunciations of the Eternal; else when attended by the retinue of creation and all the happiness and hopes of redemption, he speaks of a day of rest to us, and commands our enjoyments upon it, men would not be so heedless and disobedient. But this day, which now pays such an homage to the redemption of man, has watched, in the revelation of itself, the character of man; and while it propounds to him such great things in the land of promise which for the present is afar off, it has never viewed his character but in a state of alienation from God, and disobedience to his will; and hence, my brethren, while in the primitive revelation of it, there was a simple annunciation only, never has heaven mentioned it in subsequent communications, but it has enjoined, as if there would be an unwillingness to obey, and commanded, as if excuses would be devised. Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy. They shall keep my laws and hallow my Sabbaths. Verily my Sabbaths ye shall keep, for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you. Ye shall keep the Sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you. Every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death; for whosoever doeth any work in the Sabbath day that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the Sabbath of

rest, holy to the Lord: whosoever doeth any work on the sabbath day he shall surely be put to death. Oh! my brethren, man being in honor did not abide in it, for while the Sabbath has to be guarded for us by these commandments, warnings, and threatenings; while our worldly spirit cannot be subdued by them; Adam in a state of innocency had to hear the command of God on all the economy of his worldly concerns, "be fruitful, and multiply and replenish the earth;" but this holy day, which elevated him above all created things, and which led him to the wisdom of his Creator, and communion with him as the Lord of all, needed only to be announced to him; and he embraces it—favorably, too, as his heavenly labored frame did the breath of life which was breathed into his nostrils. "And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it."

Some, under the influence of limited views, are indeed unwilling to acknowledge that there is a christian Sabbath. We would not dispute about the meaning of a term. Our Saviour is called the Redeemer, the Mediator, our passover, a sacrifice, an atonement; and these terms lead us, when fully unfolded, to the same mental conception; and so the first day of the week, and the Lord's day, when unfolded in their import in our New Testament Israel, mean precisely what is signified by the sabbath day. We have, and must have, in the New Testament church, a day of regular occurrence to the world, when men, who are all descended from one parent, and form one stock; who are immortal beings, and destined to immortality, but whose business is to cultivate the earth and to subdue it, shall, in a body united as is their lineage, present themselves before the solemn aspect of heaven, and claim that they have an interest in the institutions of the universal Creator. This duty is a standing duty to mankind, while the heavens and the earth remain; and though the day, for reasons of vast moment in the economy of our world, may be changed, yet the seventh part of our time remains sanctified unto God, as firmly as are laid the

foundations of the everlasting mountains, or as the sun that endures forever.

And the wheels of christianity, my brethren, could not long turn without the assistances of this day. Christianity is mighty when you set it forward with all the appointments which belong to it; and though the world be depraved, and its principles are divine, yet it will gradually remove barbarity, introduce morality and civilization, dispel superstition, and bring forward the Creator of this universe with his name hallowed among his creatures. Christianity seemed to be a strange religion as at first propagated: a person whom his nation had crucified as a malefactor, is presented to men as immediately presiding over this universe.—The world never could have received this, if, as some great enemies have remarked, it had come forward seconded by no other means of propagation than the ideas of immortality natural to men, and the zeal of its preachers. No, the omnipotent truth prevailed; because it was accompanied by miracles, and because the great miracle of the resurrection of Christ which the disciples witnessed, bound their consciences to water with the comforts of sincerity every step, prosperous or adverse, they took in this great cause. And the Sabbath, my brethren, the New Testament Sabbath, is to christianity what the reality of the resurrection was to the consciences of the apostles and evangelists. Were it not for this day, how could men meet to obtain an acquaintance with each other as members of a common profession? How could a ministry, which is so often and so emphatically spoken of in the New Testament, calculate on meeting their audience, and feeding them as the flock of Christ? How could the New Testament passover be orderly kept, if there were no orderly revolutions of christian time? How, in a word, could churches be formed, or remain, as all on the holy hill of Zion, if there were not a particular day appointed for people to come together as into the immediate presence of God?

Our conceptions are, that if the Sabbath were dropped out of christian observance, the whole fabric of the charter of our illumination and immortality would soon be given up to the moths and to the worms. The most pious parents are often too negligent of their children: the children when young are fond of any excuses which can free them from the task of perusing the scriptures; and if we have not a taste formed for religious knowledge when we are young, it is seldom of strength sufficient to be very beneficial to the world, when begun to be cultivated in riper years.—But were it not that the Sabbath occurs, reminding ministers of their station, attacking the consciences of parents by the appointed duty of the preaching of the gospel, and inculcating upon children the learning of that wisdom which is from above, the christian world would soon relax in all these exertions, and the consequence would be, that the scriptures would be consigned to neglect. Yea, the Sabbath, like Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, often preserves, amidst an universal corruption of principle and practice, the knowledge of God on the earth, and by its connexions with public society is used for the spreading of reformation, and watering, like the river of Paradise, the garden of God. In the dark ages, men's minds were in general as destitute of the genuine knowledge of the religion of Christ, as the trees in winter are of leaves; but yet people could not bury the form of the sabbath day; it remained a pledge that the christian community might be easily attacked, and carried triumphantly back, like the ark of God into its habitation in Israel. Had it not been for this day, the reformers never could regularly have assembled the people, to tell them of the lights of humanity, of the arrogance of spiritual power, of the vengeance of God against idolatry, and of the sacrifice that he had been long preparing to have offered up, to satisfy for that darkness and idolatry which tarried so long, like an eclipse of the sun, over our world.

The Sabbath comes, my brethren, at proper intervals of time, when the nature of man, his dispositions, and his circumstances of life, are considered. Came it more frequently, the urgencies of labor would plead their cause so effectually, that arrangements could not be made; and the refreshments for the weary could not be so properly relished. And were the time much longer, the joy at the meeting of friends might, in process of time, degenerate into those tumults which all distant and regular assemblings of men create. The festivals of the heathen gods, which brought acquaintances to their solemn devotion, without any intermediate preparation, at somewhat distant intervals of time, soon wrought them into an effervescence of carnality and religious frenzy; by which reflection may proceed to make an estimate of that precautionary wisdom which analyzed the circumstances and constitution of man, and left nothing out of account which could possibly impair the blessings of this day of rest.

Returning as it does, the Sabbath is not only the depository of the riches of our religion for the world, but it is the principal spring in the great machinery of human improvement. Men are ill judges of events and divine institutions. Had an infidel been present when Abraham circumcised himself and his son Ishmael, he would have laughed at the folly of connecting that event with all ages of the world, as about to exert a powerful influence over them; but he cannot now deny, that it was the claim of Abraham which encouraged his children to put themselves in possession of the land of Canaan; that Moses' institutions aspired to an immediate subserviency to the accomplishment of the covenant of circumcision; that the attachment of Israel to the holy land arose not from its hills and mountains, but was a holy patriotism, which, under the forms of religion, descended from father to son; that the controversy about the Messiah, who was expected to be king of the Jews, issued in the death of Christ; that, somehow or other, immediately after

this event, a portion of the Jews disseminated a new religion, and enclosed in it circumcision not made with hands, and a change of the sabbath day; that this religion has to number among its professors the most enlightened nations of the earth; that it seems not to be waxing feebler, but to be gathering strength; and that there can be no bounds set to the circulation of events which can be all traced, as connected with it, to Abraham's circumcision of his son and of himself. So the Sabbath interferes with all events, ecclesiastical and political. The world is filled with projects, and there is science and art to put them all in execution. The family of mankind, in that portion of their habitations with which we are concerned, have elements of power and arrangements of wisdom which are truly admirable. But how has society been stimulated to all this successful exertion? The greater part of human society are what seek the comforts and necessities of life, and never aspire after the mean spirit of the miser. The Sabbath visits and invites them into its assemblies, and they are desirous to have themselves washed and dressed, as Abraham had the angels of heaven's feet washed before they sat down at his table. It is the call throughout christendom for the decencies and comeliness of clothing for our Sabbath's assemblies, that brings forth and sustains so many of God's poor and laborious citizens in their workshops, not only among christian nations themselves, but even in some degree among mankind to the extremities of the earth. It is this taste which principally commands navigation to spread her sails, and to go from nation to nation in quest of what art has prepared; and bespeaking new flights of science, by the encouragements of which the arts may be still further improved. The sabbath day is like the words of Moses, who first revealed it, to the poor of the cities and villages of our earth: these dropped as the rain, and distilled as the dew; as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass. Where the Sabbath has not been known, indeed, there have been some cities apparently very rich and splendid;

such as Tyre, Memphis, Athens, and ancient Rome. There were, however, only some of the people in these great cities that were arrayed like princes; the multitude were mean and destitute; and the influence of the riches of these great cities could not spread itself over all ranks of the community, reaching to every hamlet, and spreading improvements throughout every cottage. It was necessary in order that this might take place, that there should be times which would bring people regularly together, where solemnities of exercise must be maintained, and where decencies of appearance would be indispensable. The hermit may live in superstition, the anchorite may place virtue in filthiness and in rags; but it was not without a prophetic import, that the high priest of the Jews, on the great passover Sabbath at the commencement of every ecclesiastical year, clothed himself in all the comeliness of dress, with the urim and thummim on his breast; for while the ornament of a meek spirit is the chief thing with the christian, yet this appearance of his, was an emblem of what the world would put on, in after ages, through its improvements, by means of the sabbath day.

It was a congenial and an apparently providential arrangement, which gave origin to that system now so extensively in operation of organized sabbatical instruction of youth, in a great manufactory of the most manufacturing city which our world ever beheld: for were the Sabbath given up in its observance among mankind, in its influence over society, both religious and irreligious, the manufactories might have a few supporters among the affluent and the great, but the multitude, the powerful and unbounded family of consumers which now support them would disappear. You manufacturers who happily have almost every where connected with your institutions a sabbath day's instruction of your youth, inculcate particularly on them two principles of belief; that the Sabbath is of perpetual and immutable obligation, and that, as their industry is so regular and mechanical here, so there is a free and an intellectual rest

for them in a better life than this. Instructors of youth on this day, who so benevolently assist parents and guardians of children in their rearing them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; recollect that you have the most difficult prophecy in all revelation to aid in its fulfilment. A single orator can change the sentiments of a whole assembly, and a single reformer can carry after him a nation; but youth must be individually led into knowledge, and it will require great perseverance and care to clothe them with those principles and practices, by which, according to the scriptural use of language, it can be said of them, that they know the Lord from the least to the greatest.

There are some people who exclaim against the ministers of the gospel, as idle and unproductive members of the community, and who live to consume the earnings of others. But this is the most inconsiderate and superficial of views. Without the ministers of the gospel the sabbath day could not be observed with its improving tendencies and relations. The ministers of the gospel are, among other designs, an especial ordination of providence to stimulate to the cultivation of those arts of life which would necessarily languish if the consumers of their products were essentially reduced. An army might as well cast off its recruiting officers, as wisdom in modern politics can seek to cast off their greatest and most effectual aids, who not only promote science in many instances themselves, but whose administrations stimulate every art, to increase population and to ornament it, so that the lowest of the christian race are better educated, better fed, better clothed, more healthful from their activity, and more moral from their habits of industry, than ever the poor were, or can be, in any other possible situation. It requires reflection indeed to see this; a comparison of ancient with modern times, and of the other nations of the earth with christian communities: but the man or the woman, who could make these comparisons, and would then wish to keep up an opposition to the preachers of the gospel, has never considered the

springs of the improvements of the human family, and is an individual who might deny the existence of mind because he never sees it but in its effects. The religion of Christ as administered by his servants and in support of his ordinances, is carrying forward the human family, with the wheels of improvement turning in every chamber where utility or ornaments can be produced, to the highest state of civilization here, and prepares for happiness hereafter.

Considering that the sabbath day was appointed at the commencement of time, it is wonderful in its adaptations unto the extent and character of revelation. The scriptures are what contain many histories; a wonderful intricacy of divinely appointed ceremonies; many prophecies about individuals, cities, and nations; many duties, spread over every relation of life; many doctrines sublime in mystery, or elevating by their immediate connexion with eternity; and many promises to infancy and old age, to us here and hereafter; and to become familiarly acquainted with all these requires that conscience be awed to take its seat for the business of education very frequently, and without much distraction from the urgencies of business, or the impertinence of visitation.—The heathen world in its famous schools educated a few individuals, and from despair delivered up the rest to comparative neglect; and the modern world in relation to the sciences never can promise itself any thing more; but the religion of heaven, the most benevolent of all systems, takes men under the chair of its wisdom, to train them in the principles of morals and in the hopes of piety; and to obtain this grand purpose, the sabbath day, particularly, is set apart to this end. The bible is a vast volume with its treasures rich and momentous before the eye; but they are like the stars of heaven thrown loosely into their habitations; and we have to search every part, and gather them up into particular arrangements for our edification; and to enable us to do this there is thrown around us the stillness and peace of creation, the seventh part of our time. Some of you, my brethren,

have had ten years given to you by God to learn his will from revelation,—ten years of holy Sabbaths; and yet with many of you there is a barrenness like the borders of the Dead Sea; a sad evidence of man's depravity, and of the justice of God, when, in punishing professing nations, he forgets all other transgressions, and reckons with them only for his Sabbaths.

The busy cannot, from the nature of the human mind, be very apt to learn those spiritual truths, the nature of which differs so immensely from the objects with which they are usually conversant; but the Sabbath is to them a benevolent and most wisely adapted appointment. It never takes them at unawares, and it consecrates to their service a momentous part of their time; more days to the most of men than genius pleads for its cultivation in seminaries of learning: and this is granted to them with formal expositions of scripture and explanations of texts, which, in the preaching of the gospel, are always applied to the conscience:—to make them appear, while all other arrangements among men seem to abandon them, the particular children of their heavenly Father, who is training them up for himself. Yes, the sabbath day, to the poor and laborious, comes in many blessed characters; among which this is not the least remarkable, that it is to them like God's voice to Noah when it commanded him to enter into the ark of his rest.—There, my brethren, he saw the justice of God, the mercy of God, the majesty of the divine dispensations, and hopes which were beyond the surrounding chaos, in a school where education went on irresistibly; and the busiest of mortals and dullest of mankind have such a concentration of privilege on the sabbath day,—time to read the word of God, and to hear it preached; that whatever may be the personal improvements which may be made in it, yet this much is clear, that it enters into the economy of preparation for the eternal world, like the mysterious principle of life, which leaves not uninfluenced a single part of the whole frame.

The very philosophers are elevated by this day. It, as we have seen, has been to them the great magnetical polarity, that, in the moral world, steered through the dark ages the vessel, which ultimately brought to be easily and extensively spread among men, the treasures of knowledge and the blessings of free inquiry. And when they have wearied their intellect in the pursuit of science, and find themselves by its little steps mounted somewhat above the multitude, this day brings them to consider themselves and the virtuous around them, as raised, in character and relations, above all visible things; and contemplating, in its sanctification, and in the resurrection of Christ, with which it is immediately connected, the general resurrection, and the new heavens and the new earth, they are placed in an august temple of wisdom, where infinite perfection presides, and eternity is the period for philosophy to sit in humble contemplation.—As there are seven planets which appear to the naked eye, and the sun throws his light over the rest; so the Sabbath gives light to all the rest of the days of the week, presenting man, whether in a high or a low station, whether learned or unlearned, upon these as still an immortal being,—who, on the day which remembers creation, commemorates redemption, and anticipates a glorious repose hereafter, puts on all the solemn reflections of a religious being, and advances forward to immortality.

This is a day, the duties of which are not easily performed. When it returns, the busy world might cast their tasks from their hands, and on it might be silent as the assembly of Israel when Solomon prayed at the dedication of the temple, and yet the spirit of pious awe and gratitude which this day inculcates not appear among them. The meditation of this day, having glanced through the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, as was remarked in the beginning of the discourse, enters into the fields of what is emphatically called the kingdom of heaven, and there, we must now state to you, the understanding re-

poses with amazement and gratitude upon the monuments of divine love. God is heard saying to his Son, "I have called thee in righteousness; I will hold thine hand and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant to the people and a light to the gentiles;" and the Son replies, "Here am I, send me." This Son appears in the prophecies, like the ascending rays of the sun, gilding the hemisphere, and diffusing brightness as the morning advances. At length he appears in the full resplendence of his power. Every prophecy is fulfilled, miracles are performed, the spirituality of the law is interpreted, justice is satisfied, a resurrection from the dead takes place, the ceremonies of the law are abolished, the spiritual ordinances of the New Testament are established, life and immortality are brought to light, the resurrection and the judgment are seen; and while all these things are attended to, it is as in the immediate presence of God, and while the offer of life and death is made immediately to the conscience. That man, my brethren, keeps not the Sabbath, who sends his beasts of burden to the pastures, or who closes the doors of his workshop; who is displeased and murmurs at the unhallowed steps of his neighbor in pursuing his profit on that day: the Sabbath is kept when the great works of creation and redemption impress our mind and heart, and when our affections are set, not upon the things of the earth, but upon the riches, the profits, and the honors of immortality. We are not opposed to national laws which may break down the folly and depravity of men, in their interference with the rights of heaven on this day: this day is the world's privilege, and the powers of the world have a right to protect it; but they are not the laws of man, nor the laws of God as administered by man, that can give, before the eye of heaven, a fairness to the face of this day. I have no doubt but the children of Israel had some fine forms of observance, and little more interruption on some of their Sabbaths than the lowing of their herds and the bleating of their flocks; but the Lord was angry, and thus remonstrated with them: "Who hath required this at your

hand to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is an iniquity, even the solemn meeting." The majesty of heaven descending upon the nations of the earth, the nations which enjoy revelation, and have the relations of this holy day explained to them, should make them, by their rulers and magistrates, try to prevent, around the whole borders of their habitations, a stick even from being picked up by an unhallowed hand:—but suppose that this were attained; the holiness of this day would, after all, like the vision of the prophet, have only some dry bones:—the Spirit of God must breathe upon the forms of rest which the nation would present; must give life to them, and make them stand up in the attitudes of acceptance.

The duties of this day are suitably performed when the mind commences it with meditation on the works of God and the salvation of sinful man; when it proceeds to personal acts of devotion, and a careful consultation of some part of revelation; when the family society which providence keeps together acknowledge their dependence on the Almighty's goodness and grace, and express their gratitude for his care and mercy; when men go to the temple of God to hear of his greatness, his holiness, his moral government, his displeasure at sin, his commands to repentance, his promises of assistance, his offers of the pardon of sin, his communication of holy dispositions, his diffusion of the Spirit as the spirit of perseverance, his gathering of his people to the joy of immortality, and his placing of them forever at his own right hand; when, on their return home, families continue their devotion—parents meditate on the various changes of providence which may befall members of their family, and ask the divine blessing on all such that have passed, or may yet pass over them; and strive to keep the whole always like the patriarchs, pilgrims here, and still seeking after a better country.

How elevated is a christian as he is contemplated on the sabbath day! In the midst of his relations, he thinks of the universe throughout boundless space, and with every part of it this day solemnly connects him. He is redeemed to immortality, and is presented to himself as an heir of the enjoyments which all things present; and as the angels of heaven ascend and descend quick as thought; as Christ ascended without being impeded by gravitation on his journey any more than is a ray of light; and as Moses and Elias, at the transfiguration of Christ, appeared and disappeared, as common visitants make their morning calls; so in the ceaseless ages which are before him, he has the prospect, in the immediate presence of the universal Creator, of visiting all, and of enjoying all. "All things," says the scripture, "are yours; for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

Some, indeed, in respect to the rest which remains for the people of God, suppose that the general assembly of God's righteous creatures is forever to sit, in our acceptation of the term, around the throne of the Eternal. We do not deny that in the highest heavens, of which the scriptures speak, there is a more immediate display of the divine glory than any where else, and that as the children of Israel returned on their most solemn festivals to the tabernacle in which was the divine presence, so the saints in heaven will return from every corner of the new heavens and the new earth to this most glorious habitation: but as the word "heavens" includes the creation of God, we apprehend, that as all his works are said to praise him, so, in the ceaseless ages of eternity, the righteous will visit every quarter, increase their admiration over every object, and make the boundless creation, in some respects, the temple of their praise. The law of the Sabbath, indeed, almost necessarily connects itself with this boundless field of the praises of the glorified saints. It was enacted by the divine majesty, as his eye surveys the heavens and the earth, and all

their host, and it descends upon all the concerns of life; upon empires and upon states, upon sons and upon daughters, upon man servant and upon maid servant, upon cattle, and upon the stranger who is within our gates; and it collects matter for its praise from the throne of God and of the Lamb, from the ministry of angels, and all the mighty acts of the Lord, from the history of past ages, and from the prospects of those which are to come, from dragons and all deeps, from fire and hail, snow and vapor, and stormy wind fulfilling his word, from mountains and all hills, from fruitful trees and all cedars;—but if the child of a day goes thus round creation to enrich his melody of praise, what must the inhabitant of eternity do with all the glories of the new heavens and the new earth in which dwelleth righteousness? There remains a rest or Sabbath for the people of God; but it is an eternal Sabbath, in which they will praise him in his sanctuary, and from every part of the firmament of his power.

Some have supposed that it is not necessary to keep holy the whole of the Sabbath. Some divines of great eminence have written in support of this view of the subject; and no doubt among many professors of religion have encouraged that carelessness which is so prevalent. But the views of these men, though gilded by specious reasonings, it is impossible to reconcile to the language of scripture: “Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy, six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; on it thou shalt not do any work:” and it is inconsistent with the interminable exercise and praise of eternity. Yet I would grant that the Sabbath might authorize sports, recreations, amusements, and theatrical exhibitions, if it were first demonstrated that the word of God, with all the extent of which, it is intended, that the Sabbath shall afford an opportunity of becoming acquainted, is to be withheld from our perusal and from the perusal of our children. The

Sabbath would be a most incongruous and a tyrannical appointment, if to the multitude of mankind, who have no science to engage the mind, nor any turn for speculation, the authority of it enjoined stillness and rest only; for the mind of man must be employed in some way or other: it cannot remain contented in a situation of stillness any more than a prisoner could do under the galling restrictions of his chain. No, if our Sabbaths are in any measure to be kept holy, we must cast into the arms of the illiterate, and also of the learned, the sacred scriptures, and inculcate upon their consciences the reading and study of them. We must tell them that while in these scriptures they will find many duties prescribed on which they are bound to attend, yet they are not to occupy themselves in these duties only; but they are to search the scriptures themselves: for the Sabbath and they are necessarily connected together; the Sabbath is the sacred time for our going to school, and the scriptures are the lessons which, under our heavenly Father's appointment, we are to learn there.

The Jews were in the habit of dividing the scriptures into portions which might be successively read on their sabbath days. This was a wise arrangement, suited to the nature of man, and to their circumstances in the world. The primitive christians made selections from the sacred oracles, and appointed them to be read in their assemblies on the Lord's day. Thus, there was a prudential arrangement also to employ the Sabbath, by that variety of instruction which might keep up an awakened attention, and which would occupy those hours which God had commanded to be devoted to himself. Now, indeed, that the art of printing puts the scripture into every one's hand, the gathering of the people around us to hear the scriptures read, or a particular portion of them, is entirely superseded. The command from the mouth of our Saviour is to every one who hears him, "Search the scriptures, for in them ye think that ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me." And it is to hear these explained, to attend to

their principles as inculcated under the preaching of the gospel, to hold communion with God, and to look for his blessing on his ordinances of the preaching of the word and the breaking of the bread of life, that is the end for which we are still to come into the public assemblies of Zion.

And why should any refuse to attend on these public exercises? The Sabbath is publicly proclaimed to the universe; the resurrection of Christ is the great sun of the christian system; the preaching of the gospel is to every creature, and the Sabbath, with all its variety of exercise, holds on to accommodate us in the solemn regions of immortality. Do some think that they need not to attend? that they are already wiser than their preachers? All this may be granted; but good men must keep up communion with their God, and with the heirs of eternal rest. Is it said that they can read the scriptures in private? This is a part of the exercise of the day: but it is not like the public institution of the Sabbath, in the face of the universe; it is not like the salvation of men, which is to be proclaimed to the ends of the earth; and it is not like that public employment in the regions of immortality, where all perpetually, and as in one assembly, raise the voice of their adoration. "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord." Amen.

DISCOURSE XI.

ON BROTHERLY LOVE.

1 JOHN 4:11. *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*

MY brethren, the inspired author of this epistle says God is love. Of the truth of this we have evidences in all the works of God. The harmony of the material universe is admirable. The planets play in their respective orbits with amazing friendship; the sun blesses them all equally with light and heat, according to their respective neighborhood to himself; the winds blow and the rain descends, that the air may preserve its salubrity for animal life, and that the whole kingdom of vegetation may be nourished and flourish night and day. In the providential dispensations of God there is indeed some apparent mixture; but the more minutely and attentively they are surveyed, the features of love and benevolence become more conspicuous. When we attend to the laws of nature, and behold the boundless exactness in which the great bodies of the universe and all general assortments of things are unremittedly conducted, though the partial disorders and evils, which we see on the face of our earth, cannot fail to lead us to the melancholy remembrance of its degeneracy from its original perfection, yet we cannot but behold, even through this obscurity, the well marked lines of benevolent operations;—and when we add, as we must do in relation to our earth, a view of the dispensation of mercy, which diffuses rays of joy over the whole

plans of providence, and even on the face of tremendous judgments, our language must still be, "God is love."

Of this attribute of Deity some of his intelligent creatures seem to be feelingly sensible. The angels in heaven adore the fountain of their life and beneficence, by singing, "holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, the whole earth is full of his glory." The saints make the love of God the theme of their warmest praises. Paul exclaims, "Oh! the height, and depth, and breadth, and length, of the love of God to sinners, which passeth knowledge." And this apostle John, wherever he goes, has his way, like the bottom of Solomon's chariot, paved with love. This epistle is directed to christians in all lands, and whilst the writer of it never loses sight of God as the fountain of all love, he is diffusing the rays of it amongst men in every region into which the epistle can travel. Hence in particular the language of this chapter, which breathes nothing but the purest love; and two regions of whose most happy operations—the one our privilege, the other our duty—are contained in the words of the preceding verse, and in those of our text: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sin. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

This epithet, beloved, which in our text John bestows upon those to whom he wrote, is no doubt dictated in some measure from a sense of their worthiness, as entitled to the exercise of his most amiable affections; but principally from that fulness of love which could not but overflow from his own heart. That stream which carried the Son of God into our world, a propitiation for sin, has just laved anew this aged and benevolent apostle; and as these waters issue from the fountain of free grace, so, washed and strengthened by their influence, he cannot but stand arrayed in the beauties, and elevated by the emotions of love: and as an eminent instance himself of the unmerited and efficacious love of God to guilty and lost sinners, this messenger of the good news could not fail to designate

those who make the same profession with himself, by the most endearing epithet amongst men, and the one that is the justest transcript of his own feelings.

The reason, however, I must remark, of writing the epistle obviously reflects upon some symptoms of those dissocial and discommendable affections which, even amongst brethren, are, in this frail state of man's existence, found frequently gnawing the vitals of social felicity, and rendering the outward character of the beautiful fabric of the church, like a building from the walls of which much of the cement at least has been washed away. The point which he wishes to gain amongst them is, that as "God so loved us, we ought also to love one another,"—an emphatical expression, which glances at a contrary state, which, though his benevolence would willingly cover in his affectionate and parental address to them, yet his sense of justice cannot but broadly insinuate throughout the epistle.

This state, presupposed in a greater or less degree in all societies to which this general epistle is directed, is predicable, in some sense, of all christian societies in every age. It needs but a slight acquaintance with the members of any particular association of less or greater numbers, to be convinced that the law in the members warring against the law of the mind justifies a minister of the gospel in endeavoring to awaken his hearers, by explaining and inculcating the great doctrines of the gospel, so as to promote the most essential and fundamental views of morality. In no place could the minister of the gospel, in all the varied circumstances of the church, have erred far from the dictates of his situation in choosing our text: but when his intercourse for months, and even years, has led him more certainly into the channels where their affections are either verging to flow or actually running, he sees not only a suitableness in his choice, but a singular propriety, which enforces his duty upon his mind with all the precision and pointedness of a particular command.—To-day, therefore, I

have to address you, my brethren, in these words: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

This text cannot be fully understood without explication, nor felt without deep reflection: hence our method, first, to make you understand it; secondly, to make you feel it.

Our text infolds a comparison: "If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." This love of God is operative towards us—not a mere affection; it is the spring whence arose that wonderful scheme of beneficence and mercy recorded in the preceding verse. Some would flatter themselves that they discharge the duty enjoined in the subject of our discourse, if they have a mere affection of esteem and regard for those who are their brethren in Christ; but the love which is here inculcated resembles the love of God towards our guilty and lost world; a love which gave birth to the most illustrious of the divine contrivances, and which shines throughout every part of a series of operations that are the most astonishing. Love, as beautifully exemplified in the sovereign love of God in the preceding verse, prompteth us to action, and breathes nothing but the good of its object; and as well might we think that the principle of vegetation could answer its end by lying dormant in the root of the tree; as well indeed might we suspect to see a full fountain forget to send forth its playful streams, as we can entertain the idea that love can be genuine amongst men and be inoperative. Whilst a man is alive the wheels of life continue to play, and love being the very life of intellectual society will, where it is unadulterated, exert its influence throughout the whole range of objects contained within the circle of its relations. It resembles in the moral world that mysterious principle of gravitation in the natural, by which all objects are continually kept in motion; and as soon should we expect to see the sun neglect to rise and set, and the seasons of summer and winter, of seed time and harvest, to return, as we can expect to see genuine love defined by a mere affection only.

No, God loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins, and as he loved us, so we ought also to love one another.

To mark all the channels through which this love flows, and by a survey of which we will learn its true character, would lead into an endless field; and at present we shall direct your attention to a few only of the most copious and interesting. It would be unnecessary to mention the concealed but all-powerful channel by which our love promotes the good of one another by our most fervent devotions at the throne of God. Our Maker is the primary source of all good, and as the blood which is sent from every part of the system to the heart, thence departs with new life and vigor throughout every part again; so our love for one another, which concentrates in the fountain of life, is sent forth in such purity and renewed vigor, as eminently entitles this course to the first place, and supersedes the necessity of our insisting much upon it. Hence says the apostle James, the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Hence, too, the many instances in which judgments have been averted, and showers of unmerited blessings have fallen in their stead. Thus when Moses, in the first noted experiments of war by the children of Israel, held up his hands in adoration of the God of armies, the Israelites turned the tide of victory. Thus Elias, who was a man subject to like passions with ourselves, prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months; and he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. Well does Paul, who fervently remembered the churches in every prayer of his, exhort us, saying, "Pray always, with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints:"—For the love which we thus bear our brethren ascends to the God of love, and from him it descends to fructify and render fertile the whole hill of Zion. Yes, as the rain is first collected in light vapors by the heat of the sun from the waters of our earth, and afterwards falls in copious showers to

fertilize it, so our benevolence, which is so feeble often in itself, ascends to heaven on the rays of supplication and prayer, and again returns in drops of divine mercy till the wildernesses of human society blossom as the rose, and the desert becomes a fruitful field.

But whilst we are not to forget to love one another at the throne of grace, there are lines of intercourse amongst men where this love immediately and visibly operates. The first we mention is in that benevolent and candid disposition which thinketh no evil. Because it gratifies our self-love to possess estimable qualities which others do not wear, or at least with very faint colors, no passion of the human mind is more apt to betray us, than a disposition to allow, in the fairest of characters, some secret and hidden weakness, which is more indebted for concealment to tranquillity of situation than to real virtue, and which we may expect to break out when the storms of provocation wax high. This was the way that the author of malice himself reasoned against the holy patriarch Job; and there are in the hearts of many some concealed but active drops of that poison which the Spirit of God here indeed represents in the mouth of Satan, because of the lamentable prevalence of the fact amongst men respecting estimable and highly favored characters. Says Satan, "Does Job serve God for nought?" and we are apt to ask, does such an eminent saint maintain his integrity from no other motives than what feed the flame of pure religion and virtue?

Owing to this discommendable disposition, a report which the slightest breath of pure candor would strike to the ground, will not accidentally arise, without lessening greatly our esteem of the person on whom it hath alighted; without making us shy in the support of our friendship towards him; without being circulated to every opening avenue of society, and without being permitted to wander at pleasure, and sting to death like an adder. Respecting his venerable and virtuous father, Absalom insinuated the most groundless and wicked report—presuming him-

self more fit to reign than he, saying, "Oh! that I were made judge in Israel:" and the covenanted people, actuated by principles too common in human nature, unfurled the banners of rebellion against their aged and venerable sovereign, and the Lord's anointed.—This disposition is at the deepest enmity with the laws of love—it wars against the very principles of it, and endeavors to overthrow them;—and hence an inadvertent expression or an unguarded action frequently blows it up into that flame which burns through life, which destroys societies, and effaces nations from the earth. On the other hand, my brethren, accompany me to the endearing and pleasing field where candor and liberality reign. All the malice of his father, and the influence of his splendid court, could not bias Jonathan's mind towards his beloved and innocent friend. Jonathan undoubtedly was one of the most spotless characters among mankind, unlike the ambitious and ungracious princes of the earth;—for though he loved his father, and fought and died with him, yet his love was such a pure diamond, it cut every glass which the furnace of malice could blow and tinge with the colors of deception, and then looked at the supposed enemy of his father, and the divinely appointed heir of all his illustrious possessions, in the pure and direct rays of the sun of love. Thinking no evil, his conduct shines out from amongst a corrupted and prejudiced court and family, no less bright an example to every succeeding age, than a happy instrument of saving at present the anointed of the Lord. "And Jonathan said unto David, come and let us go out into the field. And they went out both of them into the field. And Jonathan said unto David, O Lord God of Israel, when I have sounded my father about to-morrow any time, or the third day, and, behold if there be good towards David and I send not unto thee: the Lord do so and much more to Jonathan: but if it please my father to do thee evil, then I will show it thee, and send thee away that thou mayest go in peace; and the Lord be with thee as he hath been with my father. And thou shalt not only,

while yet I live, show me the kindness of the Lord, that I die not: but also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house forever: no, not when the Lord hath cut off the enemies of David, every one from the face of the earth. So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, let the Lord even require it at the hands of David's enemies. And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul."

But I observe, secondly, That this love discovers itself in the words of the mouth. Perhaps there never was on moral subjects an expression which conveyed the truth only, and yet approached apparently so near to exaggeration, as that which the spirit of inspiration puts into the page of the Apostle James, "The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity." To govern the tongue according to the circumstances in which we are placed, in such a manner as to manifest that we love our neighbor as ourselves, is a much more difficult task than what many are apt to imagine. This requires such a nice discrimination of human character, and of the particular humors of men, as few attain to; and then such a delicacy of our words themselves, and even of our manner of uttering them, as still fewer, in this state of turbulent passions, are in any suitable degree able to enrol under their authority. Yes, reflecting on what an inconsiderate word, or an unguarded tone even of voice, will occasion amongst the irritable and proud; reflecting that a single word dropped among the influential but haughty members of society will loosen and tear from their roots the most populous communities and beneficial institutions, we see an eminent beauty and force in the inspired proverb, "How great a matter a little fire kindleth." To do our duty properly here, we ought to remember that our love towards our brethren should resemble that forgiving and conquering love of God, by which he loved us, and gave his Son to be a propitiation for our sin:—a love which will reign, and has a determination not to be offended, till the last possible means of communicating its treasures and

riches are neglected and despised. "I am not willing that any should perish, but that all should come unto repentance."

My brethren, I doubt many of us seldom consider how difficult a matter it is to tame that unruly member of which the Spirit says: "So is the tongue among our members that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of hell: for every kind of beasts and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed and hath been tamed of mankind: but the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison."—I say I doubt many of us seldom reflect how difficult a matter it is to order our speech aright, else the ties of friendship would not so often appear a rope of sand,—else the little societies of families would not so often resemble the meetings of the lion and the tiger,—else the sacred associations of christian communities and congregations would not so often bear an analogy to a bomb-shell of war, which destroys itself and all within its influence.

The most difficult part of our duty here is where we conceive ourselves to have been previously injured. The principles of retaliation, on this occasion, are apt to overcome our sense of these moral obligations, so beautifully illustrated by the dispensation of mercy: "Love your enemies; render not evil for evil, nor railing for railing." It is pitiful to see the boldness with which many will assume a right, they flatter themselves lawfully accrues to them, to indulge rancorous and malicious dispositions, and spiteful and inimical language, when they conceive that they were not originally in the fault. In such a case, they think that justice inspires them with the inclinations they feel, and that she will record their deeds as her objects of protection; and forget that our religion swears us to render no man evil for evil, but contrarywise blessing. There is perhaps no instance in which the frailty of human nature and its depravity have such irresistible proofs, as in that trait of

human character by which individuals, when the breath of an inadvertent or passionate expression touches them, turn instantly off from the paths of friendship, and stand aloof on the narrow pinnacle of their resentment—a source of grief to the reflecting, and an object of pitiful weakness in themselves.

Is it asked where is an antidote to this evil?—It is in *Love*. Love makes us consider attentively the constitutional weakness of those around us, and will inspire us with charity to cover the multitude of their sins. Whilst it will neither encourage a wayward inclination, nor surrender the real rights of man, it will use every method to live at peace with all men, and to go and be reconciled to an adversary quickly. Charity beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things; charity never faileth.

But, thirdly, This love displays itself in our practice. “Do to others as ye would they should do to you,” is a principle of which the christian feels the force; and in clothing it with his practice, there are added to the pure dictates of justice those affections by which it appears that he rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth. We see this character illustrated in the instance of that person who takes up the words of the prophet: “He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” And having this for his christian coat of arms, proceeds through the world, meeting the objects of real compassion, and dispels their fears, relieves their wants, inspires them with hopes, and directs them to the goal of honor and virtue. I see this character in the compassionate and loving father, who says of his profligate and repentant son, “He was dead and is alive, he was lost and is found: bring forth the best robe and put it on him.” I see it in the pastor who says, “My brethren, dearly beloved, and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.” I see it in the friend

who knows me in prosperity, but sticketh closer than a brother in adversity. I see it in the husband who says to his spouse, "Thou art all fair, there is no spot in thee." I hear it in the spouse who exclaims, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." I admire it—for it receives a brightening lustre from its movements—towards an adversary. The heathens of old tell us that he was a great example who would give every one his own; and the Arabian hath long told us, trouble no man unnecessarily, there are enow of thorns in the path of human life; but the christian is beheld ambitious to answer these heavenly exhortations: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you."—Infidelity, you err egregiously in ascribing malice, war, and bloodshed, to our holy religion. What a happy world should we have, Oh! enemies, Oh! friends of christianity, did christian principles prevail? Did a love any way proportioned to the love of God to us, pervade as the rays of the sun our world?—Christianity thou art well calculated to bring about that glorious state of things to which our faith, with great clearness from the prophecies of revelation, looks forward, but which is yet a dim view indeed in the general practice of the world—"When the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den, and they shall not hurt nor destroy in all God's holy mountain."

My brethren, distant, distant indeed is this happy state of things from the present frame and appearance of the christian world. Many, instead of loving one another, are full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, despiteful, proud, boasters; inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful. The works of the Spirit, I remember, are these: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; but many do I see wallow in the lusts of the flesh, envyings, murders,

drunkenness, revellings, and such like.—Little indeed is christians' love towards one another; for they make no suitable exertions to instruct the ignorant, to help the weak, to reclaim the vicious, to console the wounded spirit, to relieve the distressed; to cement human societies, to open the sources which contain their strength, or to arrange the circumstances and conveniencies which enrobe them with happiness and stability.—In concluding this head of my method, I must ask, where are the prayers of christians for one another?—where is their meek and self-denied conversation?—where is their practice of love?—where, in a word, is that delicate, that tender remembrance of the words of our Saviour, “Whosoever shall give a cup of cold water to drink to one of these little ones only in the name of a disciple?”—for in our days a single word will alienate the heart, will embitter the tongue, and will purchase years of distant coldness and dislike. We have reversed this brightest gem in the crown of the apostle, and presented its dark coating to the world.—“Let each esteem other better than themselves.”

But, my brethren, I would be persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany and adorn the salvation procured for your souls. I would be persuaded that henceforth at least you will have a work and labor of love which God will not forget. And to induce you to this, I proceed to our second head of method, which was to make you feel the truth, “that if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.”

First. Can we reflect upon the love of God to us, and not feel ourselves constrained to love one another? We read in profane authors of a friend at times laying down his life for his friend; we read of sons interposing their own breasts between their fathers and the spear of the enemy; but though for good men some have even dared to die, the spirit and dimensions of love here are nothing in comparison to the height, the depth, the breadth, and the length, of the love of God to us. I wonder not that all heathen antiquity should admire the Grecian youths,

whose confidence and friendship were so pure and unalloyed, that the one should propose, after the other was unjustly condemned to death, to guarantee his absence to see his friends, by submitting his own person to the chains of a prison, and to death itself, should the other not return before the period appointed for his execution; and that this other should hasten over sea and land his return, to save his beloved friend from death by interposing his own neck to the hand of the executioner; and that, arriving at the very moment when the fatal blow was to be struck upon the substitute, he should cry out, "I am the man," and flee to sacrifice himself to reputed and inexorable justice, to save a life dear to him as his own soul. But pure as this ray of love appears, it is like the sickly beam of the smallest star to the radiance of the sun himself, compared to the love which we contemplate. When we were enemies, followers of the prince of darkness, clothed with his uniform, guilt and depravity, and marching with a front of rebellion against the throne of heaven, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son;—a Son sacrificed for strangers and enemies by wicked works; an only begotten Son; a Son who dwelt in God's bosom from everlasting; who rejoiced always before him, and was daily his delight; a Son who was the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person: this Son was wounded for our transgressions, was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him, and by his stripes we are healed: this Son was cut off, but not for himself; this Son was made a curse for us, and evidenced it when he hung upon the accursed tree. Oh! Jesus, thou hast shown us an example of love;—thou who art the Creator of all things, who upholdest them by the word of thy power, whom the angels adore and worship; for thou madest thyself of no reputation, and tookest upon thee the form of a servant, and wast found in the fashion of a man, and humblest thyself, and becamest obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. This is love, divine, transcendent love; love which never can be paralleled; but which

certainly ought to make us feel the force of this language: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."—We should feel the force of these words: "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; that henceforth we should not live unto ourselves, but unto God that loved us and gave himself for us."—Well surely, my brethren, does the apostle command us to "put on as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering: forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, even as Christ forgave us." Divinely does John reason, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he first loved us, and sent his son to be a propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."—It is lamentable that christians, who have such a transcendent example, feel so little the force of it; and that the river of this love flowing into the church of Christ does not diffuse itself over every object in it, till she appear altogether lovely.

But, secondly, You must feel the force and life of this text as you mingle amongst its advantages. There is so much selfishness prevailing amongst professors of religion, that, in general, they stand aloof from the works of brotherly love; and so catch not the flame which warms and animates the society of the church in its purest character and liveliest colors. But, my brethren, what will not love effect? and are not all its objects sources of felicity? Attend to this principle as it prevailed in the minds of Christ's apostles. Great and momentous was the cause in which they were engaged, and feeble was their strength for its accomplishment; but they were a band of brothers, and the love which they bore to their cause and to one another, whilst it distilled a sweetness out of their sufferings, made them gloriously triumphant. Often I reflect on the divine society of primitive christians, with all things common, the same cause, the same affections, the same providential sustenance of life, and admire its suitableness to the prospects before it, and its

resemblance to the general assembly and church of the first born in heaven, of which it was an emblem; and contrast this state of the christian society with its less happy condition in after ages. I behold that the primitive christians and apostles knew what it was to love one another; that they stood not at a listless distance from that scene which animates, which grows, and which consolidates into that unity of life, whose voice is, "We are members one of another;" whose exertions may be persecuted, but not destroyed; and whose blessed endeavors will fill empires with their most joyful fruits. I hear one saying to another, "I bear you record how greatly I long after you in the bowels of Christ; I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; and we are ready to impart to you, not the gospel of Christ only, but our own souls also." I see all waving the banner which angels bequeathed, and their affections unfurl, and bear along this vale of tears, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will towards men."

But, christians, how has our gold become dim, our most fine gold changed? The building of living stones is rent and scattered in ruins, and daily there are some new stones falling off from their former connexions. The field of our Zion does not wave in that golden harvest where every ear is ripe, and vies with every other in its richness for the honor of their common soil. We have need to pray, "raise up the fallen down tabernacle of David, and build it up as in the days of old; pour out thy spirit upon us as the rain upon the mown grass, and as the showers that water the earth."—Let me lead you, my friends, into the great city where there are many active men, and only this one principle of love reigning, that you may behold its operations, and catch its flame. Jerusalem lying in ruins, with the holy sepulchres of their fathers profaned, is visited by the sons of Judah, and whilst their enemies daily attack them, and would demolish their works, they build with the one hand, and defend themselves with the other, and Jerusalem thus arises out of its ashes, beautiful and girded with strength. Let me

lead you into the army whose banner over them is love: how determined is their bravery, how lively are their evolutions, how impenetrable is their line, how sure is their victory! Let me lead you among the great wheels of this universe itself. This vast machine is the offspring of love; and except where a few have left their axle by divine permission, all you see is harmony—all is life—the most glorious issues forever appear, and shine the parents of new results.—But this sight may be too amazing.—I descend to make you feel the truth of our text by the operations of love in your own hearts. You feel the love ye have for yourselves,—your life, your reputation, your favorable circumstances, are all so dear to you, the world could not purchase them. What activity does not self-love inspire? what watchfulness over character, what jealousy of honor? What would a man give in exchange for his soul? What would he give for his good name, better than precious ointment?—Is it thought that what is so advantageous to ourselves, and which we most certainly feel to be so, must sink into indifference in regard to our fellow men? No; those views and truths which form the basis of our intellectual worth, are common to us and them; that end which our individual existence is to promote, is the very end for which they were created; and this principle, the happy advantages of which we so much feel, and so necessarily feel, in our own instance, we should carry into operation in all human societies; particularly in the society of the church of Christ; that we may stand and act amidst the claims of our common nature, and of our common christian privileges. Whether, saith the apostle, one member suffer all the members suffer with it, or one member be honored all the members rejoice with it.—Love, my brethren, inspired to sow the seeds of our holy religion among the nations of the earth; love protects cities and nations; love shines throughout God's universe, and love clothes Zion fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners; and I feel that he who is destitute of this principle can neither be a follower of the

example of the saints, nor a warm and genuine patriot of his nation, nor a reflector of a beam of the glory of this universe, nor that tender hand, that, in the desert of extreme poverty where the christian is often placed, will bear a cup of cold water, and show himself his disciple by crying, "I give this for the sake of Christ." Oh! my brethren, are we wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness may be reserved forever?

But, thirdly. The force of our text must be felt by contemplating the miserable wildernesses of human nature where love does not reign. I visit the family of the poor and needy, where love and mutual kindness might be balm to every wound, and medicine to every disease; and the wretched creatures are effectually drying up the few remaining sources that might still keep some spots green in the great field of human expedients and expectations. Love having departed, they chide, they rail, they accuse, they criminate, till they weary themselves into the silence of melancholy, which continues till exhausted nature is refreshed on its own peevish indulgences, to renew in endless revolutions the same most miserable conduct. I enter into the families of the great, where affluence purchases the most desirable objects that are wafted over every sea, and where honor receives the homage of thousands of attendants; and all appears splendor except the countenances of the proprietors and heirs, who are stung with furies, and tear each other in their rage. But I would particularly direct you here to the fruits of want of brotherly love in the church of Christ. Who would not weep over that blood of Abel that still crieth for vengeance? Who does not feel when Canaan's disrespect draws forth from his aged father the bitter curse, "a servant of servants shall he be to his brethren?" Who would not join the lamentations of Jeremiah when Jerusalem that was full of people sat solitary, and weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheek; among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her; all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they are become her enemies? Who does not de-

plore the bitter enmity that so early shook the New Testament church, and like a mighty earthquake cleft it into sundry pieces? Who does not bewail the baleful effects of this principle as yet prostrating the unity of the church of Christ?—I need not call your attention unto the acrimony and violence that in general prevail among different denominations of christians towards one another, to illustrate the subject. While the operations of an enlightened conscience has every encomium from me, the violent animosities which are handed down from father to son, and which usurp the place of our prayers and exertions for the return of those who differ from us, I cannot but deplore and reprobate.—I direct you to a single congregation. I shall suppose it flourishing, and its prospects still increasing; I shall suppose the blessing of God eminently resting upon it—sinners converted, the saints edified and comforted. This congregation is visited with a blast of ill-will and contention among its members. At first it touches slightly a few of the more prominent branches only; but in a little time it diffuseth itself over the whole, till all is withered and dead. In that place no praises of God are heard, no accents from the tongue of his servant, the pulpit is forsaken, the pews are empty. The Sabbath returns over God's world; but it is not here the day of joy and gladness. All that pass by clap their hands at thee; they hiss and wag their heads at the daughter of Jerusalem, saying, "Is this the city that men call the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth?"—My brethren, is it not an unjust procedure to sell our petty passions, and the overflowings of ill humor, at the great expense of God's glory, and of the salvation of generations that are yet unborn? Where are the seven candlesticks emblematical of the seven Asiatic churches?—Their lamps are gone out, and these lands are in darkness.

Christians, I look into the word of God, and I see the church delineated in perfection; I raise my view to the present aspect of the horizon of the christian world, and I see prospects opening for the kingdom of Christ: I meditate on the glory of the

latter days, and find that the Prince of peace shall reign upon earth;—and I ask how shall I, and those that I should feed like a flock, rise above the rust that eats and consumes the beauty of the temple of God, and that threatens now to corrupt and gangrene this congregation, and the answer is—add to our observations the impression of the following passages from the mouth of the Holy Ghost. “Lord who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart; he that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbor, nor taketh up a report against his neighbor, and in whose eyes a vile person is contemned. Ye have heard it said of old time thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment, and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. This is a new commandment that I give unto you, that you love one another. Be of the same mind one towards another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate; be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, vengeance is mine, I will repay saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger feed him, if he thirst give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you. If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels

and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.—Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves and to all men.—Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past and the true light now shineth. He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him; but he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.—And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. Wives submit yourselves to your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands love your wives, and be not bitter against them. Children, obey your parents in all things; for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger lest they be discouraged. Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh. Finally, be all of one mind, having compassion one of another: love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous; not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.” Amen.

DISCOURSE XII.

THE DUTY OF PARENTS TO THEIR CHILDREN.

PROV. 22:6. *Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old he will not depart from it.*

MY brethren, every man wishes to lay a solid foundation for the structure he is desirous to raise, for his honor, his interest, and his permanent satisfaction. The builder removes from the foundation the unstable and deceptive earth, that would endanger the safety of the superstructure, and rears on a chosen basis the fabric that proclaims his name and secures his accommodations. The monarch who forms designs of extensive empire assiduously studies the art of war, and diffuses it through the immense numbers of his army, on which he builds his hopes of success. The sage patriot spends his days in devising systems of political law, that are to conduct the nations of the world to the palace of peace and impartial justice. And the vast system of the material universe shows us with what infinite wisdom its omnipotent Creator hath combined its elementary principles, so as to effect that harmony of operation, and that unison of design, which bespeak so irresistibly the character of the great Parent of all.

No earthly parent can object, that his child is an object of less moment than any of these we have presented in the analogy before his view. An infant, to be sure, in many respects has, before the natural eye of curiosity, little on which to support

its prospects of celebrity, like the far-famed buildings and palaces of the monarchs of the world; like the armies of vast kingdoms; like the more peaceful operations of systems that would plant tranquillity and prosperity, not amongst a few, but amongst the nations of the human race; and like the vast works of nature, the sun, moon, and stars, the world, and all that dwelleth in it: but to the view of reason and reflection the child of man is a more noble object than any of these. On his nurse's knee, with a smile towards her countenance, and a toy in his hand, he is the bud of an opening character that will immensely outstrip every object we have brought into the comparison. Properly instructed, it is himself who commands the noblest expressions of art to rise; who forms and commands empires; who digests and applies the instruments of their felicity and prosperity;—and when the great fabric of nature shall have waxed old and vanished away, he will be beginning to expand in his strength, and to display fully his powers. The tender blossom of the tree in the early spring is subject to ruin by the breath of the wind, and the grasp of the smallest particle that floats in the frozen air; but it is trained up by the providential hand of the great Father of life, till it becomes a large tree, loaded with a profusion of fruit; which again springs up into other trees, till the effects of the tender bud cover immense regions of the earth: And in a far higher sense does the delicate scion of human nature spring up from insignificance unto incalculably glorious effects and immeasurable relations.

That the wisest of men and most glorious of kings, therefore; yea, that the Creator of all, should pass over directions necessary for the infancy of other concerns, and yet enjoin the duty in our text, is the most reasonable of choices. Says the inspired Solomon, who spake from the cedars of Lebanon to the ivy that begirts the wall, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

Every command given by infinite wisdom has a reason for its promulgation, and the duty directed by it motives highly calculated to produce a compliance. The reason arranges the circumstances of the case, and would reprove and expel the unhappy occasions which required and warranted the present command: the motives again lead into view the smiling advantages which primary integrity would have obtained, and which amendment alone can now possess.—Our thoughts, then, are principally to be directed to the reasons which have occasioned this divine particular revelation of duty, and to the encouragements which may create and preserve its discharge.

Parents are addressed; and however much they may flatter themselves of their love for their children; though they should think that they count their welfare dear to them as their own life; yet in their sinful negligence, or misapplication of the means of instruction, are we to look for the reasons of this precept. Parents, remember the charge which is committed to you; its qualities have no objects of comparison; the sun, that bright luminary in heaven, darts its vivid and indestructible rays through a vast expansion; but immense as the region which he enlightens is, there is a darkness in boundless space beyond; but the candle you are now called to light will emit his radiance bounded by no space, and darting into eternity. Little, surely, do the guardians of youth reflect upon the trust which is committed to them; else in the parlor immediately under the parental eye, and in the streets, where parents' negligence speaks through the voice of their children, so much immorality and impiety would not prevail. What do you think, for instance, of the name of God being blasphemed, his attributes tarnished, and his holy Sabbath profaned, by children pressed into the awful service by the tyranny of ignorance, and the woful blank in the book of their instruction? As sure as the word of God is true, as certain as the practice is unamiable and unprofitable, the idle blasphemer, and the impertinent transgressor of God's holy Sabbath, will,

if grace prevent not, find prepared for him a doleful retribution,—which will bear hard upon parents in the case of children; for the former are more properly accountable than the latter. In the mismanagement of an estate which is under guardians, the loss is sustained, not by those in whose effects the injury has immediately appeared, but by the administrator; and God, who is impartially just, will require, at the hands of the guardians of children, the vast estate of privileges and advantages which he had provided for them, but which is squandered away. “And the Lord said to Samuel, behold I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken against his house; when I begin I will make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house forever, for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not; and therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering forever.”—1 Sam. 3: 11—15.

But methinks I hear some parents, whose children are a heaviness and grief to them, plead that the refractoriness of youth has overcome them. The truth that man is bent to go astray from the womb, embitters in some degree the cup of delight in the hand of every parent; and in that of some much more than of others; but before this can be pled by any with success, it must be obvious, that he has used all the means which are provided for the attainment of this end. The means of accomplishing it are as diversified, as it is frequent to divide and neglect great part of them. Were the different dispositions of children carefully studied; were there but half of the ingenuity employed in ascertaining the particular springs of action in each that is often employed in forming an adaptation of instruments for the accomplishment of a trivial affair, and then a steady and vigorous application of them made, success could scarce fail to be secured. But lamentable to contemplate, the particular turn of the child

scarce ever has a thought steadily directed towards it; whilst of the combination of means to be employed, there is bestowed one scanty portion only. Some flatter themselves that they are exerting their powers to the utmost for the formation of the characters of their children, when they invest them with the thin garment of a common education, which is only the groundwork of a temporal honorable subsistence, or when they have superadded to this a knowledge of some of the most obvious principles of religion. Attending to the relation of parents in general upon this subject, you hear them exultingly declare that such has been the education of their children; and then either exclaiming against their abuse of their instructions, or applauding their improvements on them. We would not condemn any part of useful education, much less when under the eye of this inspired text of religious education: but, my brethren, all this may be attended to, and yet small proficiency made in the great art of training up a child in the way he should go. Can you expect to find the various subordinate parts of a machine turning regularly, when the principal wheel stands still; or perhaps when through some malign power it is inclined to move backwards? Well, in proportion to the wide embrace of the road of the child, comprehending both moral and religious principles, the parent should walk before and show the way. They are lame views of the education of an immortal and dependent soul, that will not endeavor to build the practice, the most estimable feature of the character of man, on every religious principle the knowledge of which is attained. But instead of this, how many parents are loose in their own morals, and profane in the circle of the other table of God's holy law, instead of pious and godly? Such monsters of absurdity meet us as pride themselves on communicating lessons of religion and probity to their offspring, while they are found blaspheming the name of God themselves, and ridiculing in their pestiferous mirth every thing that is sacred. But a man might

as well spread poison, like the diseases from Pandora's box, on every walk of his garden, and scatter it over the branches of every tree, to be carried around in deadly effluvia by the wind; and ask his friends to take an airing amongst its bowers, and flatter himself that he was actually thus to promote their health, as calculate on this method of education succeeding. Man in his infancy is like the tender flower; it will rear its head even in a barren soil, if frosty winds do not shrivel its leaves, nor pestilential seasons wither its stem: but if these visit it, all the care of art and spirit of vegetation cannot support and preserve it.—A hint of comfort to the weak and helpless.—A child, through the blessing of God, is often marvellously trained up amidst almost a famine of the common means of education; but with the pestilential breath of a profane conversation, or an immoral practice, all, all the instructions which wisdom can devise, or precept can enjoin, will be of no avail. “Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?”

But from this inapplicable and wicked character, I know many assure themselves they are entirely free; and I will say it with confidence, that I am persuaded many are so: but beware, my brethren, of the general principle from which we have shown you the pernicious influence of the practice you are so forward to condemn. Our general principle is, that example must go hand in hand with precept. Now, though you are not wicked, yet in one respect are not many of you negligent? If you do not put a scorpion alive into the hand of your children to bite them, yet do not ye, instead of bread, give them the cold stone of neglect? A principal part of the great system to which children are to be trained, is religious practice:—the adoration and worship of God; the habitual inclinations for regular returns to duty; and the lively spirit of true piety in them. It is not known what numbers of you may be deficient here; but the fact we have mentioned as of the most ruinous consequence in the education of youth, with respect to piety

and religion, cannot be too earnestly recommended to your consciences for a personal application. Suppose, you who wish to teach your children the principles of religion, and this for the purpose that henceforth they should not serve sin, that you had prepared the fields and sown your seeds by the strictest rules of agriculture; but that the providence of God blesses the earth with no dew nor rain; what would be the harvest you promise yourselves? Suppose that lectures for years, by the greatest master, were given on the most useful and noble arts; but that the teacher never took into his own hand, nor put into that of his students, the instruments of their operation; what sort of practical mechanics would such a seminary produce? In the same manner, it is equally absurd to look for the field of youth, with the seed only, without the enlivening dews and rains of religious communion seasonably and frequently bestowed, bringing forth a ripe and matured character. It is equally absurd to look for a trained christian in the greatest and noblest art of living to God, without initiation into the practice of the art, as to look for the approved workman where we have directed you.—Consult the history of the human race, its impiety, its malice, and its revenge, and ask yourselves then if there were not great reasons for God, by the wisest of men, addressing parents in the language of our text, and for us still, from time to time, thus most seriously to review it.

But as children, we plead, are more obedient to example than precept, we will not lead you, as some would, into the regions of terror, by supposing their upbraidings of you in a state of misery from which there is no release, in order to command you to your duty: we will, in the spirit of that religion which says, “Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven,” now, in the second place, turn your attention to the motives which should lead you to this desirable and honorable employment.

First. This is the means that will obtain your parental desires in regard to them. That children should be respected, happy,

and even good, is a wish which is unalienable from the heart of a parent. The heads of the family may be abandoned to every vice themselves, and may appear the offscourings of mankind; but except where their own glaring iniquities will not permit them to speak their secret desires, or where the habits of the children have grown inveterate, under their too irresolute discipline, parents will weep over the absence of the welfare and respect of their offspring, where they would find a thousand pert excuses for their own misdemeanors.—Good men consider themselves as either undone or comforted in this life, by the untoward or obedient conduct of their children. Hence says Solomon, “A wise son maketh a glad father, but a froward son is the sadness of his mother. A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him.” The agonies of David with his rebellious and wicked family, are a lively picture of the grief which preys upon the bowels of a parent. Well, would you desire your children to reflect an honor upon the name they bear, and to cheer your declining years with filial kindness and independent worth, consider that the materials are in your hand, and that the attainment, through the promise and blessing of God, depends upon your care and endeavors. To see a son growing into manhood, not in bodily dimensions only, but in the talents of the mind; for a father to contemplate him as prepared for useful employment, in the state and in the church, scenes where the interest of man and the glory of God are strikingly promoted; and above all, to behold him a star of benign influence in the domestic circle where he resides, and daily treading himself and endeavoring to lead others to eternal enjoyments, must be one of the liveliest and brightest of this world’s possessions. A parent invested with these riches might challenge the treasures of kingdoms, however destitute of gold and silver, of food and raiment, he himself was, to produce such stores of wealth, either for the admiration of others or the felicity of himself. But on the other hand, to behold children wasting their

strength, and substance provided for them through years of hardship and toil; to see them sink the honor of their family in disgrace, and entail perpetual ignominy upon their own characters; to augur their eternal destruction from the forebodings of a uniform vileness, must wring the hearts of parents with agonies which they alone can describe. For their own sakes, then, they should be abundantly careful, to train up a child in the way he should go, that when he is old he may not depart from it.

But secondly. They are to do this duty because of the great honor of such an employment. God their Creator could have formed children independent, for the obtainment of knowledge, of their parents; and could have invested them with other means as the only ones for the direction of their practice: but as they bear the most intimate natural relation to them here, he did not deprive parents of what would be so truly honorable exercises for them. To the memory of those who have achieved great conquests, or acted in the hour of danger as the fathers of their country, there have been monuments raised, and marked with every expression of gratitude and every encomium. But as no enemies are so numerous, subtle, and powerful, as the temptations and passions of youth, the trophy which is erected for the memory of him who has subdued and foiled these, though in the eye of the world at large less brilliant, is yet both better founded and more substantial, than the laurels which crown the brow of the successful patriot and conqueror. In truth, more assiduity, and even ingenuity of such a kind indeed as is more common amongst men, are necessary to rear children in the empire of virtue erected upon the ruins of prevalent vices and immoralities, than are required to plant the standard of conquest and victory on the walls of an enemy. Never was a more successful warrior than David, King of Israel, in every engagement; but he who could rout the Philistines and Jebusites, and every enemy of the people of God, yet found himself weak and unsuccessful in vanquishing the temptations which surrounded them, and the passions which impelled his own family to their ruin and disgrace.—But though difficult, a diligent application

of the means cannot fail to attain the end. David, it is suspected, was a more watchful shepherd over the flock of Israel, and a more attentive general to array their ranks, than a leader to the members of his own family.—Innumerable parents have beheld a living image of all their pious desires, liberal instructions, candid advices, and commendable examples, shining in their trained and tutored children. Except where there are dangers to brave and difficulties to overcome, there is little glory to reap; and God, who knows what joy it must communicate to a parent to have been the principal instrument of rearing his son to all the ends of his existence, hath allotted to him, in this endearing connexion, opportunities for those endeavors that will procure such a revenue of honor to his success. What incalculable happiness in the state of estimation and reward hereafter, for parents to reflect, that though their children fell into their arms with inclinations to every vanity; that although the sparks of knowledge and piety they endeavored to kindle in them were likely to be extinguished by the floods of temptation; yet their perseverance, by the blessing of God, brought them through these seas of danger, and landed them their honorable and joyful companions in the land of everlasting life. You whose circumstances are straitened, and whose qualifications make you timid, recollect what glory a conquest of your difficulties will diffuse over your character, and what a happiness your feeble exertions here will provide for you hereafter. In every other, but especially in this, can you say with truth, “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” Oh, what a gracious God, to make the most indispensable duty of man, and the most difficult to be properly performed, the most rich reward and most copious source of enjoyment, both in this world and that which is to come.

But thirdly. This command is given, because children look up to parents for their information and instruction. We have classed this idea amongst the motives, because the helplessness of infancy draws forth the deepest care under the attire of parental affection and sympathy. The pleasure which the parent

has in rescuing his children from the devouring flames, must be equal to the solicitude into which his mind was plunged by the magnitude and imminent nature of the danger which threatened them. Well, the consideration of children being so destitute of genuine principles of religious and moral conduct, and so devoid of inclinations for commendable practice, certainly will engage the thoughtful parent to very strenuous exertions. You may imagine what would be your feelings, did you see these pledges of your love and affection secluded from every earthly happiness in the miseries of a dungeon, or under the slavery of a cruel tyrant. Tears would speak emphatically the affection you bear them, and the desire you have to relieve them. But is there any prison so truly deplorable, any tyranny so bitterly un-mixed, as that prison of ignorance, and that tyranny of unsubdued, unruly passions, where are beheld the babes of the careless and the profane? No; if there is a principle implanted in the breast of man, that would prompt him to interpose in behalf of his son perishing in the devouring whirlpool, standing unsuspected on the tottering precipice, or assailed by the poniard of the assassin, here is an opportunity for him to give full play to his sympathy. The child of his affections, unless properly trained, is, in the glory of his being, his morality, and his religion, more apt to perish, than is any earthly danger to issue in its fatal effects. The bent of his own soul is to evil, and amid the innumerable snares which are laid for him, he is ready to fall a prey to the evil one. The imaginations of the heart of man are only evil, and that continually; and if the compass of this heart be not under the attractions of mild, generous, pointed, and prudent direction, it is not to be expected that the voyage of life will be happily made, or his landing felicitous hereafter.

But fourthly and lastly. We would engage you to this duty, because of the confidence with which you may expect success. It is the Spirit of inspiration who here declares, that if a child be trained up in his youth in the way he should go, he will not when old depart from it: and whilst it is obvious that this proverb is founded on the general experience of mankind, and admits of some dishonorable exceptions, the certainty that it is

founded, like every other proverb, on the general results in life, places before our view the most distinctly marked encouragement. In many instances, the most hazardous experiments and the most expensive are made by individuals, and the most laborious and daring expeditions are undertaken by states and nations, where the permanency of the advantages to be secured rests upon the most suspicious basis: but the stream of the child's life which is properly conducted, gathering strength as it flows, bears down every opposition, and will not be diverted from its course. No; guided by the light which has been infused into his mind, and guarded by the holiness of the character he has been ever accustomed to wear, the vices which prevail around him, and the irreligion which marks the most of the age he lives in, instead of surprising or beguiling him, as they do the unprepared and the defenceless, only stimulate and fan his virtues. "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." To be sure, the infirmities of human nature will discover themselves in all men; and there may, in many instances, be in the conduct of manhood a lamentable desertion of the principles of youth; but at a later period there may be a happy returning; a declaration of repentance in these mournful words: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants." In many instances has there been an imitation of that example, which is so much to our present purpose, and which is so generally known, of a great man that was stung through every scene of a loose life, by the maternal instructions and lessons of piety, which, in very early infancy, he had received, and who, at last, through the grace of God, has presented us with the example from which we must insist so much upon the efficacy of the doctrine taught in our text. Yes, the formation of an estimable character will weather the storms of temptation in general; and when at any time the violence of them may carry him far out of his course, it will recover the distressed and miserable mariner to the latitudes along which he should bear. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

Terrible must be the wickedness of some individuals; for though they have got the most eligible education, yet they have contemned its blessings, and live devoted to every kind of evil. They are the exceptions from the general truth mentioned in our text; and as they are wandering stars of such irregular orbits, the reprobation of mankind is fixed upon them, and their end can scarce fail to be the blackness of darkness for ever. How low human nature sinks, when the son of a respectable and religious father, who has been the centre of his care and hopes, withers in the bloom of life, and languishes out a degraded existence, low as that of the brutes which perish; whose breath, by his sensual indulgences, taints the air, and whose words, by his profanity, pollute the walk on which piety may meet him. Such reminds us of the reprobate Cain, of Esau, and Judas, the wandering star from the divine instructions of the great parent and teacher of mankind, and who perished to go to his place. On the other hand, what happiness does a youth properly educated, and remaining under the blessings of this education, enjoy? The sweets of knowledge, which are pure as the light of heaven, are his possession; and when this knowledge is clothed with piety, he is fitted for every dispensation of providence and every station of life here, and for the eternal house itself of his heavenly Father. When I attend the remains of a holy youth to the bed of his long repose, there is a swell of thought runs in my mind, and spreads itself; like the circles on the tranquil lake, till lost in the indefinable distance—a presage to me that he has died as if an hundred years old, and that mortality is about, undoubtedly, in his instance, to be swallowed up of life. I return and repeat to the pious parents, that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, and that this day he hath rewarded them for all their toil and labor about the little plant in his vineyard, which he hath now taken to grow on the borders of the river of life which issues out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.—The parents are tender, and their affections are moved by that cold earth which covers him.—I leave them with uttering, “This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” Amen.

DISCOURSE XIII.

ON LIGHT.

GEN. 1:3. *God said, let there be light: and there was light.*

THE beauty of scripture composition, my brethren, is seldom seen at first sight. Indeed, where there is order, it seems, to a superficial review, that there is confusion. This apparent confusion never appears greater than when light, the ornament of all the works of God, is the subject. "And the life," says John, "was the light of men." What life? That which, according to him, existed long before it appeared.—For this evangelist presents us with a beautiful gradation which the Spirit of God maintains in expressing the wisdom of his arrangements. Matthew, the first of the evangelists, rehearses the record of God respecting his Son, in whom is eternal life, as it traces the genealogy of Christ according to the flesh to David, King of Israel; Luke carries it up to Adam, who was the son of God; and John, who wrote the last of the evangelists, passes on with the genealogy of the Messiah into eternity. "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God." And then as the joy of all the patriarchs and holy men of God, as Zacharias said, came to his temple, John, wrapt in the robe of the visions of the prophets, exclaimed, "the life," which was "in the beginning, is the light of men."

The expression in our text is uncommonly sublime. It is, indeed, not like the roaring of thunder, nor the noise of the whirlwind: it is not like the earthquake, nor the foaming of the

cataract; it is not like the moving of the mountains from their places, nor the laying bare the foundations of the deep: but it is something far more grand. These are the sublime objects of untutored minds; sublime to the herdsman and shepherd, to the husbandman, and hunter with his bow and arrow in the forest: but light is the object of admiration and astonishment to all the inhabitants of the universe. When the young man, Elisha's companion, had his eyes opened, and saw all the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire, he saw a sight that was wonderfully sublime; and were John's new Jerusalem, with its walls and streets of pure gold, and its gates of pearl, really to appear, it would be the grandest of objects made out of the most precious materials which our earth affords: but it would be grand in a small chamber in the house of creation, and would not be the ornament and life of the whole.

This light is first said, in this chapter, to have been created; and then several days afterwards, says Moses, "God made two great lights and placed them in the heavens; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night." This is by many supposed an inconsistent account. But it is simple and beautiful. In the materials of the very stones of our earth there is combined light, many of its strata yield it in the greatest splendor, and water when inflamed is a lamp of sparkling brightness. The air which we breathe in the darkest night has, asleep in its bosom, a vast possession of it, which, when the air is suddenly condensed, escapes from it like the lightning of heaven. Our earth then has the matter of light, like the matter of heat, diffused through all that abyss on which the Spirit of God was moving, when God said, "Let there be light, and it was." Besides, light disdains the humble abode of one particular habitation. The sun was formed and clothed with his robe of radiant light, and the moon on her surface, like our earth, received illumination from him; but there are millions of suns which had each to get their portion; and as light, not for our little world, nor for our solar system, was, as we must believe, created by these words, "let there be light," but for the universe; it must have been first formed, and then collected

afterwards to the various stations where in majesty it was to shine.

I intend to show you, to-day, that light by its properties elevates the understanding of man, guides him in all the practice of life, illustrates the moral relations of the universe, and insinuates to man that in soul and body, as a creature of God, he is an immortal being.

First. Light improves the understanding of man. The garden of Eden, had it not been for the light of the sun, would have been a poor habitation for man; to illuminate which even the flaming sword of the avenging angel might have been adopted in preference to the darkness which hung over it. There was not a flower in Eden but which was painted into every tint of beauty by the light of day. They are the rays of light which to our eye form the blue sky and arch the heavens; which gild over the clouds, and give them comeliness to variegate at times the face of the firmament; that the heavens may declare the glory of God, and the sky show forth his handy works. In the morning they are the rays of light that sit in ornaments of gold upon the mountain's brow, and fire the youthful imagination with those sensations which teach patriotism, and begin the attempts of poetry. "Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon; look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens and mountains of the leopards." Light is airy, and seemingly very unsubstantial, as in the rainbow; but it stretches itself in that sublime arch of heaven, that it may appear alone, and away from all gross earthly objects which we think have colors in themselves; and that it may teach us that all the beauties which are spread over nature are from these rays that thus, in the covenant of God, are a pledge of his mercy that he will destroy our earth no more by water.

It is light which enables us to command, with the greatest ease, the most extensive prospects on the surface of our earth; that presents to us, in an instant of time, the extensive range of distant mountains, the valleys with their winding streams, their cities, their villages, and fertile fields. It is light which enables

us to stretch our eye over the ocean, and qualifies the mariner, by a single glance, to return with the picture of an unknown country which accident may have cast within some miles of his course. It is light, in a word, which makes man an inhabitant of this world, and identifies him with its fields, its forests, its valleys, its hills, its seas, its islands, its continents; for, were not this element of our accommodation provided for us, our condition in this world, as respects itself, might justly be compared to the oyster in its shell, or the passion flower, which feels but has no range of enjoyment beyond itself.

But light guides the eye of research in all the attainments of knowledge. Light not only touches the leaves of the flowers with their inimitable colorings, so that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of them; but it leads the eye of the philosopher to these gentle offspring of nature, and enables him to observe the wisdom which is contained in the cup of every flower; and thus, while it makes him devout, it fills his pages with descriptions of the works of nature. But it guides him further; it enables him to assort the fruits of creation, and to observe what his experience teaches him is useful upon the soil, and to reject what encumbers it only. But it goes farther; it qualifies him to lay open the interior of the productions of nature, and apply to all the uses and ornaments of life the pine and the cedar wood, the oak, and every tree of the forest. But this is by no means the highest attainment of vision. Light submits to accommodate us, so that by a little artifice we may behold millions of creatures in the family of our heavenly Father, which even our natural sight cannot perceive. Indeed, it is the eye of man that peoples creation with all the most delicate and gentle of the objects in the vegetable creation, and with those myriads of animal existences, the properties of which blindness could never ascertain, but which are such amazing evidences of the wisdom and beneficence of the glorious Creator.

Connecting us with the myriads of living and organized existences which here have members of the most beautiful symmetry and color, and are totally unknown to darkness; it is light, too, which enables us to walk through the vast regions of the fixed

stars, and to consider ourselves as inhabitants of the universe. How enlarged we feel ourselves, when by light aided by a little artificial contrivance, we examine the environs of the most distant planets, see their retinue of magnificent attendants, and then pass on to observe those stars which, appearing to the naked eye as one body only, divide into brilliant companions at immeasurable distances from one another. How vast is the capacity of man when it is thus stretched; and still he is conscious of a power to continue his observations at much greater removes from his little home.

Well may it be said, God made man in his own image; for while this image, under the freshest appearance of its coloring, was indescribably faint; yet man is not like any of the lower species of creation. Light is, indeed, useful to them; but it cannot conduct them, by the beauties which it spreads before them, to seek entertainment from kindred beauties in other parts of our earth. Some things which they have seen they remember; but they cannot picture to themselves the beauties of the valleys and mountains of the world, nor travel over its surface to reap the pleasure of actual enjoyment. Their eye is, indeed, in some instances, better formed than that of man; but their instincts are narrow and circumscribed; whereas man opens his eye and feeds on the prospect which is immediately before it, receives descriptions of other visible scenes from other men, is delighted with meditation upon them, leaves the earth, and pursues new enjoyments in the distant regions of unbounded space. God said let there be light; and man, by means of it, connects himself with the life that sports in the summer's ray, and with the furniture of the creation through an amazing chamber of her works.

But secondly. Light directs the practice. Nothing through perhaps creation can be done without it. This may be the reason why it is so universally spread, and why no place is left absolutely without it. The stars are delicate lamps which perpetually shine, and enclose us on all hands. Some creatures, indeed, are overpowered by the effulgence of day; but the night has beams sufficient for them. This arrangement of the Creator

may be intended to point out to the least observant of mankind, how easily God can suit, in the most remote corners of a solar system, his creatures to the condition of their habitation. —Yes, some creatures can live only in the purest emission of the summer's rays,—indicative to us of the happy regions of those globes which move near to the sun; and others retire into the cool shade and the caves of the earth till the chill of our evenings, when they can enter on the fatigues of their labor—a proof how delightful may be those habitations which lie far beyond us.

Indeed, the economy of our world, as connected with light, illustrates in some respects to us the expedients which must render delightful the most apparently dreary suburbs of any system. As light is absolutely necessary to the business of life, so many creatures here have the power of laying up a treasure of it, and of drawing it forth only when it is in demand. Indeed the depths of the plans of providence in this respect are astonishing. We are delighted with the green color of the sea; but we little think that the rest of the rays are absorbed by those invisible animalculæ, which fill every drop of the water where it has this color, and that support the larger inhabitants of the deep, and supply them with that light which those that live at the bottom of the abyss can bring to play around their path at their pleasure. The very vegetable creation cannot carry on any process to advantage, without both the heat and the light of the sun. Throughout all existences that grow on our earth, light seems the source of their joy. It gives health and vigor to every flower and plant, and even the very shells of the fish of the sea seem greedily to absorb it; as if without it no enjoyment could take place. When the heathen philosopher passed a high encomium on Moses for the sublime conception in our text, he knew little of the reasons which might have been assigned for his observation; but modern science has supplied the deficiency; and it may be truly said, that as God dwells in light inaccessible and full of glory; so all creatures that have the life even of organization are, for their joy, absolutely dependent upon it.

I cannot run over the departments of the business of human life to exemplify its utility to man. Look at his eye and his implements, and you will at once see how necessarily, in all instances, these are connected together. Life itself is not more necessary in the agent than vision in the eye. I direct you to the confidence which every step betokens, and the ease and expedition with which it is taken; and I direct you to the difficulties of darkness. "Come near me, my son, that I may feel whether you are my very son Esau: and he said, the voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.—Arise, my father, and eat of my venison. Who art thou? I am thy son Esau. And he trembled with an exceeding great trembling, and he said, who is he, where is he, who hath come, and with subtlety hath taken away thy blessing?" I direct you to the joy of the business of life. The morning sun gladdens creation; the firmament is filled with music; the labor of the day increases; but man wipes from his brow the sweat, and throws a glance, forgotten indeed the next moment, over the surrounding scenes of nature, and gathers a refreshment sweeter than a mere imagination bred in darkness could ever present.

But light would have availed nothing to the business of life, separated from the end for which here it was prepared. Before the divine mind, when God said, "let there be light," the substance and forms of all eyes, for air, earth, and water, stood infallibly connected with the realities to be prepared. How admirable an organ is the eye of man! There may be as much wisdom indeed in the construction of the ear, and of the organ of taste or smell; yea, in the formation of a hair of the head; but the eye expresses its wisdom more openly to our capacity. Our eye is the most delicate of all our members, and yet the rays of light never injure nor weary it; and with a rapidity little inferior to the velocity of light itself, it changes its form for every new point of the scene which it wishes to survey. Above all things in our constitution that is inexpressibly wonderful, this of the accommodation of our vision according to the distance of every object proclaims, to the few people who have adverted to

it, the delicacy of the divine wisdom, and the minuteness of its attention to our happiness in our situation. The labor of the eye, too, in turning in its socket, is always gone through with so much ease, that though it traverses with its axis a longer journey every day, than would weary any other member of our frame, it never since creation uttered a complaint.

It is with propriety, my christian brethren, that the heathen, who lost sight of the intellectual and moral beauties of creation, are represented as a people who sit in darkness and have no light; and that revelation, the word of divine knowledge, is always presented to us as the light of the world. Where there is no vision, the people and all the business of life perish, even in a literal point of view. It is often by critics quoted as a remarkably heroic and courageous expression of one of Homer's heroes, who, when stopped in the heat of the fight by impracticable darkness, prayed to Jupiter to give light, if he should then slay him when it would direct his steps. Milton's lamentation over the loss of his sight is by all admired as one of the most natural and pathetic passages to be found in any composition; but to a philosophical mind the inimitably fine scenes in "Paradise Lost" show that the writer of them, after blindness had seized him, could find no enjoyments but in recalling and contemplating those beauties, the elements of which had entered by the eye. Of all productions in poetry, those which have proceeded from men who by age have lost their sight, are the most admirable: but the reason of this is very obvious; present objects of interest are very scantily presented to them; and the past objects of delight are pursued, caught, new moulded, and formed into the brightest attitudes. Some of these productions are, therefore, airy and bright; the fancy of youth having clothed the knowledge of experience and of age: but when they touch on their present feelings and their relations to the universe, their strains are like the sound of the birds that sing by night, melancholy and doleful; and though some of the strains may be sweet, these are like the notes of

the nightingale, that seem to spring from a perpetual fountain of sorrow.

But thirdly. Light is indicative of the character of the moral government of the universe. We have, from a minute examination of them, many evidences, from other things, of the character of the divine government in our world. The fact that the proportion of original elements in all compound substances of the same nature, are always invariably the same; that the air never varies in the proportion of the elements which compose it; that water never in its composition will admit one particle more or less at one time than at another; that crystallizations of the same substance are invariably under the same angle, and in the same proportions; that the forms of the organs of plants never deviated from their order since creation, nor is even a color of their leaf changed; that every thing brings forth its kind in perfection of parts and organs—these things clearly show that there is a plan of perfection connected with the natural government of the world; and also that if any of God's creatures here be under a moral law proceeding from the same origin, it must have a definite perfection, as well as all other emanations from the divine councils. This is the very truth which the sense of religion in all men appears weakly to have laid hold of; for sacrifices of expiation have been offered in all places and ages; but the view of it was, like the rest of their knowledge of divine things, extremely imperfect among the heathen nations. But these words, "the Judge of all the earth will do right," receive from the light of modern science a strictness and an inflexibility of interpretation which are grand and majestic. Science has passed into every chamber of the divine works; and all things are definite and unchangeable in the principles which form their nature and regulate their character. There is one common law to every existence of the same species; and this is as permanent as the order of the universe, and cannot be altered without the annihilation of a species of being.

It may make man stand amazed at the accumulation of guilt which thus the order of the universe brings against him for his transgressions; but it is the very view of the subject the scriptures present. To a christian, whose faith is founded on the immediate communications of revelation, the view we have exhibited has nothing alarming. He may not have so minutely analyzed the mind of the great and universal Governor as I have attempted to do; but his belief is not in the least different.—Is it said that we know nothing of the perfection of the divine works, unless in this small corner of them where we reside? The rays of light, my brethren, convey a knowledge to us of the order of the heavens. The stars all shine invariably brightly, or change by some known law which adds only to the wisdom of the economy by which they are governed. There is the power of attraction which binds our solar system into an order, which in some degree we can estimate; and this order is never disturbed, any more than the wisdom of the Maker of all could find any difficulty in adjusting that admirably perfect plan which from his will the system exemplifies.

But it is light itself that is the universal herald of the absolute perfection of the creation. It travels through all space, and it has no variety in any portion of its journey different from what it had in any other. It moves universally in the same straight lines when left to itself, and with the same velocity. And the rays which come from the most distant stars are affected, in all instances, precisely in the same manner as is the light of our sun. The light of a star which is invisible entirely to the naked eye, on entering our atmosphere, pays an equal duty of refraction with a ray from the moon or sun, or any other heavenly body. Its progress, as learned from its aberration, is precisely with the same rapidity; and it disdains equally to be a messenger to us of any thing but brightness on every beam, and order in every movement. When the moon rises from the bosom of the ocean, her light plays on the sur-

face of every wave, and so does the light of the most distant and smallest star, to show that this inhabitant of the universe has unchangeable laws of order, to make known every where to his intelligent creatures, That he who dwells in light inaccessible and full of glory, is absolutely perfect; and this, too, as his authority stands over those rational existences who were originally created with powers to examine and estimate this universal state of things.—My God, I thank thee that Christ said, “I am the light of the world:” for with this night of sin, there is a horror and a darkness which, from all the images of divine perfection in heaven and in earth, bear in upon the sinner; and how awful must be the naked arm of justice, when it strikes to realize the truth which is thus sketched before us in all the works of God.

In the plan of salvation, my brethren, by Christ, the law of God may be supposed as perfect as are the laws which he has assigned to light, not a particle of which since creation ever erred; yet we are safe. Yea, were not the moral law of God equally inflexible in its majesty, as the laws of nature are in their order, the whole of our religion would be a fabric without a principle to cement its parts. But they are in an error, deeply in an error, who illustrate the beauty of the crown of heaven, and the original lines of order among the intelligences of this universe, by sometimes one vague view, and sometimes another; and who think that the sinner returns back to his God, like a child who is wearied of its waywardness to his father. No, the angels might desire to look into the plan of our restoration; for they have some knowledge of the perfection of this building of creation; and they will see, that high as its order is, there is no infringement of it as we return to God. The wages of sin is death: its cold hand was felt; justice spared not; but out of the state of the dead, came life and immortality to light. Christ, the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world, had his countenance like the sun, and his raiment like the light

of the sun; and a voice comes to us from heaven, as Moses and Elias talked about his decease, saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

But lastly. Light insinuates to man that in soul and body he is an immortal being. When we look at the lower species of the creation, they are as devoid as the rocks of the mountain of any turn for speculation on any object which they see. They often exhibit considerable talent and address in arranging their habitations, in providing their food, in attacking their enemies, and in lying in ambush to make them their prey. Never, however, has an individual of them brought forward the least feature of that philosophy which we recognize in the eye of every infant; and which, while all appetite and selfishness are at a distance, commences an inquiry into the nature of surrounding objects, and the relations of their component parts. Every creature of the lower species of creation has the bounds of its habitation circumscribed by a line on the earth which is never far distant from it; and beyond this all the objects which the Creator could make and ornament have no relations which interest it. The natures of these creatures never identify them with the universe, and fill their souls with the images of beauty and order from every thing that is great or small. Their eye is an organ of utility indispensable to their existence; but when it guides them to the pasture, or to the stream, to the prey, or to the danger which threatens existence, it has accomplished its highest attainments.

But man never appears before the door of his habitation but you perceive that, by means of the rays of light, his mind is travelling over scenes, which, though often viewed, may yet be supposed to have something to please his curiosity. When the fields have any thing uncommon on them, every man would make the whole prospect his own, by the eager curiosity which he summons up upon it, and by the examination to which he subjects it. Should the heavens put on a new array, towards them he directs an equal interest. The contemplation of even

the azure canopy of the sky often begets in him a tranquillity as indefinable as is the boundary of our vision, and as rich in enjoyment as imagination can provide. Man by the properties of his mind, and the faculty of vision, is not a local insulated existence; but connects himself with all God's works that are around him, and cultivates an acquaintance, intimate and deep, with the most transitory or permanent on the earth or in the heavens over it. Yea, he starts off to the most distant of the visible works of God, and cultivates with more joy an acquaintance with them, than he does with the familiar environs of his habitation. Man is an inhabitant even here of a vast part of the possessions of the universe.

Now, my brethren, while not a particle of matter, as far as we know, is annihilated, while the rays of light, feeble as they are, all yet play throughout boundless space, are we to suppose that the mind of man, that existence which travels throughout a great part of the works of God, and examines them as it passes along, is just as the leaf of the grass, or that creature which can think of nothing but feeding upon it? No, I hold that the human mind has a testimony from every star, and the more distant the clearer, that it is an heir to the enjoyments which the permanency of the heavenly luminaries presents. God could have given us more light by situating one of the stars a little nearer to us, and making it move so as to rise when the sun set, and thus hide as the sun does all the rest from our view; but he has hung out to us the splendors of creation, and arranged them so as to invite our intelligence and numbers among them.

But it may be said we leave every thing here by death; and why not all things every where else?—When the building is great and full of chambers, the members of the family are not kept eternally in one little corner. They walk throughout the halls and apartments, and occupy what they see to be all suitable and delightful.

But it may be said, my brethren, that this reasoning though splendid and specious, is yet overturned by one consideration, level to our capacity, and easily estimated. Men, it may be said, cannot be immortal, else these vast views to which they are heirs, the works of God, and all which he has provided for us of a still more exalted character nearer to himself, would not be put out of view by indifference, or be trodden upon by that madness of impiety which we see every where so prevalent.—I am not attempting to prove the immortality of man from his conduct. I grant that the gold of his creation has become dim; I am proving it from the creation of God, and from that relation to it, which his intellectual nature still yet presents.

Were I to prove it any way connected with his moral habits I would first recall the truth that the idea of morality connects immediately with the throne of heaven; and then I would direct to the judgments where a fire goeth before God and burneth up round about him. Yes, I would direct to the flaming sword, that, in respect to the sinner, guards the tree of life; I would direct to the top of Sinai and the terror of its flames; I would direct to the fire which men kept perpetually burning as an emblem of justice to consume the sacrifice; and I would repeat the prophecy, that the Lord shall be revealed from heaven, in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them who know not God, and who believe not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.

But light affords us also an evidence for the resurrection of the body. The ancients thought meanly of matter, and spake of it as the prison of the soul. But the light of modern science shows infinite space filled with it, and the wisdom of Deity unfolded in all its forms. The book of creation is written on material leaves; and no creature which we see, can perceive any thing out of himself but by the intervention of it. It is the soul which perceives; but the consciousness of its own

operations is not more certain, than are the intimations of the senses.—We do not say that the angels have bodies. On the other hand, their spiritual nature is an evidence that our souls may exist by themselves with powers of enjoyment, before the resurrection. But we say, that the angels never visit our world without putting on a form like to a friend or a foe. They eat with Abraham; Manoah sees their wonderful operations; they speak to Zacharias; they roll back the stone from the sepulchre of our Saviour and sit upon it; and they say, ye men of Galilee why stand ye here gazing into heaven, this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.—These angels no doubt visit other parts of the creation, and accommodate themselves to the material forms and organs of their inhabitants.—Spiritual existences as they are, we do not suppose, that it is for their own enjoyment, that they put on the material forms in which they appear. This is to befriend those to whom they are sent.—But, my brethren, since creation in its material parts is so vast and magnificent, since the angels of heaven robe themselves at times in material coverings, and since we can form no conception how matter can be perceived, and its magnitude and beauties be properly estimated, but by material organs;—if our souls be immortal, the union of them to what is a constituent part of our nature here, would only prepare us for being companions to the works of our creator as we see them at present existing, and as in the new heavens and the new earth they will continue for ever to exist. The works of God are spirit and matter; the one is powerful to examine and comprehend; and the other is spread every where throughout boundless space with its beauties and marks of divine wisdom to employ us by endless variety through an endless duration.

There may be some tie which our Maker will have to break to set us loose from our present abode. But it is easy to imagine this. Light is incident upon the earth, but it is not at-

tracted by it; nor is it by a single body of the universe. It leaves the sun, and steps off to the most distant of the planets; but it returns to us with the utmost ease, and with the same velocity. The Creator, to the glorious bodies of the saints, has only to communicate the independence which light possesses in respect to attraction, its incorruptibility in all situations, and its speed on its journey, to prepare them for occupying the whole building of creation, and throughout eternity for making all his works to praise him.

What a beautiful passage is that in the nineteenth chapter of Job! Job says that God hung our earth upon nothing; that he bringeth forth Arcturus with his sons, and he speaks of Orion and Pleiades and the chambers of the south.—Having exclaimed, Oh! that my words were now written in a book, that they were engraven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever, he adds, in the passage referred to, For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and though after my skin worms destroy this my body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom mine eyes shall behold and not another. Job's deep distress was like the picture of our sinful world, and his body that was scraped with a potsherd, was a fit emblem of the realization of these words of his, "I have said to corruption thou art my father, and to the worm thou art my sister and my mother;" but this sigh of faith, is like the light of God's creation;—this may be absorbed by all substances, but it has in itself a principle of indestructive purity, and always clears off from them in its original brightness; so Job shakes off from him in these words, every thing that is vile and corrupting, and stands arrayed, as on the last day, ready to meet that Judge who in his character presents that absolute perfection which is the intellectual light of the whole creation.

That which thou sowest, says Paul, is not quickened except it die.—Parents you may sow in death your children, children you may sow to corruption your parents: but why those tears? Look at the field. The seed cannot be barren. The blessing

of heaven is upon it. That which is sown in weakness shall be raised in power; that which is sown a natural body shall be raised a spiritual body; that which is sown in corruption shall be raised in incorruption; and that which is sown in dishonor shall be raised in glory.

My brethren, what hopes the religion of Christ gives! Man comes forth as a flower and is cut down; but all things change; the light was a while without a permanent abode; but was then gathered into a glorious habitation; so man, redeemed to his original perfection, may wander about for a little among the toils and the tombs of this earth; but at last he will be gathered to an eternal home, to shine as those stars in the firmament for ever and ever.—For this corruptible must put on incorruption; and this mortal must put on immortality. Oh! infidels why rob us of these hopes? Does not the Creator of the universe connect us with it far and wide; and is he, as soon as we begin to open the eye of enjoyment, to dash his children from the breast which he has hung out so rich and so desirable? Christian this cannot be. For we have instructions beyond the beauties of creation.—When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass, the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.—Oh! death where is thy sting, oh! grave where is thy victory! Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.—The day spring from on high hath visited us—the light of the new creation shines.—Amen.

DISCOURSE XIV.

THE CONVERSION OF THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH.

ACTS 8:39. *And he went on his way rejoicing.*

THERE are, my brethren, particular providential occurrences in one's life which, though not in the least anticipated, are the sole spring of his power, aggrandizement, or happiness. Saul had not the slenderest expectation, when in rural simplicity, he went in search of his father's asses, that before his return a prophet of the Lord should anoint him king of Israel. Joseph, persecuted by his brethren, and sold into Egypt where he experienced treachery and imprisonment, had not himself any knowledge or belief, that the Lord was doing these things, that he might preserve Jacob a posterity upon the earth, and save lives by a great deliverance. The disciples of our Saviour said in despair of its being the case, we thought that this was he who should have redeemed Israel, and it was the very event which interpreted to them the whole of the sacred oracles, and started them in that honorable cause for which they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods.

The Ethiopian eunuch, whose exultation is the subject of our discourse, met with an equally unexpected but happy providential occurrence in his behalf. This minister of Candace, queen of Ethiopia, went to Jerusalem for to worship. The light however which he received from the interpreters of the Jewish law and prophets, threw but little information upon the true nature of the ordinances on which he attended, or the scriptures, which

to the Jews themselves, as well as all their proselytes, were the rule and spirit of true and undefiled religion. Returning from his religious performances this man read Isaiah the prophet, and in that particular place of him too, which more clearly than all the rest explained the intention and spirit of the Jewish institutions, and yet he understood not what he read. Verse 29. And the spirit said unto Philip, go near and join thyself to this chariot, and Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Isaiah, and said, understandest thou what thou readest? and he said how can I except some man guide me. Poor had been the instructions of the Jewish teachers, else this man who was of those distinguished talents that advanced him to the charge of all the affairs of his mistress' kingdom, and who peruses the sacred scriptures as he journeys along in his chariot, would have had some conjectures at least about the true import of this peculiar and striking passage of Isaiah. But his lines are falling to him in pleasant places above his expectation. That unanticipated and striking occurrence to which we alluded, and which was the great spring of joy to all his future life, now takes place.—It is added, “and he desired Philip that he would come up, and sit with him.” And Philip, it is said, verse 35, “opened his mouth and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus:”—Jesus whom this prophetic passage led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so opened he not his mouth; who was wounded for our transgressions, was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him, and by his stripes we are healed.—The light which was cast upon the subject was irresistible: the eunuch is converted; the greatest and most blessed change that can happen to mortal man. Verse 36. “And as they went on their way they came unto a certain water, and the eunuch said, see, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptised? and Philip said, if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest; and he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still; and they went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptised him. And when

they were come up out of the water, the spirit caught away Philip, and the eunuch saw him no more. And he went on his way rejoicing."

What we intend, in the further prosecution of this discourse, shall be, in the first place, to present before you the causes of the rejoicing of this convert; secondly, we will inquire how such an effect could be so suddenly produced on him; and thirdly, we will ascertain why this event is so particularly mentioned.

And no wonder that the eunuch went on his way rejoicing; for, in the first place, he now received a key to the prophecies contained in what he esteemed the word of God. When an honest man believes that God is speaking to him, if he cannot understand what has been communicated, he is filled with deep anxiety; and his relief from it must fill his mind with a proportional joy. But we see from a preceding part of this chapter, that the eunuch was equally ignorant of as desirous to know the true import of one of the most remarkable and singular predictions of revelation. The Jews had sought the fulfilment of this prophecy in the character of Jeremiah, and several other illustrious sufferers: yea, they had feigned two Messiahs in order to answer to the description of power and distress; but at the period of the commencement of the New Testament worship, they appear to have lost its true and legitimate import. And of many of the rest of the predictions of revelation were they, and all their disciples, equally ignorant: in particular of all those which delineated the person and work of the great Mystery of Godliness, God manifested in the flesh. To find a meaning to these passages, "he shall make his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; his flesh shall rest in hope, and his soul shall not be left in hell; unto us a son is given, and a child is born, and the government shall be upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace; Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself;" necessitates an interpreter to believe in Jesus of Nazareth, and to bring him to the explication of what otherwise cannot be resolved. Indeed to him gave all the law and

the prophets witness. What is the meaning of all those illustrious predictions which describe the typical nature of the land of Canaan, and promise it to the seed of Jacob; of those which define and bewail the captivity of Judah, and secure her subsequent restoration; of those which tell us of the rise and fall of empires; if they derive not to themselves an importance from the great event of the redemption of mankind; for which any other events could become worthy of a particular divine record? The Saviour of the world is the true key to the prophecies. In his incarnation, miraculous birth, mean life, accursed death, and glorious resurrection from the dead, many of them have met with their literal and only interpretation: and even the more distant and scattered among the affairs of the world, receive their great value, for which they must be recorded by God, from him in whom all the promises and predictions of revelation are yea and amen. No wonder then, when the genuine key was put into his hand, that the Ethiopian, the eunuch of great authority, should proceed on his way rejoicing. Having the charge of all her treasures this minister of queen Candace could no doubt open many a door, and unlock many a bolt that admitted to the most valuable of earthly concerns, of precious jewels and gold with which that court abounded. But this key lets him into secrets which the topaz of Ethiopia could not equal, neither could they be valued with pure gold. He saw here that pearl of great price, in order to buy which, a man would with advantage, yea even a king, sell every other concern.

But we observe, secondly, That he went on his way rejoicing, because he had found a rational interpretation to all the institutions of that religion on which he attended. The supporters of superstition flatter themselves that every part of their ritual has a significancy, and every feature of their practice a religious meaning: otherwise they could not content themselves in supporting often a burdensome and an expensive system of ceremonies. There was in all the heathen devotees an imagination which pleased them with their external forms of worship, and which was equally rooted and easy of furious agitation, with that which stimulated the Ephesians to cry out "great is Diana of

the Ephesians." The Jews' religious institutions were of divine origin, and had actually the most pointed import; every type might find a principal, every ceremony a substance, and every figure a reality; but at the commencement of the christian dispensation, the most of that people had lost sight of the real import of those institutions that were so truly significant. They made clean the outside of the cup and platter, and neglected the weightier matters of the law. They thought that he was a Jew that was one outwardly, and that that was circumcision which was outward in the flesh. It was the certainty that their ordinances had been instituted by God, and the backwardness which every one feels to condemn himself, that led them to feel such satisfaction with the external appearance without the rational and necessary substance. For the law, says truth, hath a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things.

This fond flattery of themselves in the utility of that which they presently professed, did not however, either among the Jews or gentiles, give satisfaction unto the impartial and the reflecting. The intelligent and learned in the pagan world rejected, as below the reasonableness of things, the superstition which had overrun their respective regions, and longed in deep anxiety for a revelation to direct them: and the wise of the Jews were waiting, as is instanced in good old Simeon, for the consolation of Israel. It was impossible for them to be completely satisfied, and each of them must have desired like this eunuch with regard to the portion of scripture he was reading, to have some one to guide him. Generation after generation, however, in the heathen world, had passed away without seeing the light of revelation arising upon them; and few of the Jews were directed to the genuine sight of divine doctrine. The one remained enveloped in the clouds of their impenetrable ignorance, and the other might be asked and reproved by, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices? will the Lord be pleased with the blood of bullocks, or of rams, or of lambs, or of he-goats?" But that ignorance which had involved all nations of the gentiles, and that perversion of divinely instituted ordi-

nances among the Jews, which might expose them to the ridicule of the more reflecting, are now completely overturned. Jesus the Saviour of the world, whose death appeases the justice of God, and reconciles the obstinate sinner; in regard to the sacrifice of whom all expiations throughout the world must have been instituted; and whose death gives so full an account of the reasonableness of the Jewish rites and ceremonies, is proclaimed in the preaching of the gospel. The great difficulties of the light of nature, how a sinner is to appear before a holy God, and on what evidences the soul's immortality rests, are now resolved. The divine Mediator makes a real atonement, and presents us without spot or blemish before the Holy One; whilst his resurrection brings life and immortality to light; and whilst thus all oblations throughout the world may be traced to their origin, sacrificing amongst the Jews in particular is explained, by this one offering of him who hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified. Yes, the ignorance which involved his fathers is now dispersed; and his religion, to the ceremonies of which, he has travelled so far, he can clearly show to all the world, is worthy of his long journey. Hence the eunuch goes on his way rejoicing.

But we observe, thirdly, That he went on his way rejoicing, because that great personage, expected over all the nations, had actually arrived. Not only was there an anticipation among the Jews who were immediately directed by the prophecies and ordinances of the Old Testament, that at the time of Christ's appearance in our world, a mighty personage should show himself on the stage of time; but there was a general expectation of him throughout almost all nations. The woman of Samaria said, that she knew that the Messiah who is called Christ should come; and even Virgil and Julius Marathus spake of a great personage to appear; which idea could not be supposed to occur to them, but by some adulterated and faint tradition of the expected Messiah. And the very manner in which the latter speaks of him, is particularly to be observed. He says that nature was about to bring forth a Son that should be king of the nations. Tacitus and Suetonius, Roman historians of

great celebrity, mention too this general expectation of mankind, and even say that he is to arise out of Judea. In the east, in Persia and Babylon, they were so vigilant in their outlook for this admirable person, that they believed, even before it happened, that men were to be directed to him by a supernatural star;—the reason, no doubt, why the wise men came to our Saviour, saying, “Lo! we have seen his star in the east.” The dispersion of the Jews among the rest of the nations of the earth, as well as the prophecies of Balaam, Daniel, and others, we may just remark, no doubt occasioned this general expectation. Now a knowledge that this general expectation of all nations was fully gratified, could not but infuse joy unspeakable into the breast of the Ethiopian eunuch. He would say to himself, it has been no unfounded fancy of which poets have sung and philosophers have conjectured, and by which distressed nations have consoled themselves with the prospects of deliverance. Greatly have they been mistaken about the real manner and design of his appearance. The Jews calculated on a great king, and temporal Redeemer only, to redeem from Roman bondage the dishonorably mortgaged inheritance of their peculiarly promised land; and the rest of the nations looked to him, some with joy, and some with fear; the oppressed that perhaps he would break the chains of their oppression, and the oppressors that perhaps their instruments of power would be broken. But he is a deliverer most glorious indeed: not as either Jew or gentile were expecting him to be; not a temporal Saviour, to place justice among the nations; but a spiritual Redeemer, to deliver both the victor and vanquished from the most disgraceful and miserable of all conditions, bondage to sin, and the displeasure of an angry God.

Which brings us to remark, fourthly, That he went on his way rejoicing, because he saw the salvation of mankind accomplished. It appears that this eunuch was truly a man desirous of religious attainments, and not satisfied with every form of worship, else he would not have travelled from the court of Ethiopia to Jerusalem, to the temple of God, for his devotions. But whilst his religious affections were warm, and he sought the end of religion, the salvation of his immortal soul, many doubts,

even at the altars of the Jews, must have arisen in his mind. The superstition of all nations around him, he saw, was gross and abhorrent, and even the most systematic and rational under the wings of the temple of God had many infirmities. Can reason believe that the blood of bulls or of goats expiates sin? No; the sinful world, for all this good man can yet see of its redemption, may be lost for ever. His religion is only the best with which he can obtain an acquaintance, in an age universally sunk in superstition or deceived with mere observances. But the hopes of the human race he sees are now established; their salvation on the most firm grounds is come to pass. The only begotten Son of God could not be crucified and raised from the dead, without our being saved. No; when the Creator of the world makes an effort to destroy death in his own territories, the world must be redeemed. It is impossible that the source of all life should pass through the regions of death, and not sweep them of every mortal seed and mean of destruction, as far as his omniscience saw was for his glory. Hence the inspired interpretation which Philip gave him of the prophecy of sufferings and punishment, which he was reading, could not but show to his understanding the real redemption of the world, and fill his heart with joy proportioned to this great achievement. When a kingdom is emancipated from the successful tyranny that for years has oppressed it, joy beams on every countenance within the realm, and friendly nations light the torch of sympathetic rejoicings; but how much more genuine, as well as deep, must have been the gladness of this pious and sincere eunuch, when he, in light clearer than noonday, saw the world through to the latest age delivered from the worst of all thraldoms, condemnation and eternal death.

But we observe, fifthly, That he went on his way rejoicing, because he had received in his own instance this salvation which was provided for all nations. The welfare of our own immortal souls is of such vast moment, that whilst great and beneficent objects draw forth our exultation, the security of our own eternal existence amongst the intellectual natures that are to live for ever, cannot but form a copious source of it. Our immortal

souls look into the awful pit of ignominy and disgrace from which they are saved, and to the eternal inheritance to which they are destined; and a sense of rescue from the former, and preparation for the latter, is a perpetual spring of vivid enjoyment. Hence the language of the jailer, "What shall I do to be saved?" hence the commendation of our Saviour to Mary, for attending to the one thing needful; hence the propriety of the precept to lay up treasures where neither moth nor rust can corrupt, nor thieves break through to steal; and hence the true emphasis of that language from the mouth of an apostle, "Wo is me if I preach not the gospel;" hence, indeed, the very end of Christ's death, the reason of the revelation of all the doctrines of salvation, and the whole meaning of religious exercises. —The value of an immortal soul is seldom duly estimated. But the worth of the whole world is nothing to it; yea, of a thousand worlds, which are only transitory connexions. "What is a man profited if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Could we read the countless objects that would define its value, as it appears to the eye of Jehovah, who hath redeemed it by the blood of his Son, we would see that worlds, countless as the leaves of the forest, the drops of water which roll in the ocean, the stars of night, which are innumerable, could not make the most distant approximation to its surpassing excellence. Whatever a person possesses and enjoys may be considered his subservient and ministering property; and worlds more numerous than the sand on the sea shore may, in the ceaseless ages of existence, be surveyed by the saints, in the glorious character too of the new heavens and the new earth. "And he that overcometh shall inherit all things." Sensible of this great value and these prospects of his own immortal spirit, he goes on his way rejoicing.

But we observe, sixthly, That he went on his way rejoicing, because he had the most joyful news to carry home to his countrymen. No doubt although his talents must have procured him very great respect, and his high and dignified office hushed to silence the malicious whispers of the interested, yet this

eunuch had many in the Ethiopian nation, and strangers at Queen Candace's court, who must have suspected him as under the influence of it, and putting himself to great hardships in order to support a grievous superstition. Apt would many of the wits of court and many of the profane of the country be, to ask him many questions about the great advantages he certainly had from his long and rugged journey, under a burning sun, and through a barren country, to the temple of a mean and despised people. But this day a field of thought and argument has indeed burst upon his view. Every prophecy has found a meaning, every divinely instituted ordinance a solid substance, every obscure doctrine a heavenly light, God's temple a real inhabitant, and his altar an effectual sacrifice. The eunuch could tell them that those prophecies which he always expected to be divine, that those ordinances which had been established by the evidence of such miracles, and that those doctrines which appeared to be so sublimely expressed, were really to a demonstration what he believed them to be. Attend, he would say, to the prophecies of Jacob which promised the Messiah at the departure of the sceptre from Juda and the lawgiver from between her feet; and see how well this prediction, though delivered many ages ago, answers to the period of the manifestation of the Son of God. Consider Balaam's star out of Jacob, and his sceptre of righteousness out of Israel; and see how fully the one beams in the all-powerful light, and the other rules in the dominion, of the Redeemer of mankind. Turn over to the prophecies of Daniel, where his seventy weeks are determined to build the city of Jerusalem and its walls in troublous times, before Messiah the Prince be cut off but not for himself; and see how admirably the time answers to this era of the redemption of our world. In a word, consider that portion of Isaiah, that portion which I was reading, when an apostle, divinely directed, ran to me and asked me, "Understandest thou what thou readest?"—that portion which admits of no application but to the promised Messiah, and which from him receives such a divine light; and you will behold what reason I have had to attend upon the passover and feast of unleavened bread at Jerusalem. At the

temple of Jerusalem there was appointed the sacrifices which typified the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world; there was ordained, in every preceding age, the means of the salvation of mankind. Oh! Ethiopians, I have to tell you of the Saviour of sinners, who, in the fulness of time, when all things, by predictions, and types, and revolutions of kingdoms, had prepared his way, actually in a correspondence to these, and indeed a general expectation of mankind, died in our world to redeem it, and hath really saved it from its sin. You, Ethiopians, cannot change your skin, nor the leopard his spots; but to you now will be administered the laver in which, black as you are in a moral point of view, you may wash yourselves whiter than the snow. The middle wall of partition which till now has separated the Jew from the gentile is broken down, and the religion of the Saviour of the world will be preached at your gates. The apostles of the Lord of glory, invested with the power of working miracles, are sent out to all nations, and their signs, and their wonders, and the life, the life and immortality of their doctrines, will now appear amongst you. Contemplating these things he went on his way rejoicing.

But we observe, lastly, That he went on his way rejoicing, because he saw that dispensation of mercy which was to visit all lands established and unfolding its principles. It was impossible to have been baptised in the name of Jesus, and to have had all the scriptures which respected him unfolded, and not see the advantageous nature of that dispensation of mercy under which he now lived. Following the streams of the prophecies which must have been discovered to him, he could not but be greatly delighted as he rode along, with the belief that the barren wildernesses must become fertile lands, and that streams of living water are to break out in every desert. His imagination must have wandered into the distant periods of time, as well as the distant regions of the world, and must have felt a joyful enthusiasm from the prospect of the true religion to be disseminated from sea to sea, and from the rivers to the ends of the earth. I am baptised, he would say, in the name of Jesus; and the water with which I have been baptised will be consecrated for

this blessed purpose to the ends of the earth. Yes, hail ye streams and ye sacred fountains; ye have been often celebrated in the song of the muses, and been highly useful in refreshing our weak and exhausted natures; but ever after, you may contain some drops that represent the blood of the Son of God, and may be employed in washing an immortal soul from its sins; you are now the ordained symbols which on the earth are to purify the church of God. Hail ye many nations who will drink your sacred fountains; and as you drink may you always recollect that these streams may be a mean of sealing your rescue from the burning flame of divine wrath. Thus looking forward among the ages to come, he would sing at every stream the remembrance of the Lord, and go on his way rejoicing.

The second thing we proposed to investigate was, how could such an effect be so suddenly and so effectually produced on his mind? This is a most important inquiry; differing immensely from that inquiry which the divine institutes in respect to those instances of conversion which take place under an acknowledged and professed system of religion. Our present inquiry cannot be rationally satisfied, till we analyze the whole of the circumstances attending the life of the convert, and the time and place of his conversion.

The history of the Ethiopian eunuch is known as far as we can desire. He was a minister employed in a political office; which both requires talent and is disposed to remain contented with existing institutions. He is particularly connected with the Jewish nation, and travels far to do honor to the institutions of the Jewish people. His conduct is the very opposite of levity, and his mind is not distracted by any terrors of conscience. Indeed he starts into view most respectable, and he seems to act from the deepest conviction. With the time and place of his conversion we are equally acquainted. It was not far off from the city of Jerusalem, and in the midst of that ground which was tearing up and changing its appearance, by a whirlwind which made every spot feel its influence, and which left no one without exciting his feelings to the highest degree. An immense number of men have been driven off from the city

of Jerusalem; but wherever they appear they have a sternness in their look, and a determination in their step, which clearly show that whether they be managing their cause in their metropolis or any where else, it is their resolution that it shall prevail. It was, indeed a peculiar cause. An illustrious master had begun it; had given it renown by the reputation of miracles; had been arrested, however, in his progress by an ignominious death; and yet had started it anew by an astonishing fact, his own resurrection from the dead. If the whole Jewish nation had become converts to this extraordinary cause, it might have been suspected that the people, who had so many miracles in their national records, were determined that they should crown the history of the whole, by the resurrection and ascension into heaven of their Messiah; and it might have been suspected that the Ethiopian eunuch could not, when he came to the city of Jerusalem, withstand an impulse which was so irresistible. But the resurrection and ascension of Christ were observed by some particular witnesses, who could not possibly be mistaken about the identity of his person; and the rest were left with the undoubted absence of Christ's body from the tomb; the continuance of the train of miracles which they thought to stop by the crucifixion of Christ; and the zeal and sincerity of the apostles and disciples. By these means a part of the Jewish nation underwent a most astonishing revolution of sentiment. Many who had before his crucifixion continued incredulous in respect to Christ's pretensions, became, after his death, not only converts to his cause, but attached to it above the love of life itself. Eight thousand at the city of Jerusalem were proselyted by the address of Peter on the day of Pentecost, and of the apostles on a subsequent occasion; and the cause gathered an increase daily.

When the Ethiopian eunuch, therefore, came to Jerusalem, the national agitation could not possibly have concealed itself from him. Indeed it is implied in the history of his conversion that he was acquainted with it. Had he not known of the general and interesting topics of the day, when Philip approached him, and when he preached to him Jesus, he would have replied

to him, these things cannot be as you state them: a man so famous in his life, so remarkable in his death, and who rose again from the dead; who has produced such a deep sensation as you say on the minds of the Jews, and even on surrounding nations, cannot have been in this place else I would have heard of it. What, do you require me to believe, as a great and miraculous fact, that which is even more extraordinary than the passing of the Red Sea, and which, however, instead of being the national song of the Israelites, is not attracting the least attention, nor exciting the least inquiry? It is surely a sublime dream that you are introducing to interpret this passage of our prophets.

But, my brethren, if this minister of Queen Candace, when at the city of Jerusalem, heard any narration of the circumstances of the times; if he heard what the high priest and the rulers had lately done, and what a new party were determined to establish; if he heard that both parties appealed to facts and to scripture, he could scarce fail, if met near the city of Jerusalem, to be either thinking on these things, or to be reading the predictions respecting them.

The celebrated historian of "the decline and fall of the Roman empire," in his enmity to the christian religion, states, that he will pass over the supernatural evidences of it, and attend to the human causes which operated to its rapid diffusion and establishment among men. But though it may be granted that in general, in our day, converts are made to a religious life without particularly fixing their minds on the miracles of Christ, especially that of his resurrection; yet this could not be the case in the first instances of its triumph in the world. After converts became numerous in any country, and their manners exerted an influence over neighbors, inducing them to put on the same habits, we grant that those principles in human nature which copy generally the religion which is prevailing, would not be, in respect to the christian religion, without their effect; and that even in the first century many might be brought to embrace the religion of Christ from the holy lives and doctrines of the apostles, and the professedly pious habits of its converts.

But still we do not think that any man of judgment in our own time embraces our religion without a respect to its miraculous origin; and far less that any man of reflection could, in the first age of christianity, cast off his former religious sentiments, and become a disciple of the new religion, without adopting those miraculous traits which were the most prominent points of its history, and which, by men of judgment and feeling, could never, when the subject came to be mentioned, but summon upon themselves all their powers of reflection. When Peter and the rest of the apostles, on the day of Pentecost, stood arrayed under the miraculous appearance which descended from heaven upon them, and when they spake of the death and resurrection of Christ, had the converts, so numerous among their hearers, no respect to any thing but the zeal of the apostles, the sublime doctrine of immortality, the resurrection from the dead, and the promise of the forgiveness of all their sins? As Jews, the doctrine of immortality, of the resurrection, of the pardon of sin by the promises of God, had been a subject of perpetual exultation to them; and nothing but the naked miracle which addressed their eyes and ears, and the resurrection of Christ and his ascension into heaven, could operate to prick them to the heart, and to make them cry out, "What shall we do to be saved?" Infidels may suppose what they please about the truth of the history of the propagation of christianity; but if the facts respecting the conversion of men are not to be denied, from the very principles of human nature, they were not human arts and arguments that succeeded in making proselytes: but, howsoever we are to account for it, it was a belief in divine evidences which no man nor assemblage of men could of themselves promise to afford.—For let us draw near to this one man, this Ethiopian eunuch of intelligence and of enterprise.—The whole country where he has been, and through which he is passing, is convulsed by the events of the times; and after the explication of the passage which he is found reading, and the statement of the events of Jesus'

history, he believes with all his heart. What does he believe? The zeal of his teacher, and the common doctrines of his religion? No, he believes that the Messiah was cut off out of the land of the living, and that yet he sees his seed and prolongs his days. They are the miracles, the death, the resurrection, and ascension of Christ that he believes; and had not he believed all these, his heart, at the sight of the water, never would have suggested to him to make the solemn change in his religious profession which, in our text, is stated to be the source of his joy.

Indeed, the conduct of infidels never will permit us to believe, that any thing else than the deepest conviction of the truth of the miracles, in the history of Christ and of his apostles, could, in the first age of christianity, induce any man however little he might reflect, to enrol his name with sincerity among the followers of Christ. The infidels are continually talking against the miracles of our holy religion, insisting on the uniformity of the laws of nature; and the impossibility of a real interruption of these laws. And the enemies of this religion among the Jews and among the Gentiles could find no successful means of attacking it, but prejudices in favor of the ancient systems of their fathers, and the falsehood of the doctrine of Christ's resurrection. This point of his resurrection was the great bone of contention: a miraculous evidence which its friends could never leave behind them, could never put out of sight, on which alone they must risk the prosperity of their cause, and which with every opponent they must dispute. If they could have shut it up in neutrality; then men might speak about the mere human means that were in operation, but the disciples could no more do this, than they could tear the sun from the firmament; nor at that time could any man, even of the most moderate capacity, have turned, under the banners of his conscience, to the new religion, but as a sincere believer in all its miraculous history, and this as in opposition to those who were around him still of a different sentiment.

All disciples went on their way rejoicing; but it was from the deepest convictions of the miraculous fact of Christ's resurrection.

But, in the last place, We ask why is this occurrence so particularly noticed? This is for the most important ends. The names of individuals mentioned throughout the Acts of the Apostles, and in some other parts of revelation, present to us a view of the vast fabric of the church as she existed in the days of the apostles; for we see the extent of the society, in the number of those who managed her concerns. When the Europeans first sailed round Africa they were astonished to find the vast nation of Ethiopia possessed of the religion of Christ; but while indeed they might have received it from Egypt, it is highly probable that they date the entrance of the waters of life from the time of the return of this eunuch. Of the introduction of christianity into Africa we in scripture have no account. Yet Ethiopia must stretch out her hand to God; and when this eunuch passes through the messengers of the new covenant, the spirit hails him, and sends forward for her acceptance wisdom which the topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal. Egypt is to vow a vow and swear to the Lord of hosts; but one would be apt to think, that the apostles designed to let the prophecies adjust their own concerns; for they tread where the prophecies had scarcely ventured to prepare their way. Egypt is just once alluded to; but the allusion is like the prophet's cruise of oil to one who reflects upon it: we cannot exhaust it.—Apollon is stated to have come from Alexandria, the capital of Egypt. This man was mighty in the scriptures; and although he needed some little information about some of the concomitant parts which attended the main concerns in the history of Christ and of his apostles, yet he is esteemed by many superior to Paul himself. Why did he leave Africa, the place of his nativity, and the school of his education? Was the ministry of Christ so flourishing and abundant there, that they could spare with ease one of their most promising students? It would seem

that this was the case; for the christian history of Egypt and of the adjoining regions, soon comes forward in maturity of attainments, and rivals, if not excels, the triumphs of our religion in the most favored spots of the world.

The historian we alluded to, does more justice to the general and rapid spread of the gospel, than many of the warmest friends of christianity. He was too well acquainted with ancient history to err in respect to the facts on this head; but many individuals will make the apostles travel with innumerable assistants into the most populous cities of the world, where in many places a hundred numerous congregations might have been collected; and yet they will not concede that we ought to persuade ourselves that they gathered together in the utmost tide of their success more than one congregation. Even in the alarm excited at Ephesus for the general overthrow of idolatry in that uncommonly populous city and throughout Asia by the success of the apostles; yet it is believed, that not more than can be edified in one congregation had left idolatry and enrolled their names under the banners of the gospel. But the word church, in scripture, though sometimes applied to to a single congregation, is not equivalent to it, and generally means the whole converts to christianity in the region in question, however numerous they might be; because they had all one faith and one profession. Hence the word church, as in this passage, "he is head over all things to his church which is his body," at times comprehends the whole New Testament congregation of the Lord, dispersed far and wide as they were, and clustered in immense multitudes as in some cities took place.

There are two or three things which bring the religion of Christ before us as most extensively spread, and in many places closely planted in the days of the apostles. Paul, after he had been long in the ministry, and had had on his mind the care of the whole churches, yet does not seem, throughout all the lines of his intercourse, to have learned the christian settlements

which were making and gathering strength. Tyre, which now answers in its desolation wonderfully to the dress of the fisherman's nets which Isaiah put upon it, was however to be preserved till after the diffusion of the gospel, and with Rahab and Babylon, Philistia and Ethiopia, was to present sons to God; but when Paul came to it, he was unexpectedly greeted by the brethren whom he found there. It was especially prophetic ground, and for any thing that we can see, was left, like other such portions of the earth, to present to us the fact only of a rich harvest of converts to Christ.—Paul says that when he would take his journey into Spain, he would visit the disciples in Italy and in Rome; but why leave the populous regions of Asia, of Greece, and pay only a passing visit to the metropolis of the world? Why leave Egypt behind, the cradle of the sciences, and the scene of ancient renown? It is impossible to account for these things on any other supposition than that he saw a solid and permanent foundation for the prosperity of the religion of Christ already laid in all these countries, and that therefore he might leave them safely to others to water, whilst he himself passed on to a region in which he would be building on no other man's foundation.—But Rome, containing three millions of people, has it only one little society, which a single voice might edify and command? We see the flourishing state of the Italian churches in Paul's salutations to his fellow laborers in that country, in the sixteenth chapter of his epistle to the Romans. That chapter seems to have been written to proclaim to the world, at that time and in every future age, the wisdom of an intended journey into a distant and partly savage colony, by leaving every renowned and populous region, where there had been already plantings and waterings with wonderful success.

Yes, my brethren, wherever Ham's children were, they were gathered by the prophecies among the fulness of the gentiles; but as our Saviour was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, so his apostles seemed, under the providence of God,

to direct all their energies to the fulfilment in its order of the declaration, that Japheth should dwell in the tents of Shem. Hence as many colonies in Spain were from Africa, Paul can only speak of his journey thither; Egypt is only once alluded to; and Ethiopia has in revelation no more provision made for it, than this eunuch on whom a few moments of Christ's ministry has been bestowed, and then his Spirit calls off the minister. "And the Spirit caught away Philip, and he went on his way rejoicing."—This conversion, however, is an instance of the small mustard seed beginning to take root, and which, belonging to the kingdom of heaven, is, under the watering of Christ's prediction, to spread into a great tree. In it we see Ethiopia's ancient promise fulfilled for a rich and powerful increase. The expression is incidental; but it is connected with the illumination of a quarter of the world.

For while among the Jews and among the gentiles so many converts were made, in the very earliest periods of the propagation of our holy religion, to convince every future age that a conviction of the truth of the miracles and resurrection of Christ and the miracles of the apostles produced on human nature such a total change in so many thousands of individuals; we must state to you that this very nation to which the eunuch belonged comes to occupy afterwards a very important feature in the history of our world. Ethiopia and many other churches, scattered in the providence of God over the face of the earth, are evidences, and will be to the end of time, that God hath never acknowledged, in the actual state of things, for one moment, that there shall be, visible or invisible, any universal head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ alone. And when that spirit of joy in spreading the religion of Christ which now operates on the north, south, east, and west of Ethiopia, shall enter among that people, as in some degree it can scarcely fail to do, they may bear the scriptures to many surrounding nations of kindred languages; and remembering what was done of old, they may long keep on their way

rejoicing.—For these things are certain, that in the first age of christianity the ministers of Christ were flocking in every quarter; convinced, of the wonders of their religion, men of the most respectable characters and estimable judgment; attacked cities, countries, and individuals, and shook off the dust of their feet against only a very few; in the issue, by the belief of miracles, they turned the world upside down; and what they so successfully began, under God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, their successors, in every nation, should endeavor to carry, by the means in their hands, to the extremities of the earth. The word of God is called “glad tidings;” and its converts should always send it on its way rejoicing; while for themselves, each individual, in looking after the risen Saviour, should utter this beautiful language: “Whom having not seen we love; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” Amen

DISCOURSE XV.

GOD'S BLESSING TO HIS PEOPLE.

REVELATION 22:21. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*

THERE are, my brethren, as respecting the lives of individual persons, so particular periods in every important transaction, peculiarly impressive. The solemnity which marks the commencement of any great city which it is intended to build, or of any kingdom which is projected to be raised; the inscriptions which are engraven upon the first laid stone of the foundation of the first house of that city, and the royal ensigns which are first dedicated to the promised empire, fill the beholders with emotions that are deep and awful. We see in history the grandees of the nation assembled to behold the foundation of their capitol laid, and to bestow an august solemnity on the deed; and we see, with bended knee, the victorious army, or the strangers in the infant colony, kneeling around the regalia of their infant nation, and laying them up in custody as the pledges of their mutual fidelity, union, and independence. The end of great achievements kindles still more lively emotions. The palaces of kings are finished with shouts of exultation, wars are terminated by universal testimonies of joy, and the great designs of good men are finished, like that of the temple of Jerusalem, with shoutings, crying grace, grace, unto it.

This certainly proceeds from some principles in our nature inclined to produce such a conduct. For the Saviour of the world himself, when finishing the arduous and magnificent work of our salvation in regard to the procurement of the blessings which compose it, said, with solemn emotion, "It is finished;" the sun withdrew his shining, and the dead arose.

The relations of our text have led us into these reflections. These are the last words God will ever reveal to men; these are the copestone of the great building of Zion, as it is reared in perfection in revelation; these stop the mouths of the prophets of the living God; and these impress our minds with emotions of sublimity from the lapse of time, and the abundance of benediction which they contain.—"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

What, in the further prosecution of the discourse, we intend is, in the first place, to illustrate the solemn relations of this verse; secondly, to unfold the abundance of benediction which it contains; and, lastly, to conclude by an application.

We are first to illustrate the solemn relations of this verse. We observe, first, That these are the last words ever God will speak to men. When men were few, God frequently uttered his voice among them; and the divine instructions were committed as a treasury to man for the use of future ages. Men under the immediate guidance of the Holy Ghost illumed, in every age, the stage of human life, and corrected, with the authority of divine ambassadors, the abuses that prevailed; instructed how difficulties were to be overcome; and pointed out the path of duty to individuals, states, and nations. God's voice was always to be heard either immediately from the clouds, or where the divine communications could not be doubted, from the venerable lips of commissioned seers and prophets, accredited by miracles. But God had the full system of truth which unfolds the contents of the covenant of grace only to reveal; and while he displayed his sovereignty in selecting the state of human society to which to manifest his

will, and his wisdom in the choice of the early time when to reveal it, he hath impressed our minds with solemnity in reading this verse, which concludes the whole of the revelation of it, by the reflection—that God's voice shall never more be heard.

Individuals may be placed in situations where nothing but a heavenly voice could resolve their doubts and direct their course; nations may be so shaken and agitated, convulsed by internal divisions or terrified by external enemies, that a gleam of heavenly light to bestow direction would be a blessing to be obtained from no other quarter: but the visions and the prophecies are over. The command, benign and merciful, which led Noah to build the ark of his preservation from the deluge of waters that overwhelmed the whole world besides; the intimation which was no less mercifully given to Abraham than submissively received, to leave the idolatrous and destructive land of his nativity; the words which taught Isaac and Jacob and conducted the retreat of Lot; the divine communications made known to Moses, when God spake face to face with him; the knowledge from the urim and thummim on the breast of the high priest of the Jews; and God's instructing mankind in dreams, trances, and visions of the night, meet no longer the deluded or ignorant, the harrassed or afflicted individual, or the convulsed and expiring nation. We may throw our eye over the millions that now people our globe; we may survey the innumerable kingdoms of the heathen world, whose regions live with inhabitants; and we may imagine what superstition might be expelled, and what souls might be saved, by the erection of divine oracles and the immediate utterance of Jehovah's voice among them;—but the idea only heightens the solemnity of these words, which prevent the opening of such gates of divine instruction, at the same time that they seal up the very treasure of divine knowledge which, at its appointed period, is to accomplish this happy end.—Reflect upon the relations of this verse in regard to God's speaking to our world. It marks

the precise point when God, who spake for many ages to mankind, stops his voice; it hushes into silence the expectations of all men in all nations respecting further communications of knowledge from heaven; and it seals the very book which contains all that is necessary to be known for the present and eternal welfare of all men; and that very book too, which, at their respective times when it was ordained by God that they should receive it, will be delivered into their possession.

God has always, my brethren, hastened to have his works transferred to the ends for which they are destined, finished and consummated in every part. What wisdom in the arrangements of nature for the support, conveniency, and happiness of his sentient and intelligent creatures! But God hastened over the hours of the economy of creation; and interesting as it might be to see new species of plants springing from the soil, or new animals arising from the clay, the period of all such operations is past. So revelation was not deferred in its origin beyond the earliest period of a proper commencement, and in its consummation beyond the formation and arrangement of the materials which had to enter into the great building which he was constructing. God made all mines of gold and silver, of iron and copper, and of the minerals which support the useful arts in all their departments; but these were laid up in treasures in the very morning of creation; and just as the whole process was finishing, with the most of them in the crust of the globe; and so revelation, as soon as its elements were all prepared, tarried not, but came to a definite and joyful conclusion in the mellow and rich language of the subject of our discourse.

But we observe, secondly, That this verse completes revelation as a perfect system. Jehovah, who had a grand design of mercy to display, did not stop short, at these words, from the revelation of any truth that was necessary to be known in order to perfect the magnificent fabric of the revelation of his will. Some would detract from the merits of the grand building of revelation, and the distinguished impressions made by this verse, by uncharitable and impious surmises, that there are deficiencies in the interior of the noble work, and that these words

do not finish a perfect performance, but mark where the hand of the workman stopped. But where is there a want or a flaw in that structure, which, like the works of nature, is not indeed reared by the rules of human composition and art, but with a divine magnificence which is at once inimitable in stately grandeur and appearance, and in a singular adaptation to the needs and wants of all who will accept the benefit of it? They who have seen it may consider the lofty palace, which, when viewed at a distance, appears a confusion of broken casements, roofs, and turrets, but which, on a near approach, bespeaks itself finished by the hand of a master, and accommodated to entertain the state and to please the taste of a sovereign; and he will see a faint emblem of the sacred temple of divine truth, as it is designed and built, in perfection and magnificence, in the volume of inspiration; and reflecting on the shouts of joy which the sight of a fabric as incomparably more grand than any reared on earth, as the glorious and eternal truths of the gospel surpass cement and stones, he may thus acquire some idea of the solemn and impressive relations of our text.

Yes, God, in his eternal councils which arranged all events, great and small, that will ever take place, appointed the whole of the matter, instituted its order, and circumscribed the extent of revelation; and every part of the great whole made, like the successive steps of creation, its appearance at the appointed time, among its appropriate circumstances, and adjusted to its own peculiar relations, till the magnificent structure appeared completed, without a word wanting or a syllable to be added, by the words of this verse. The ignorance of sinners could not require another doctrine to be revealed, or the same to be presented in a more diversified aspect; their misery could not justify the wisdom of proclaiming another promise, or presenting with a more pointed edge the abundance of them that are promulgated; and their obedience could not desire to be set on a more sure foundation, or directed to a more glorious end, than what the explained connexion between the gospel and God's perfect law, written and defined in every point, and enforced by example, affords. The dead spring up anew by the incorruptible seed of

this word of life; the tender offspring are fed by the milk which it bestows, and are fostered by the nursing care which it exercises. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, but I will not forget thee; I have engraven thee on the palms of my hands, and thy walls are continually before me." The child of the new birth is reared to all the duties that are required from him, and to all the dignity of character which he should support. Difficulties are presented, but he overcomes their embarrassment and opposition. "I can do all things through him that strengtheneth me." Temptations assail him, but he sets at defiance their disguised allurements and their bewitching enticements. "With the temptation he will afford a way to escape." Enemies surround him, but he foils their power. "The Lord is on our side." The man advanced to full age stands the centre of approved goodness, and diffuses his uprightness in every direction where the light of his duty prescribes. He is humble, in the abodes of humility; patient, where this grace should particularly shine; and active, where there starts up a good cause; zealous in religion, and warm in his friendship to men. "The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth." But mark this man at the end of his days: he retreats from the world, like the setting sun in a cloudless sky and serene evening, clear and enlarged to our view, and shedding abroad over the face of nature, streams of light in all directions;—an evidence to the most inattentive, that he retires only from the view of men, and does not lose a single ray of his vigorous brightness. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth and forever; yea, saith the Spirit, for they shall rest from their labors, and their works shall follow them." But truth enjoins us to tell it; this new creature which the scripture thus forms, rears, establishes, and leads into the eternal world, enlarging in life and glory, may be multiplied into all the individuals that ever were, are, or shall be, true members of the church; and placing them in this united capacity, every single instance, and the whole built together, are prepared, cemented, and sent off the stage of time, with this question from God him-

self, to every plant in it, and to the whole sacred inclosure, "What could I have done more to my vineyard that I have not done?" The individual is formed, reared, and led into eternal glory, and the church of God is established, filled, and perfected, by the volume of inspiration exactly adapted, and no more, to the promotion of the glory of God, in the accomplishment of these two illustrious ends; and the solemn and concluding words of this exactly adapted and perfect system of revelation are, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

But thirdly, we observe, with a view to illustrate the solemn relations of this verse, That this verse forever stops the mouths of the prophets of the living God. When a society of men is about to be abolished, and never more is that character which they have long supported to utter another syllable in our world, the last words which are spoken by the last man in it derive peculiar solemnity from the occasion of their utterance. All connexions which have arisen before, and all events which the existence of their order may in the least influence among men to the end of time, rush in forcible remembrance or anticipation upon the mind. With a peculiar increase of emotions is this the case, when the order has been instituted by Jehovah himself; when it has lived for many generations; when it has been the conveyance of all the knowledge and felicity among men,—light to them here and glory to them hereafter. We cannot approach in our imagination the land where the prophets of the living God consulted his oracles, saw his visions, disclosed his secrets, and acted with a divinely delegated character on earth, without feeling a reverence, and having our minds impressed with the august and sacred character of the scenery amid which we are placed. On John's mind was impressed the solemnity which the consecrated scene of the prophets retiring with all the robes of their order, the form of their amazed countenances, and the power which executed in miraculous achievements God's will upon earth, could produce; on John's mind was impressed the solemnity which the anticipation of all events predicted by himself and preceding prophets could occasion, or which might fall out by

the influential relations of their words among unborn generations; and on John's mind was impressed the solemnity of standing in the eventful crisis between the states of the world, when all divine inspiration and inspired men retired from the face of the earth, and a new scene of things appeared—men left to themselves with the book of revelation consummated in their hand;—when he held his pen to transcribe this last portion of heaven's discoveries for the salvation of sinful men. The prophets, where are they now? Holy men of God of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; but is there a voice from such now ever to be heard? The vision and the prophecy are sealed.

Yes, my brethren, God never demonstrates his wisdom and his power by new acts of creative energy. Men must learn the invisible things of God by what is already made and fixed under laws which alter not. So the prophecies of revelation are prepared for the observation of men, and no power is permitted to interfere with them; they spread themselves over the face of the earth, and collect matter from particular nations, and by the rise and overthrow of particular societies, as well as the most cheering prospects in the faith and improvemets of mankind; but whether all these things shall be realized to do honor to the scriptures, and those holy men who wrote them and sprinkled them with so many predictions, is left as nakedly to the lineaments of truth in these declarations themselves, as the voice of nature is left to utter God's existence by marks which have continued since the morning of creation, as unvaryingly as is the cloudless countenance of the stars. Whosoever addeth to this book, to him shall be added the plagues which it contains.

Nor does this view of the subject hinder our utmost activity in the discharge of our christian duties for the purpose of spreading the gospel, any more than the intense application of philosophical research, which has in modern times been crowned with such wonderful success, interferes improperly with the lessons taught in the school of nature. If the prophecies of scripture be not trees of God's planting, they would soon wither, notwithstanding the waterings of men; but if he has planted

them, as christians we ought to copy something of the spirit of primitive innocency;—While Adam could not make a single tree of Paradise grow, he could be busy pruning and dressing it; and so, though our feeble hands can do nothing to make even a limb spring forth where God has not prepared a bud for it, we are yet to be active and assiduous for the very end of making the garden of God prosper. “For God hath established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children, that the generations to come might know them, even the children who should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children.” The prophets and seers have withdrawn; but we have their visions and prophecies, sealed, like the work of creation by the sabbath day, in these most solemn and suitable words: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”

Lastly, we observe, That these words impress our minds with emotions of solemnity, from the lapse of time and the abundance of appropriate benediction which they contain. Vast and glorious is the stupendous fabric of nature, and six days completed it; but the structure of revelation, having to adapt itself to the various wants and circumstances of successive generations, had to rise gradually, and was completed only at the termination of more than four thousand years after its foundation had been laid. The rude and beggarly elements appearing at first in the uncompounded substance of a single promise, increased and multiplied afterwards into the various forms of an imperfect dispensation, with the light, as in the original state of material nature, scattered through the whole, but affording an imperfect vision; and this continued to be the case till the sun of righteousness himself shone upon our world, and all the light being concentrated in him, the day broke forth in perfection after the revolution of many ages. “God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past to the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son.” Vast, however, as was the time which the manifestation of God’s will, in the wisdom of its adaptations, occupied; long as his oracles

continued to speak, and his prophets to awe men by the immediate revelation of his will, the period is long since past. Many multitudinous generations of those unborn ages to which the prophet looked forward, and by the sight of which his mind was filled with benevolence, and to which he bequeathed his parting benediction, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all, Amen," have appeared upon the current of time, sailed down the stream, and are gone on the ocean of eternity.—And our days are equally rapidly passing away.

Oh! my brethren, do you measure your time by the solemn relations of this verse? How long is it since the last time you read through the scriptures, and stopped, pausing, and praying, and blessing, all nations and ages of mankind that are yet to come, from a heart full and engaged in their interest, in the language of this appropriate benediction? Were not too many of your days spent in the time which was occupied in perusing from the beginning the sacred records, till you came to these concluding words? Consider, my young friends, what a flock of your sportive days have fallen behind, in the time which is necessarily employed in attending to that indispensable duty, which will not leave you, nor can be transferred from you, of reading through the sacred records; and while you mark your days by the lapse of your time, and learn to number them so as to apply your hearts to wisdom, double your vigor of application: For these words, while you read through the preceding pages, can never be too often made a resting place, and a point of solemn reflection; whether we consider the instruction you will have received, the view of the transitoriness of time that the reflection will present before you, or the divine sensations and wishes with which these last words themselves will fill you.—My aged parents, how often have you paused and reflected on your concluding the perusal of the contents of revelation? The more often you have done it, the more solemn does this verse, by its relations to your time and the abundance of blessing which it contains, become before you. Telling you that the more of your days are numbered, and that you are the nearer to the eternal world, I hope it has found you conscious of the character of the saint, whose

path is as the shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day; and that you are now, suppose this to be even the last time that you are to hear them, walking in those anticipations of blessedness which are thus expressed: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give unto me; and not to me only, but to all them who love his glorious appearing." —We grow up, my brethren, like the seeds of the trees which the wind, after a little, scatters over the face of the earth, some here, some there: but it matters not; the dews and the rain are the blessings of every region and of every clime. Which brings me to the second head of my method, which was,

Secondly, To unfold the abundance of benediction which my text contains. Surely there is something very full and very substantial in these words, with which the great God stops his mouth from speaking any more to the sons of men; with which he would finish his great system of evangelical communications; with which he would dismiss from our world the only rank of men to whom he had condescended to manifest himself; and with which he would mark such an important era of time. In the material creation we see him rising in each successive day's work to more and more exquisite displays of his omnipotent power and infinite wisdom. Chaos, a rude and undigested mass, first appears; forms afterwards assume their organization, life moving but irrational follows, and then last of all man, bearing the image of his Maker, erect in stature, comely in features, and endowed with rational faculties, crowns the whole work. Something very grand, then, must surely be comprised in these words, which are the last of the whole structure, and mark the perfection of revelation.

This verse comprises, like man, who is a compend of God's creation, organized matter and intelligent spirit, the whole of the substance of inspiration.

In the first place, This benediction reaches to all men to whom the scriptures come. The scriptures were revealed with the intent of offering life and salvation to all who receive them; and

correspondently to this design of theirs, these concluding words pour forth their blessing upon every one who is so happy as to lay hold upon them. We are not to consider these words as containing the fervent prayer and wishes of the last penman of revelation for the people alone who professed christianity in his own time, and on whom their blessing primarily rested; but we ought to contemplate this sacred penman walking among all the generations of mankind that have received the gospel since his day; yea, visiting in their respective nations all races of his christian brethren, that have been, are, or will be, to the end of time; and saying, with the proffered system of perfected revelation in his hand, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." He follows the streams of the prophecies which break out in the wildernesses of the gentiles, and goes from sea to sea, and from the rivers unto the ends of the earth; and he gathers their sons from far, and their daughters to be nursed at his side. He pours out his benediction among their kingdoms, till a little one becomes a thousand, and a strong one a great nation. He turns also to God's ancient people, who have been deserted of God and scattered among the nations; and seeing them visited after many days, he encourages them, as well as the gentiles, by the appropriate benediction of our text. To this view he is influenced, not by his own affections merely as gathered upon the prospect, but by the light of the Spirit which shines around him from the innumerable passages of the Old Testament which present Christ a covenant of the people and a light to the gentiles. For his heart swells with the thought, that though the Jews crucified the Prince of life, and exclaimed, "We have Abraham to our Father, and we are Moses' children," yet the world are never to put on the circumcision of Abraham, nor the ceremonies of Moses. It is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that suits to the future improvements of mankind; which aspires after universal dominion, and which will ultimately command it. Laying hold upon the borders, then, of the universal empire of his exalted master, and remembering that his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, he looks on the high and the low, on the rich and the poor, in their successive generations; and as he

looks he pours, like Aaron's oil that flowed to the skirts of his garments, his benediction over all of them.

But we observe here, in the second place, That as this benediction reaches to all christians, in all ages and nations, so it bestows all the blessings which the supernatural scheme of God's salvation of sinful man infolds. Who can lay open the import of the word grace here? God himself began the work, and he was four thousand years before he finished it. Surely the matter of this benediction is surpassing human calculation or expression. Moses, their lawgiver, and David, the king of Israel, Isaiah, the evangelical prophet, and each of the apostles of our Saviour, may present portions of it; but since God himself spent age upon age in telling us of the substance of it, must we not ask, in unfolding this concluding and all-comprehensive benediction, who is sufficient for these things? Let a guilty sinner, who has defiled his way through life by a mournful course of impiety and profanity, of immorality and licentiousness, seek for an atonement for his sins, he will find it prepared and perfected in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let the polluted heart, whose affections, like as a foul and flooded fountain wells out impure waters, discharge every hateful abomination, pride, malice, envy, revenge, blasphemy, and every evil thing, ask for a laver in which to wash itself from all its defilement, the purifying fountain is opened, and will forever flow, in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Such, says the apostle, were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

But it may be asked, in order to perceive the abundance of the blessing contained in this benediction, what is the demerit of a single instance of that iniquity, all the guilt of which it thus cancels; and how hateful to the eye of holiness is a single stain of that corruption, the whole soul polluted with which it cleanses? That act of transgression which is the most naked of aggravations incorporates in its frame this perversion—a denial that God is just and righteous, and that he has a supreme prerogative over his creatures. Sin is not only virtually, but it is

explicitly a denial that God's glorious plans, by which he governs the universe, are equitable plans; a bold and daring assertion in the very face of Jehovah shining on his laws by his authority, that we will not be directed by them; that better rules of conduct than his law might be adopted; that we will assume opposite and independent methods of practice; and that we will act, in spite of him, just according to our own inclinations. Multiply this iniquitous deed, this impious and impotent attempt to set aside the government of the Almighty, into all the iniquitous thoughts which you have devised, the words of evil you have spoken, and the actions your hands have unhappily performed; and add to the sum the innumerable aggravations which attend many of the more enormous of your offences; and laying this mass of guilt beside that sink of corruption which is in the heart, learn hence the abundance of that grace which washes an individual whiter than the snow. And multiply this individual into all the tongues, people, and nations, upon whom the last prophet of God has here his eye, in all generations to the end of time; and you will perceive in some faint view the abundance of this concluding benediction of God's word, as it happily discovers itself in these two primary and distinguishing characters of it—the justification and sanctification of sinners.

But the plenitude of its benedictions has relations far more extended than these. That not an arrangement of circumstances can injure our state, that not an enemy can overcome us, and that no less than an entrance into the heavenly state is provided for us, are blessings which are comprehended in this valedictory benediction of revelation. Let the kingdoms of this world, with all the iron chains of persecution, and the deadly axe and block, unite with the temptations of Satan to stop the man who is under the influence of that grace which is the matter of this benediction; still we may as soon expect to see the waters return to their fountains, and the rain stopped in mid-air, and returning to the clouds, as we can expect that we can witness the man whose guilt is washed away by this grace, and who is under its sanctifying influences, endangered in his happy condition, or prevented from the attainment of his celestial possessions.

"For I am persuaded," says Paul, "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, is able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." By the ultimate effects of this grace, judgments issue in mercies, diseases in salutary medicines, hardships in opportunities of zeal and holiness, the bravery of numerous and powerful enemies in occasions of splendid victories, life possesses glorious enjoyments, and death is the gate into everlasting rest. "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, our inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal; for we know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." The latter end of Job was better than when he was the greatest man of the east; it was the furnace heated seven times hot, their steps in the midst of it with one like to the Son of Man, and the smell of fire not marking their garments, that gave renown to the three children; and we never feel more true amazement at the early disciples of Christ, than when we read that they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his sake. Said a virgin, whose beauty was inferior only to her piety, and her modesty to her faith, and who, in the time of the heathen persecutions, had been silent beside the scene of the execution of many of her brethren, but broke silence as she was called to the block, and waved then her white hand to the multitude, "This is a day of receiving crowns, and my head is about to be encircled with mine."

But we observe, lastly, with a view to unfold the abundance of benediction which this verse contains, That all this grace is bestowed with a reiterated affection. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." This last word of inspiration always returns upon the thoughts preceding, and repeats

in a single annunciation the whole mental reflections to which it relates,—so let them be. In all occurrences this is its import; but where has it such an emphasis as here? Here, as it is a word from God, it reviews and seals the whole of that revelation which unfolds the supernatural dispensation of his grace. As it is a word from the last of his prophets, it cements together and brings into one blessed possession the whole of the labors of his acknowledged brethren. And as it is a word from God's Spirit, influencing with groanings which cannot be uttered, a man, a christian, and a prophet, it desires with a twofold desire that the whole of the contents of God's everlasting covenant of grace, in the application of the very means which are appointed for the end, may be ours.—What a word is this Amen! This is a word which takes the mantle of the prophets, and spreads it with a double portion of affection over us, as the eye is turned to the last sight of inspired men, ascending in a whole cluster, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof.

I chose these words, my brethren, for our text to-day, the last of Revelation, because this is the last time that I am to address you; and because, as a minister of the sanctuary, I was unwilling that the word of God should not be presented by me, both as perfect, and as rich in its gracious communications.

The word of God, my brethren, is so perfect, in its adaptation to the great end for which it was revealed, that the Eternal, who continued for so many ages to aid it by miracles, and guard it by the hands of a particularly chosen people, might well throw it naked and alone upon the theatre of our world, like the globe which we inhabit, transferred from creating energy to the management of common providence. The sacred oracles are designed to be read by all; by the young and by the busy, by the illiterate, and by the rude of understanding, in the urgencies of life, and in the hours of distress; and they contain all the rules of duty, and all the blessings of privileges, so prepared and immediately adapted that they are nourishment to the very babes in Christ. But it was intended by the author of this revelation, that as our nature was pleased with variety and delighted with research, so an extensive field should be prepared for our labors;

and some parts should contain mines of precious materials which we should have patiently to open and dig, to arrive at our desired object. It was, moreover, contemplated that it should adapt itself to times, and seasons, and fellowships, when those ministers whom Jesus sends to preach the gospel to every creature will come to bless the sacrifice; and hence it contains depths which require a general knowledge of the history of the world in order to successfully sound them, intricacies of thought and language which enlightened criticism only can unfold, and mysteries which knowledge and science alone can adequately defend.

It is a puerile taste that finds fault with revelation because it borrows not, in the general form of its whole frame, and in its particular members, the exact symmetry which particular provincial compositions adopt; for the production that is to suit to all climes, and continents, and ages of the world, had at first to put on that perfection which, in the highest speculations of intellectual science, is absolutely supposed to be the most perfect in its kind—the form which is the most general in its application. The outside of the great works of God are never extremely comely. The whale is shapeless compared with many of the inhabitants of the deep; the elephant is far from excelling in proportions many of the quadrupeds; our beautiful cities, and the inclosures of civilization, are laid out by rules; but the world casts its mountains into groups or ranges, sometimes high and sometimes low, most carelessly thrown from its hand; its valleys sweep along as if accident had placed her foot in them; the rivers wind as if bewildered in their courses; and the ocean has not a regular border on any part of all the regions which it visits. Yes, no part of the system of God's works, when viewed on a great scale, appears at first sight perfect. The sun is irregular in his motions; the planets seem to move, to stand still, to return upon their path; the comets are wandering bodies which visit the blackness of darkness; the constellations sometimes gather the stars into clusters, leaving empty spaces, as it would seem to us, to the very borders of creation; but these things, to reflecting and scientific minds, only proclaim the absolute

perfection of the works of God. It was once supposed that in our solar system there are evidences of decay; but it has been demonstrated, that all the apparent imperfections which were observed are real excellencies, which proclaim the permanency and perpetuity, till their Maker shall alter them, of these works of his hand; and so revelation, my brethren, I wish to leave with you, in its adaptation to so many ends, ages, and purposes, under its broad but divine exterior; and as recommended by that principle of absolute suitableness to all intended ends which pervades this universe, and is seen by the mind which assiduously inquires after it.

As a steward of the mysteries of God, I wish to manage, in relation to you and myself, that benediction which is amongst our hands. In eternity God existed, and space had no births nor changes among children; but the Almighty created the heavens and the earth; and since they were created all things have been changing; there is nothing great or small which alters not. But whilst the Creator has placed us in a universe that changes, yet every thing returns into the habitation from which it set out. The history of the heavens is kept in periods, and that of our world in successive generations. But the individuals of the human family are each on a journey which admits of no returning, but keeps forward, like the vista among the stars, to the very borders of infinity. Each of us, then, my brethren, needs a blessing,—a blessing from the Creator of the universe, that he may be fitted for his high destiny.

That we should be separated for a little, that I should leave you here, and that you should see me take a step in the duties of the journey of life which bids adieu to kindred and acquaintances, is a matter, in the instances of many to be calculated on, and can be of little serious moment—because the time is short, and because in the providence of God this is the place of your duty and pilgrimage, but mine is far hence.

Oh! my brethren, many of you have been too little impressed with that vast prospect in the heavens, where many shall shine

as the stars in the firmament for ever and ever.—But my parting voice is not to complain.—I am going where God has a vineyard for me. My God, on me and on those to whom you send me, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ descend. My brethren, you will bear me on the wings of your supplication to the throne of the Eternal, and pray that the word of God may have free course and be glorified in the ministrations of him who is separate from his brethren.

I have no energy, I have no efficacy; but I have a form of office; a form which sprung from the mind of the Creator of this universe; a form which the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, the faithful and true witness, upholds upon his servants; a form which the Eternal Spirit fills with all the energies of new life; and from this form, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, I communicate, on each and all of you, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.—Holy Three, water what is planted. Amen.

ERRATUM.

The reader will please to correct the following error, in page 162, fifth line from the foot: for "*in the sense*," read "*in this sense*."

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