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*James & James Inglis.*

*Aug. 5<sup>th</sup> 1820*

**SERMONS**

*J. W. Musgrave*

OF THE

**LATE DR. JAMES INGLIS,**

PASTOR OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN BALTIMORE;

WITH SOME OF HIS

**FORMS OF PRAYER.**

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**VOLUME I.**

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1820.

**DISTRICT OF MARYLAND, to wit:—**

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“Sermons of the Late Reverend Dr. James Inglis, Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Baltimore; with some of his Forms of Prayer.”

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PHILIP MOORE,

*Clerk of the District of Maryland:*



## PREFACE.

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IN offering the following Discourses to the publick, it may be proper to observe, that, never having been corrected for the press by the author, they must, necessarily, appear in a less finished form than if prepared for publication by his own hand; and, it is hoped, that this observation will suffice to insure for them a candid and liberal reception.

In the selection of Sermons for the present volume, great pains have been taken so to vary the subjects, as to render them interesting and useful to all denominations of Christians. The pious reader will find the leading truths of religion, both doctrinal and preceptive, so far as they are treated in these Discourses, ably and satisfactorily elucidated.

The *Forms of Prayer*, which, in compliance with the request of a number of the author's friends, are subjoined to the Sermons, are a few of a collection which he prepared and used at an early period of his ministry. For many years before his death, his prayers were entirely extemporaneous.

There is still a large collection of Sermons and Lectures, of which one, two, or more volumes, as circumstances permit, will be published as soon as it shall be deemed expedient.

# INDEX.

---

SERMON I.—CHRIST, OUR LIFE.—1 John, v. 12.—“ <i>He that hath the Son, hath life.</i> ” - - - - -	9
SERMON II.—CHRIST CRUCIFIED.—THE CHRISTIAN PASTOR’S MOTTO.—1 Cor. ii. 2.—“ <i>For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.</i> ” - - - - -	22
SERMON III.—FUNERAL SERMON.†—1 Thess. i. 13.—“ <i>But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope.</i> ” - - - - -	35
SERMON IV.—ON FAITH—As a purifier of the heart.—Acts, xv. 9.—“ <i>Purifying their hearts by faith.</i> ” - - - - -	47
SERMON V.—THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION.—Luke, x. 42.—“ <i>One thing is needful.</i> ” - - - - -	61
SERMON VI.—FAMILY RELIGION.—Acts, x. 12.—“ <i>There was a certain man in Cesaria, called Cornelius, a centurian of the band called the Italian band, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.</i> ” - - - - -	75
SERMON VII.—THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST.—John, i. 1.—“ <i>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.</i> ” - - - - -	84
SERMON VIII.—THE SUBJECT CONTINUED.—John, i. 1.—“ <i>In the beginning,</i> ” &c. - - - - -	93
SERMON IX.—NATURAL AND REVEALED RELIGION.—Rom. i. 20.—“ <i>The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and God-head.</i> ” - - - - -	101
SERMON X.—WORLDLY-MINDEDNESS.—Inimical to the reception of Sacred Truth.—Gen. xix. 14.—“ <i>And Lot went out and spake unto his sons-in-law which married his daughters, and said up, get ye out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city. But he seemed us one that mocked unto his sons-in-law.</i> ” - - - - -	113
SERMON XI.—ON INCONSIDERATION—As chargeable against the people of God.—Isaiah, i. 3.—“ <i>My people doth not consider.</i> ” - - - - -	125
SERMON XII.—ON INCONSIDERATION—As chargeable against the merely nominal Christian.—Isaiah, i. 3.—“ <i>My people doth not consider.</i> ” - - - - -	133

\* First Sermon after the author’s Ordination.

† Occasioned by the death of the late Dr. Allison, first Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Baltimore.

SERMON XIII.—THE LAST SUBJECT CONTINUED.—Isaiah, i. 3.—“ <i>My people,</i> ” &c.	141
SERMON XIV.—ON DEVOTION—as including the reading and hearing of the Word of God—Meditation—Prayer—Praise—and attendance on ritual ordinances.—A Sacramental Discourse.—Psalm, lxxiii. 28.—“ <i>It is good for me to draw near to God.</i> ”	153
SERMON XV.—ON DEATH.—Job, xvii. 11.—“ <i>My days are past, my purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart.</i> ”	169
SERMON XVI.—THE DISPENSATIONS OF GOD VINDICATED.—Isaiah, v. 4.—“ <i>What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?</i> ”	179
SERMON XVII.—PREPARATION SERMON.—Mark, xv. 34.—“ <i>And at the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama-sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, my God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?</i> ”	187
SERMON XVIII.—THE DEATH OF CHRIST.—A Sacramental Discourse.—Mark, xv. 37.—“ <i>And Jesus cried with a loud voice and gave up the Ghost.</i> ”	197
SERMON XIX.—THE UNSATISFYING NATURE OF SUBLUNARY ENJOYMENTS.—Eccles. i. 2.—“ <i>Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; vanity of vanities, all is vanity.</i> ”	207
SERMON XX.—THE ETERNITY OF GOD.—Psalm, xc. 2.—“ <i>From everlasting to everlasting thou art God.</i> ”	217
SERMON XXI.—THE ATONEMENT.—I Peter, iii. 18.—“ <i>Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.</i> ”	227
SERMON XXII.—THE FEAR OF MAN SUBORDINATE TO THE FEAR OF GOD.—St. Matt. x. 28.—“ <i>Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.</i> ”	241
SERMON XXIII.—THE CAUSES OF INCONSTANCY IN RELIGION.—Gal. v. 7.—“ <i>Ye did run well; who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth?</i> ”	251
SERMON XXIV.—THE SUBJECT CONTINUED.—Gal. v. 7.—“ <i>Ye did run well,</i> ” &c.	261
SERMON XXV.—THE MEANS BY WHICH INCONSTANCY IN RELIGION MAY BE PREVENTED.—Gal. v. 7.—“ <i>Ye did run well,</i> ” &c.	271
SERMON XXVI.—THE VARIOUS WAYS IN WHICH MEN GRIEVE THE HOLY SPIRIT.—Eph. iv. 30.—“ <i>And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.</i> ”	281

- SERMON XXVII.—GRATITUDE, PECULIARLY INCUMBENT ON CHRISTIANS.—St. Luke, xvii. 15. 16.—*“And one of them when he saw he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks; and he was a Samaritan.”* - - - - - 289
- SERMON XXVIII.—THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD.—Eph. i. 11.—*“In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”* - - - - - 297
- SERMON XXIX.—CONFIDENCE IN THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD RECOMMENDED.—Matt. vi. 34.—*“Take, therefore, no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.”* - - - - - 309
- SERMON XXX.—THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.—Luke, xxiv. 34.—*“The Lord is risen indeed.”* - - - - - 319
- SERMON XXXI.—THE SUBJECT CONTINUED.—Luke, xxiv. 34.—*“The Lord is risen indeed.”* - - - - - 329
- SERMON XXXII.—THE CHARACTER AND OPERATIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.—John, xiv. 16. 17.—*“I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of Truth.”* - - - - - 339
- SERMON XXXIII.—THE QUALITIES ESSENTIAL TO DEVOTION, AND THE ADVANTAGES RESULTING FROM IT.—James, iv. 8.—*“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.”* 353
- SERMON XXXIV.—UNIVERSAL PRAISE.—Psalm cl.—*“Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in the firmament of his power; praise him for his mighty acts; praise him according to his excellent greatness; praise him with the sound of the trumpet; praise him with the psaltery and harp; praise him with the timbral and dance; praise him with stringed instruments and organs; praise him upon the loud cymbals; praise him upon the high-sounding cymbals; let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord.”* - - - - - 365
- FORMS OF PRAYER. - - - - - 377

# SERMONS

BY THE

LATE REV. JAMES INGLIS.

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## SERMON 1.

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CHRIST, OUR LIFE.

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1 JOHN, v. 12.

*“He that hath the Son, hath the life.”*

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WHEN that fatal act was perpetrated by which our race incurred the displeasure of heaven, death erected his throne. At that moment the decree went forth which numbered every child of Adam among his subjects, and put into his hands an iron sceptre to minister to the justice of God. His dominion embraces both the natural and moral worlds. Every where we trace his footsteps. At his touch, beauty withers; strength is unnerved; and the proudest monuments of human glory vanish like a vision. If we follow him into the spiritual department of his empire, what desolations do we not behold! All the ravages which mark the progress of mortals to conquest and power, are but faint emblems of the ruins of the soul. Where is Piety?—Where is Charity?—Where is Primeval Integrity? Is this the being formed in the divine likeness, with an understanding to know, and a heart to love God and virtue? It is—but ah! how changed.

Man is fallen from his high estate; his sins are at once the evidence and the reward of his defection. They form the very sting of death. They give edge to his sword, and barb his arrow's point. Without them, his stroke would be innoxious. For this our heart is faint; for these things our eyes are dim; "because the enemy prevailed, and the destroyer is among the works of God."\* We see his operations in the gradual decay of our bodies; we feel his chilling touch upon our hearts, weakening our strength in the way; repressing the flight of devotion; extinguishing the fire of love; inspiring a servile fear where the reverential confidence of the child should predominate, and compelling us to evil, even when we would do good. Seeing these things, feeling these things, we exclaim, "O wretched men that we are, who shall deliver us from the body of this death."† The answer to this anxious and most impressive question is near us, even in our mouths. "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son;" therefore, "He that hath the Son, hath life." Let us seriously apply ourselves to meditate upon that life which the atoning merits of Christ have procured for those who believe in him. Corresponding with those evils in which death involves us, the loss of innocence—the corruption of the heart—the distresses of this world, and the torments of the next—are the consolations to be derived from this sacred oracle, "He that hath the son, hath life." Contemplate the blessing it announces as an assemblage of all those traits of mercy which distinguish the redemption of a guilty world. Contemplate it more particularly under three characters; the remission of your sins; the renovation of your nature; your final resurrection to heaven and immortality.

"He that hath the son, hath life," because his sins are forgiven.

There is no truth more evident than this, that God is a holy, and man an unholy being. Reason, conscience, and

\* Lam. i. xvi. 5, 17. † Rom. vii. 24.



faith combine their testimony in support of this truth. If we look round upon the world, we perceive the sanctity of God in the dispensations of his providence. We behold him ever active in punishing those disorders which insult his moral government; at one time visiting the iniquities of individuals with the rod of justice, and casting the bloody and deceitful man into the pit which he had digged for the righteous; at another, desolating whole nations by the scourge of war, by pestilence, or by famine, and sweeping them from the earth with the besom of destruction. These awful events proclaim the divine holiness not more loudly than human guilt. God does not willingly afflict the children of men. Mercy is his delight, and judgment his strange work.—Every act of severity which signalizes his government, is an execution of that sentence of death which constitutes the wages of sin. It was probably the contrast which common observation must have occasioned between the sanctity of the divine nature, and the vices of men, that led some among the heathens to suspect that our race is in a lapsed state. No sentiment was more common with many of their moralists than that of the imperfection of human virtue. Most, if not all, of the religious institutions which have obtained in the world, pre-suppose equally the existence of impurity in the votary, and purity in the object of adoration. Hence, the altar and the victim—hence, the incense and the ablation.

If we have recourse to conscience, it will tell us the same unwelcome truth. We might challenge the world to produce that man who can lay his hand upon his heart, and in the presence of HIM who searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins, declare himself unconscious of a fault. But if conscience convinces us of sin, what is this but to teach us also the sanctity of that Being, whose commandments we have transgressed? Here is her office; in this consists her power. Reason and conscience, therefore, concur in their evidence. But it is in the school of inspiration that we are to look for



the complete demonstration of the matter. The everlasting God—the Lord—the Creator of the ends of the earth—in whose sight the heavens are unclean, hath proclaimed himself of purer eyes than to behold evil. He will by no means clear the guilty; he will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him; that is, of all sinners. The exhibition which he so frequently offers of this most illustrious attribute, is more than once contrasted with human impurity. "Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts,"\* is the exclamation of one who was favoured with a vision of God, enthroned in the temple, and heard the loud shout of Holy! Holy! Holy! from the voices of the seraphim resounding through that sacred edifice. "Mine eye seeth thee," says Job, "Wherefore I abhor myself."† Wonder not, brethren, to hear such expressions from the lips of just men, for thus it is written, "There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not."‡ "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."§ "If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." Thus while Revelation teaches the sanctity of God, it publishes our impurity; while it asserts the divine justice, it exposes our guilt; while it proclaims, in language that cannot be misunderstood, the existence and extent of moral evil or spiritual death, it precludes the vain hope of cancelling past offences by any supposable subsequent obedience. "Wherewithal then shall we come before the Lord, and bow ourselves before the high God?"¶ Canst thou, majesty of heaven, canst thou be just, and yet cancel the crimes which invite thy vengeance? Canst thou be just and yet reverse the sentence which dooms the ungodly to the horrors of eternal death? Momentous questions! but let us hear their an-

\* Isaiah, vi. 5. † Job, xlii. 5, 6. ‡ Eccl. vii. 20. § 1 John, i. 8. ¶ 1 John, i. 10.

swers. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life."\* When destruction and the terrors of hell encompassed us; when the ministering spirits that not long before had rejoiced in unison with the stars of the morning, to witness the creation of man, now hung in silent sorrow over the spectacle of his ruin; when the exterminating angel, prepared to execute the behest, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die;" in that moment a divine arm saved us. "Lo! I come," said the eternal Son of God, "in the volume of the decrees it is written of me, 'I come to do thy will, O God! Angel of death, who bearest the sword of my Father's justice, stay now thine hand, I come to redeem the world.'" In the fulness of time this august person was manifest in the flesh, and entered upon a life, every succeeding stage of which was marked with sufferings and sorrows. He was a wanderer in a world of his own creation; exposed to the damps of heaven, to hunger, and to poverty. He endured temptation, persecution, and the keenest wounds which malevolence could inflict. He was forsaken by the friends of his bosom. He was despised and rejected by those whom he came to save. And at length when the measure of human iniquity was completed, in the murder of this most innocent and holy being, he gave his soul an offering for sin, and died for the ungodly. Sublime condescension! Exalted humiliation! "Heaven wept, that man might smile! Heaven bled, that man might never die." But, praised be God, the cross and the tomb, although the most melancholy, are not the concluding circumstances which signalize the mediatorial function of our Redeemer. A nobler destiny awaited him. The splendour of a celestial triumph was in reserve for him. Avert your eyes, and behold him ascending the throne of his glory. If he died for our sins, he rose again for our justification, and liveth forever in a better world, to intercede for those who rejected him. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his

\* John, iii. 16.

Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."\* Here then, let conscience find repose. The tear which trembles in the eye of penitence, and the sigh which agitates her bosom, thou, O! merciful Jesus, wilt not forget, when from the golden altar, before the throne, thou offerest the pure incense of the prayers of thy redeemed!

"He that hath the Son, hath life," because his nature is renewed.

"Christ," we are told, "bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness."† And, "that he might purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works."‡ It became him, therefore, to employ means adequate to the end. We who receive the whole record of God, must believe that, upon the first defection of our race, the principle of spiritual life was extinguished, and man became "dead in trespasses and sins." From a metaphor so striking as that of *death* and so generally employed by the sacred writers in describing the human character in its fallen state, we learn that the reformation of the heart is as much beyond our natural ability, as the reanimation of the body. And may we not appeal to fact in illustration of this truth? Let history point to the happy moment, before the incarnation of Jesus, when the world, or any part of it, influenced by the writings and conferences of sages, persuaded by the charms of amiable example, or urged by the terrors of superstition, abjured its follies and its crimes: when early rectitude resumed its place: when piety, justice, purity, revived to be venerated and practised. Let her contradict the remark so often and so unanswerably made, that the annals of mankind are the annals of crime; and that every page of them teems with abominations. If, pursuing our illustration, we resort to the grand theatre of human action, the world around us, what do we see? We see multitudes even within the pale of the church and favoured with the external privileges of our re-

\* Rom. v. 10. †1 Peter, ii. 24. ‡ Titus, ii. 14.

ligion, practising vices which excite the scorn of the uneducated savage. We see multitudes wilfully closing their eyes against the light which encircles them, and abandoning the sublime truths of our holy faith for the doting fables of the infidel and the sophist.

Shall we seek for amendment from the sentiments of our own hearts? Alas! our own hearts condemn us. We feel that it is impossible for us without superiour aid, to sever the links of that eternal chain of darkness with which the corruption of nature hath bound us. But I will not enlarge.

It is enough that the word of God be accredited. There every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is described as being only evil, and that continually, and this very heart compared to stone. There, we are depicted as being insufficient of ourselves to think any good thing as of ourselves. "The carnal mind," says an Apostle, "is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed *can* be. So then," and it is an inference of his own, "they that are in the flesh *cannot* please God."\* So perverse is fallen human nature, that even the illustrious servant of Christ is necessitated to lament that the commandment which was ordained to life he found to be unto death; and the whole seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans furnishes a most instructive comment on this part of our subject. So far, then, from being capacitated, of ourselves, to attain the heights of virtue, as some have dreamed, the least attempt to amend our hearts and lives exceeds our ability: and to suppose otherwise is to suppose contrary to the truth of history, experience, and holy writ. Philosophy mistakes her province when she assumes the task of regenerating the depraved heart. As easily might she change the black hue of Ethiopia, or deprive the Leopard of his spots. Revelation itself, I would speak it with reverence, revelation itself, unassisted by the internal witness of a sanctified heart, is incompetent to the office. It is the prerogative of an all-wise

\* Rom. viii. 7. 8.

and all-merciful God to operate a change of such magnitude. The same divine person who saves us from guilt, saves us also from pollution. From the habitation of his holiness, where he reigns exalted far above all principality and power and might and dominion, he dispenses to his church the spirit of sanctification. "For we are the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which he hath before ordained that we should walk in them."\* It is the office of faith to purify the heart; and faith is one of the graces of that Eternal Spirit who hath descended into the abodes of mortality to deliver those who were "subject to bondage," and to quicken those who were "dead in trespasses and sins."

"He that hath the Son hath life;" because he obtains a happy resurrection to heaven and immortality.

Never does death wear a form so terrific, as when he approaches to sever the mysterious tie which connects the soul with the body. When we consider this awful event in all its circumstances, and especially in the view which it presents of the ruins of man, we cannot wonder that the most resolute mind loses its self possession. To close the eye in darkness, forgetting and forgotten—to behold no more the light of heaven or the innumerable glories of creation—to break those bonds which unite heart with heart—to hear the last accents and receive the last embrace of affection—to descend into the grave—to make up our abode with corruption and claim kindred with the worm—to suffer the dissolution of the body, while the immortal spirit launches upon a trackless ocean and penetrates into unknown regions—this it is which affects all men—and this it is to die. But are the fluctuations of suspense all that remains to those who have devoted their lives to heaven? Does the sod that conceals their mouldering reliques terminate the prospect which beguiled their pilgrimage through life? Shall the sun of righteousness, whose beams once conveyed to all their faculties light,

\*Eph. ii. 10.



warmth, and activity, never revisit them to scatter the night which closes over their silent dwelling? Brethren, extend your views beyond the short term of terrestrial existence, and behold the innumerable multitudes of ransomed saints celebrating their triumph over death and over hell. The hopes of heaven and the promises of Jesus, overcame their fears of death. "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."\* "I am the Resurrection and the Life," saith the Lord; "whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die."† "In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you. Because I live, you shall live also."‡ "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."§ This is the doctrine—these are the hopes; and these the promises which brighten the prospect of futurity. Under the influence of these, pious men in every age have seen the approach of death without concern: and you, believers in Jesus, you shall one day feel their sacred energy dispelling many of those poignant griefs which infest the chamber of death, and preparing you to resign the dearest joys of earth for the superior joys of heaven. The grave, to others the dreaded receptacle of corruption, shall present itself to you as the refuge of the unhappy. Once it was consecrated by the presence of your Lord and Master, whose steps you follow; and sacred in his sight is the dust of his servants. In this peaceful asylum you shall rest safe from the storms of time, and in the full assurance of a happy immortality. As God liveth, who hath revealed the glorious truth, that body which was once the residence of a regenerated soul, and the temple of the Holy Ghost, shall not be forever in ruins. For "the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and you shall be

\* Job, xix. 25. †John, xi. 25. ‡John, xiv. 2. 19. §1 Cor. xv. 22.

changed.”\* You shall leave in the grave, disease, pollution, sin, and sorrow. “That which was sown in corruption, shall be raised in incorruption; that which was sown in dishonour, shall be raised in glory; that which was sown in weakness, shall be raised in power; that which was sown a natural body, shall be raised a spiritual body.”† Yes; “there is a time appointed when the year of the redeemed shall come; when the everlasting morning shall dawn; when the voice of the Son of God shall pierce the caverns of the tomb; shall be heard over the dominions of the dead; shall reanimate the ashes of all that ever lived upon the earth; and raise a glorious and immortal army from the bosom of corruption.”‡ Whilst the rest of the world, whose sins are ripe for the just retribution of the Almighty, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the *second* death; those who have Christ, shall be received up to meet their Lord in the heavens. They shall live and reign with him forever in as high a state of glory as the human understanding can conceive. That renewal of their nature which was begun in this life, shall then be completed; and by the second Adam they shall be crowned with far greater felicity than they forfeited in the first. The curse of disobedience shall not poison the springs of their joy. Sin shall not retard them in their progress to perfection. Repentance shall have no office in that world where all is holy, harmless, and undefiled. “There shall be no more death—no more sorrow—no more pain—for the former things are passed away.” “Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope; for thou wilt not leave me to perish with the impenitent; thou wilt shew me the path of life; in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forever more.”|| The lapse of everlasting ages shall not diminish the duration of my felicity; for “the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”§ Visions of honour, that have so often

\*1 Cor. xv. 42. †1 Cor. xv. 42. ‡Logan’s sermons. ||Psalm, xvi. §Rom. vi. 23.



appalled the heart of unhappy man, where are you now? Before the cross of our Redeemer you vanish. Where now, O! Death, is thy sting? By his Almighty power who hath led captivity captive, thy sceptre is broken—thy throne subverted—and thy dominions shaken to their centre. “How hath the oppressor ceased! Is this the mighty one that made the earth to tremble; that did shake kingdoms; that made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners?”\* Hear, O heavens! and give ear, O earth! He who smote the people in wrath with a continual stroke; he who ruled the nations in anger; he who carried desolation through the works of God; is “swallowed up in victory”—his glory is departed—his empire is no more—“Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”†

As we are all candidates for immortality, there cannot be a more interesting question than that which the text naturally suggests: are *we* entitled to the character expressed in those inspired words, “He that hath the Son?” We can be at no loss to discover that to have the Son, in the sententious and energetic style of this Apostle, is to believe savingly in Jesus Christ. If God, in his providence, hath brought into the congregation of his people any to whom this character does not belong, they will not be offended, if we address a few words to them in all charity and brotherly kindness. Fellow-travellers with you through a valley of sorrows, we cannot be indifferent to your fate. It matters not as to the present question, whether, unrestrained by the checks of conscience, you avowedly reject all faith in revealed religion; or whether, which is more probable, you have a name to live while you are dead, and are to be ranked with that numerous class of men, whose religious belief is at best but speculative, and unproductive of the fruits that flourish in the soil of vital christianity. Your prospects in either case are alike gloomy. Undisguised infidelity, and

\* Isaiah, xiv. † 1 Cor, xv. 57.

unproductive faith, however the last may surpass the other in certain particulars which need not be noticed here, are equally foreign to that eternal life to which our text alludes. Future misery is your inevitable portion. And can you be happy in the anticipation of future misery? Can you be happy even under the surmise of which you cannot divest yourselves that you may be miserable hereafter? What constitutes the balm of existence? It is hope. Hope guides the wanderer through this world's wilderness, and as the darkness of the night increases, emits a brighter beam to illuminate his path. But what is your hope? It is even as the giving up of the ghost. After a life spent in toil and anxiety, or exhausted by the repetition of cloying pleasures; a life embittered by the pains and diseases of a dying body, and the pangs of an accusing conscience; death puts an end to all your expectations, and the clods of the valley cover you. Hope never dispels the shades of midnight which envelop the grave of the impenitent. The silence of that abode is interrupted only by the voice of the Archangel calling the dead to judgment. But what emotion, think you, will that signal excite in your breasts? Shall it be hope? Ah, no! At the sound of the last trumpet, despair commences his everlasting reign; and none who reject the counsel of God now; none who lightly esteem the mystery of the cross; none, but true believers, shall escape the retribution of despair. Do you mistrust this representation? "He that hath not the Son, hath not life." They are the words immediately following the text—the words of the venerable John. "He that believeth not, shall be damned."\*—They are the words of the Son of God.

But from a theme so melancholy, I turn with pleasure to congratulate the faithful disciples of the crucified Jesus.

Wisdom *will* be justified of her children. "He that hath the Son, hath life." Yours are the sceptres and the palms of Paradise. Let not fears agitate—let not doubts perplex

\* Mark, xvi. 16.

you. Know in whom you have trusted, and be persuaded that he is able to keep that which you have committed to him, till that day. Happy Christians! "Who shall lay any thing to your charge? It is God that justifieth. Who shall condemn you? It is Christ that died; yea, rather that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God; who also maketh intercession for you. Who shall separate you from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things you are more than conquerours through him that loved you."\* Exposed to the malignity of hell, to the temptations of the world, and to the remains of that body of death from which you are, in this state, but partially delivered; faithful memory will upbraid you with many an unguarded trespass, with many good deeds omitted, and many evil ones perpetrated. But be not disquieted or cast down. Let faith unfold the gates of the Temple, and shew you the Priest—the Altar—and the Holy Victim. Look forward Christians. A few more struggles, and your enemies perish: a few more storms, and the sun shall break forth: a few more clouds, and all will be serene forever. The day is fast approaching "when your warfare shall be accomplished; when sin and sorrow shall be no more; when the sackcloth of the penitent shall be exchanged for a robe of glory, and every tear become a gem in his crown; when sighs and groans shall give place to the hallelujahs of the blest, and faith shall be resolved into the vision of the Almighty."†

\* Rom. viii. 33, 34, 35, 37. † Bishop Horne.

## SERMON III.

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### CHRIST CRUCIFIED.\*

THE CHRISTIAN PASTOR'S MOTTO.

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1 CORINTHIANS, ii. 2.

*“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”*

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**T**HE celebrated orator of Athens, being on a certain occasion asked, what was the principal thing in his art? replied, “*action;*” being asked what was the next considerable, he again made answer “*action;*” being asked what possessed the third rank in importance, he persisted in the same reply, “*action.*”

In like manner, but with far greater justice, if I may be allowed to illustrate things *divine* by things *human*, and everlasting concerns by the pursuits of time, were a Christian pastor interrogated as to the end and aim of his ministrations, he would answer, that it ought to be “Christ crucified.” Were he asked to what object his views ought next to be directed, he would reply, “Christ crucified.” And were the same question put to him a third time, or as often as the inquirer might choose, he would still proclaim, “Christ crucified.”

If we offer the prayers of the church, it is on the altar of “Christ crucified.” If we preach the word, it is the foundation of “Christ crucified,” on which we build every instruction, moral, doctrinal, and experimental. If we dispense the holy sacraments, it is that we may set forth in them the

\* First Sermon after Ordination.

august spectacle of "Christ crucified." If we administer consolation to the children of sorrow, to the poor and the destitute, to the broken spirit, to the contrite heart, it is the blood mingled source of "Christ crucified," from which alone the streams of comfort are derived. "Christ crucified," is the all in all, the first and the last, the beginning and the ending of our public ministrations, and ought to be, of our private studies. Such must have been the sentiments of St. Paul, when he told the Corinthians that "he determined not to know any thing among them, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

As this great apostle was well skilled in the learning of his day, his determination cannot be interpreted in its literal acceptation. He does not mean that he sought to divest himself of the various knowledge which he had acquired. This would have been impossible, had he been so inclined; nor can we discover what good purpose it would have answered. We may suppose him paraphrasing his own text thus: "Whatever attainments I may have made in science, however agreeable the display of them might be to some; and notwithstanding that love of popular applause, which is too apt to obtrude itself upon the minds of public men, yet I have resolved to make no confused mixture of the things of God with the things of man; I am resolved to be silent on my attainments in the wisdom of the age; I have resolved to teach no other doctrine but that which is the power of God unto salvation, the doctrine of Jesus Christ; and to consult no other interest but that which involves your immortal concerns, the interest of Jesus Christ. Of Jesus Christ do I say? Nay; of Jesus Christ. *and him crucified*; the rock of offence to the Jew, and the object of contempt to the Gentile."

This was St. Paul's determination, my brethren; and, I doubt not, you feel that it was worthy the greatness of the man.

But that we may form the more judicious estimate of it,

and improve it to our greater benefit, let us see what those matters might be which he resolved not to know.

FIRST.—He resolved not to compliment the false taste of the Corinthians, by perverting the end of his ministry, and inculcating for doctrines, the commandments of men, and the systems of a vain science.

Corinth was a city of Greece, abounding, like its other cities, in learned men. Its inhabitants were curious and inquisitive; and before the planting of a Christian church among them, universally devoted to philosophical pursuits. Their philosophy, however, was superficial and variable; well characterized by our apostle elsewhere, as consisting in “oppositions of science falsely so called.” It was, in short, such a philosophy as we may expect to find among men left to the unassisted investigations of frail reason, or voluntarily closing their eyes against superior light. Such as it was, however, they were enamoured of its imaginary charms, and measured their opinions of other men by the attachment or the aversion which they discovered to their own favourite pursuit. Every new philosopher superseded those who had gone before him, in the admiration of this fickle people; and the flame of rivalry often burst forth between the schools of contemporary sages. Something of this disposition is observable in the divisions which arose among the converts whom St. Paul had formed into a church at Corinth. “It hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren,” says the apostle, “that there are contentions among you; every one of you saying, ‘I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.’”\*

Besides this, there were among the Corinthian converts, Jews, who contended for the Mosaic ceremonies, and by their superstitious observances, made the sacrifice of Christ of none effect.

Against all these empty conceits; this idle sophistry; this philosophy, so uncertain, so vain, and so useless; this su-

\*1 Cor. i. 11. 12.



perstition, pregnant with such anti-christian issues; the apostle puts himself in arms. He determines to give it no quarter; to know nothing of it; and, in all his sermons, his writings, his conferences, and his defences, to inculcate the truth, in its simplicity, of "Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Here he publishes the holy challenge: "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For, after that, in the wisdom of God, the world, by wisdom, knew not God; it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom, but we preach "Christ crucified," unto the Jews, a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God; because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."\*

SECOND.—St. Paul determined to shew no indulgence to the criminal pursuits of the people among whom he officiated. He obeyed the superiour impulse which warned him to cry aloud, and spare not. From the convenience of her situation for commerce, Corinth was among the most opulent of ancient cities. She was amply provided with the accommodations, the elegancies, and the superfluities of life. This, by a natural, or at least, a too common consequence, betrayed her citizens into luxury and impure vices; and such lengths did they proceed in sin, that they became infamous, even to a proverb. This epistle furnishes melancholy evidence that even of the converts to the Christian profession, many did not abjure their former propensities. Not to speak of that litigious spirit which led them, on every slight difference, to heathen tribunals. One of their members is stigmatized with the crime of incest; and many did eat and drink judgment to themselves, by profaning, through intemperance, the holy communion of Christ's body and blood.

\*1 Cor. i. 20.—25.



Practices, so far from comporting with the doctrine of "Jesus Christ, and him crucified," that they crucified the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame.

In this state of things, when conduct and principle were so much at variance, what should the apostle do? should he suffer them to continue in sin? or should he compromise matters, by allowing them to compound with duty, and to excuse violations of one statute, by obedience to another? or finally, should he lay his axe at the root, and by one stroke, cut down the tree of wickedness? He could not hesitate. He "determined not to know any thing, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." The cause of Christ suffered reproach from the crimes of those who avouched it. The person of Christ was wounded by those of his own household. The end for which Christ offered himself upon the cross, which was, that he might purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works, was defeated. Their own bodies, which Christ had consecrated by his spirit, as so many temples for himself, were defiled. This was the ground taken by the apostle, from which to convince the Corinthians of sin. This was the weapon which he grasped, and triumphantly used to break in pieces the power of corruption. He rested in no plea; he taught no doctrine; he consulted no interest, but "Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

THIRD.—St. Paul determined not to consult his own fame in the display of genius and eloquence. "And I, brethren," says he, "when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God." "And my speech, and my preaching, was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."\* But let us not conspire with ignorance, bigotry, and fanaticism, to mistake the apostle. Was he not eloquent? Yes. History, profane or sacred, names not the man possessed of more persuasive or commanding powers, than Paul of Tarsus. We cannot surely forget the day when the citizens of Lystra mistook him for

\* 1 Cor. ii. 1. 4.

Mercury, the idol god of eloquence. We cannot forget his numerous defences, and the honest arts which he employed to interest men in his cause. We cannot forget that Felix, on his tribunal, trembled before his venerable prisoner, when he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. Nor yet can we forget that compliment which the energy of the speaker extorted from his royal hearer; "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian;"\* or that noble answer, "I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." But let us not multiply words. The epistle which lies open before me furnishes abundant proof that Paul was an orator of the very first class. What could he mean then by telling this people that he came not to them with the excellency of speech? He meant, that he despised, and purposely avoided that artificial pomp and turgidity of address which constituted the fashionable eloquence of the times. He meant, that he would make no oblique attempts to work upon the prejudices of his hearers, and to enlist their passions, apart from the sober dictates of their understandings. He meant, that he would not disparage the christian cause; the noblest cause on which the sun of heaven ever shone; by pursuing such measures as are generally made to sustain and promote the worst of causes. In those days, and in those regions of mental and moral prostitution, eloquence had very little either of force or dignity. It was not the language of nature, of feeling, or of integrity. It was the laboured produce of mercenary artists; and more frequently employed to advance the interests of vice, than those of truth and goodness. The apostle himself has well described it; "the enticing words of man's wisdom." Justly did he spurn such "excellency of speech." The christian cause would have been injured, not promoted by it. That cause has, in itself, weight more than sufficient to command both assent and respect; and

\* Acts, xxvi. 28. 29.

where it fails to receive either, such failure proceeds from an evil which human art cannot remedy, which man's rhetoric cannot probe, "*an evil heart of unbelief.*" Instead of resorting to such helps, the apostle determined to repair to "Jesus Christ, and him crucified." He resolved to elevate the cross, and present a Saviour bleeding on it. This is the true eloquence of the sacred chair; the eloquence of feeling; the eloquence of sense; the eloquence to which every heart is accessible in the day of God's powerful working.

But he meant, further, that whatever good effects might result from his ministry, he did not make them a subject of glorying to himself; as if the excellency of his speech had produced them; or as if the enticing words of his own wisdom had convinced the minds and changed the hearts of the people. "I have planted," said he, "but God gave the increase." He rendered praise where praise was due, to the great name of the wonder-working God. He referred his success to the demonstration of the Spirit, and the resistless power of Heaven accompanying the instituted means of success; the exposition of the doctrine of "Jesus Christ and him crucified."

FOURTH.—St. Paul determined not to consult with flesh and blood; not to shrink from personal danger; not to indulge in ease and indolence when duty should summon him to activity, and to toil. For evidence of this, we need not look beyond his two epistles to the Corinthian believers. "Even unto this present hour," says he, for himself and his brethren in the primitive ministry, "we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; and labour, working with our hands; being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat; we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day."\* All this for the name of Jesus Christ, and him crucified! What diligence and activity did he display in the sacred cause!

\* 1 Cor. iv. 11. 12. 13.

“Though I be free from all men,” says he, “ye have I made myself servant unto all that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law: to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law: to the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak. I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel’s sake.”\* “Giving no offence in any thing, that thy ministry be not blamed: but in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things. O. ye Corinthians! our mouth is opened unto you; our heart is enlarged.”†—“Are they ministers of Christ?” exclaims the apostle, alluding to certain perverse and schismatical ecclesiastics; “are they ministers of Christ? I am more: In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews, five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the

\* 1 Cor. ix. 19.—23. † 2. Cor. vi. 3.—11.

wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides these things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." "Who is weak and I am not weak? who is offended and I burn not? If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern my infirmities. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forevermore, knoweth that I lie not."\* "and I will very gladly spend, and be spent for you; though ye more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved."†

Thus, my brethren, we have the sufferings, the diligence, and the zeal of Paul, narrated in the words of Paul. If we mistrust him in his own cause, let the author of the "Acts of the Apostles" be heard for him. We have only to open those sacred memoirs, to obtain a thorough conviction that Paul has not exaggerated in the story of his wrongs, his distresses, his dangers, his zeal, his faith, and his philanthropy. If it be asked, why he did, and why he suffered, all these things? the text gives his own answer; "I determined not to know any thing, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

From what has been said, we may obviously collect the duty of the christian pastor. I am sensible that there is no small difference between the time when St. Paul wrote his epistles, and that, in which we live; between the apostolical character andunctions, and the character and functions of the ordinary pastor; between the situation and circumstances of the people to whom the apostles ministered, and those of christian congregations in our day. The difference, however, may be magnified to an unwarrantable degree. Men, in all ages, have the same passions, and similar prejudices.

That evil hear of unbelief which opposed the gospel in its early period, still continues to wage the same war. Pride, avarice, ambition, luxury, sensuality, still maintain their empire over the unrenewed heart. A vain philosophy

\* 2. Cor. xi. 23.—31. † 2. Cor. xii. 15.



has not ceased to be conspicuous through every successive period of the history of civilized man. Nor is it now a less inveterate or less rancorous foe to the christian cause than in past ages.

The church too, is corrupted by false teachers. Jesus is betrayed by those who profess to glory in his name. Some would deprive him of his Deity. Others assail the tremendous mystery of his atonement. Some deny, and many weaken, the necessity of divine influences to regenerate the corrupt nature of man. And not a few appear to build their hopes of final acceptance on their personal virtues and dispositions, in disparagement of "Jesus Christ, and crucified."

But besides this laxity of religious principle, there are many things practised, inconsistent with gospel purity.

Against all these errors of doctrine and of deportment, it is incumbent on the Christian pastor to arm himself with the weapons of spiritual warfare. Surrounded by ~~fideli~~ sophistry and counterfeit Christianity, it is his part to know nothing, "save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Let him preach the word. Let him reprove for sin. Let him exhort to holiness. Let him exert himself to preserve the peace, unity, and purity of the church, whatever persecution or opposition he may experience on that account. Let him be faithful and assiduous in the exercise of every personal and pastoral duty, and endeavour, by his conversation, to adorn the profession of the gospel. If the head of the church shall vouchsafe to honour his ministry by the seal of success, let him not fail to acknowledge the demonstration of the spirit and power from on high. In a word, let him, though at an humble distance, walk in the footsteps of that great apostle who "determined not to know any thing, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

But the obligations of the ministry imply correlative duties on the part of Christian people. If that mind be in them, without which no man can be a true disciple of the

Son of God; they, too, will “determine not to know any thing, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” If they possess but a small portion of deference to the authority of this holy apostle, they will countenance no ministrations which have not for their object “Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” They will silence, by marked neglect, the clamorous disputations of heresy and schism. They will frown indignantly upon every attempt to pervert the truth, and adulterate the pure and simple religion of the gospel. They will receive, in charity, admonitions given in charity, and suffer with meekness, the word of exhortation, knowing that for every means of grace, and every season of Christian instruction and discipline, they will be made rigidly to account.

You will readily conceive that I have chosen to address you on this subject, my brethren, in consequence of the relation which a late solemn transaction has constituted between us. I have not the vanity and presumption to believe myself called either to perform the extent of St. Paul’s duty, or to encounter the severity of his trials, nor have I the weakness and rashness to ascribe Corinthian vices to you, my brethren. Yet I cannot but think it incumbent on every pastor, especially in the early stages of his ministry, to study apostolic example, and imitate apostolic practice, as far as circumstances shall permit, or make it necessary. When therefore, I review this discourse, when I weigh the full import of the apostle’s determination “not to know any thing, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified,” when I consider that by assuming among you the office to which an over-ruling providence hath called me, I have already implicitly made this determination mine; when I reflect that the vows of God are upon me, vows solemnly offered in your presence, my brethren, and in the presence of God—of Christ—and of the holy angels, and recorded in the eternal register of heaven; when I anticipate the day of “dread decision,” and in imagination hear the great God say to me, “Give an account of thy stewardship, and be no longer



steward, and tell me concerning the blood of the people among whom I appointed thee to minister," mixed sensations of zeal and diffidence overcome me.

Let us, my brethren, co-operate in the promotion of our spiritual concerns. Let us unite in determining "not to know any thing, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Let us supplicate the blessing of heaven upon the ministerial relation. Let me have your prayers, that he who perfects divine strength in human weakness, and glorifies himself by human infirmity, may grant to his young and unworthy servant, strength equal to his day; may qualify him for what he has called him to perform; may replenish him with all gifts and graces necessary for the pastoral office; may accompany his ministry with the unction of the spirit, and the irresistible power of grace; and own it as the instrument of converting sinners, and establishing and comforting saints.

And now, my brethren, to God's mercy I commend you. The grace of Christ be multiplied unto you. Jehovah bless you, and keep you. Jehovah make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you. Jehovah lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and give you peace.—AMEN.

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## PRAYER.

**ALMIGHTY** God! the giver of all good! who didst enable us, with one accord, to be in thy temple to serve thee this morning, graciously follow, with thy powerful benediction, thy word read and preached; the celebration of thy praises; and the supplications that have been offered thee. Be propitious to the sacred connection of pastor and people, recently established here. Grant us grace, that we may determine not to know any thing, "save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Give us strength equal to our day—quali-

fications commensurate with our duties—and that zeal for God, which is according to knowledge. And mercifully grant that on that awful day, to which we are all fast advancing, when an assembled world shall stand at thy bar, the pastors of this church, and their people, shall be evidence for each other that thy cause prospered amongst them.

God of our lives! enable us to rejoice in thee! God of our fathers! may we stay ourselves upon thee! Jehovah! in whom is everlasting strength, suffer us not to fall from thee! Teach us thy ways, and lead us in thy paths, for thy name's sake, O God! for thou art the God of our salvation!

Through the mediation of thy dear Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we beseech thee to hear and answer our petitions, and our souls shall glorify thee forever and ever.—AMEN.

## SERMON III.

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### FUNERAL SERMON.\*

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I. THESS. iv. xiii.

*“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope.”*

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**R**EGRET at the loss of those we love, is an emotion natural to all. There is a chord in every heart which vibrates at the touch of funeral sorrow. Like other affections, however, it must be controlled by religion. Excess, here, is as unwarrantable, as deficiency is reproachful. We have the true measure assigned, in the words of the text, if we give them their full and proper latitude. They teach us the sentiments with which we should be inspired, when called to survive those who are dear to us; those who have ever possessed our veneration, or on whom our souls rest with the fondness of attachment. The sorrow caused by their death our text does not condemn. But it distinguishes it, that it may be lawful, from hopeless grief. The emotion, in itself natural, circumstances render either innocent or criminal. It is innocent, when compatible with those bright anticipations which christianity allows and commands us to form. It is criminal when it assumes the dark hue of despair; when it is founded either on a principle of mistrust, or on a principle of unbelief.

*In the first place.*—Originating in a principle of mistrust of providence, this sorrow is criminal. Such is the nature

\*Occasioned by the death of the late Dr. ALLISON, first Pastor of the first Presbyterian Church in Baltimore.

of this world's connections, that they frequently centre in a single point. The interests, the rank and splendour of a family, depend on an individual.

A friend—a father—forms, unites, governs, and protects the whole. He expires; and all that can render life desirable; rank, pleasure, competence, are buried in his tomb. At this prospect, nature shudders; faith becomes obscure; and the soul, impressed with gloomy images, discerns her own destruction in the loss of her support, and loses her energy in the contemplation of approaching misery. Hence those impetuous movements; those piercing shrieks; resembling the lamentations of Rachel, “who would not be comforted because her children were not.” Hence those highly wrought representations of past felicity; those exaggerations of present suffering; those gloomy prognostications of future woe.

There can be no difficulty in pronouncing such sorrow criminal. When the loss of any temporal good excites these despondent sensations, there is the clearest evidence that it maintained the chief place in our affections. But the most innocent and commendable ties cease to be innocent and commendable, when they are drawn too close. To make any object whatever the centre of our felicity, is to seat it on the throne of Divinity; and convert it into an idol. Our religion admonishes us to make the Almighty the unrivalled object of our most ardent desire; our growing love; and firmest reliance. It is only in the life of the world to come that our union with God can be consummated; and therefore our religion forbids us to look for ultimate and supreme happiness in the present life. And were religion silent; reason would hold the same language. Reason would instruct us to form only mutable attachments for objects that change with the changes of time, and pass with the fleeting moments. Reason would teach us that they who “have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed

not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the passion of this world passeth away."\* Reason would say "put not your trust in princes, nor in the sons of men, in whom there is no help. Their breath goeth forth, they return to their earth; in that very day their thoughts perish."†

*In the second place.*—Originating in a principle of unbelief, this sorrow is criminal. It is no unusual thing for a man to make his own happiness the criterion by which to judge of another's. He who esteems life the greatest good, will be inclined to view the victim of death as an object of the tenderest compassion. He will regard death itself as the ruin of all that is great and good and fair. Had some untoward fortune stripped the deceased of his possessions; had he been deprived of external ease, or inward repose; the mourner would have commiserated his infelicity; but what bounds shall be set to lamentation, when death lays the axe at the root of earthly bliss, and levels the proudest hopes at a blow? My brethren, such grief comports not with the faith of christianity. You believe the soul immortal; you believe that in the moment of dissolution, she ascends to Heaven; and that holy angels who had encamped around her for her protection and defence, carry her to the bosom of God. You have known her to sigh and pant for the hour of deliverance; and yet when that hour arrives, your cries and your tears would seem to class her among unhappy spirits. Ah, how inconsistent! This soul was indeed an object of pity, when, treading the path of salvation, impending dangers threatened her every step; when participating the interests of the church universal, she saw that church invaded by corruption, and error, and fanaticism; when, exploring truth, she was opposed by the impenetrable veil of mystery; and aspiring to perfection, found it unattainable. But will you now pity her, when she basks in the blaze of the divine glory? When she stands on Mount Zion; when she dwells in the heavenly Jerusalem; surrounded by the spi: it;

\* 1 Cor. vii. 29.—31. † Psalm, cxlvi. 3. 4.



of the just; and consociated with the assembly of the first-born? Will you now pity her, when the spirit of God has pronounced "blessed are the dead who die in the Lord for they rest from their toils to everlasting?"

My brethren; accuse me not of preaching a harsh and unfeeling morality; in censuring the grief that flows to the memory of the dead. It is not the grief, it is the excess, which I censure. It is that ungovernable emotion, which regardless of the religious principle, incites us to act as if there were no hope beyond life; and no life beyond the grave. But there is a sorrow which is innocent and becoming; a sorrow which is founded either in tenderness, in self-consideration, or in the exercise of christian repentance.

FIRST.—That sorrow for the dead is innocent and becoming which is founded in tenderness. The heart may feel the privation of dear and accustomed intercourse without excluding the resources of religion. We may lament the pains and sufferings which our friends may have endured in their march through the wilderness, without harbouring a doubt that their toils are compensated by the possession of the promised land. This sorrowful emotion, so far from being criminal, is not more inseparable from the texture of the human soul than it is laudable in a religious view. When I see the lifeless remains of what was most cherished on earth—the friend of my early years—the father whose protecting arm defended me from every evil—the mother at whose breast I hung in helpless infancy—the wife of my bosom—the brother—the sister of my soul—borne from me on the funeral bier—it is no crime to recall the sweet though melancholy recollection of departed joys; the advice that guided me through difficulties; the care that instructed my mind with knowledge, and formed my heart to virtue. It is no crime to call up the days of former years when we took sweet council together; or to dwell on the last struggles of tenderness, and the efforts of expiring love. It was no crime in Joseph, when he arrived at the place where

the ashes of his father were destined to repose, to make Abel Mizraim re-echo the voice of filial sorrow. It was no crime in David, when, informed of the fate of his rebel son, he wept, while the palace resounded with the exclamation "O Absalom, my son, my son!" It was no crime when not long since a nation's tears bedewed the urn of an illustrious chief. Nor is it a crime in you, christians, to dedicate these moments to the memory of him, who was your friend, your guide, your brother, your father, and all in one, your Pastor.

SECONDLY.—That sorrow for the dead is innocent and becoming which is inspired by the consideration due to ourselves. At the first view of a dead person, it is natural to reflect that his fate must be ours; and that the gloomy path he has trodden, is "the way of all the earth." Natural, however, as is this reflection, and however universally made, it is too generally evanescent. How vague are the meditations—how superficial the regards—with which the man of levity attends the dead and dying! How innocent is he of self-application! Receiving the rule as general and co-extensive with the terms in which it is couched, that death is the allotment of all men, we must yet judge from his practice that he deems himself an exception; and because he now lives, thinks he will live forever! He hangs over the bed of languishing friendship—watches the approach of dissolution—closes the eye that never more shall beam lustrous affection on him—and joins the train that follows the inanimate reliques to the tomb where all that is admirable in the human form shall moulder in the dust. But how faint and feeble the impressions with which he returns—how soon forgotten the images of mortality, which vanish like the morning dream and leave no trace behind! how empty the sorrow that spends itself in repinings at what is lost, without admonishing him of a fate which cannot be far distant from himself!

Very different is the effect which the death of friends has

on the man of consideration. In imagination, he extends himself on their bier—he descends with them into the tomb—he attires himself in their vestments—he feels decay already commencing its operations, and corruption approaching to dissolve the fabric that was built but to be destroyed. In the destiny of the deceased he reads his own, and appropriates to himself the lesson of mortality.

**THIRDLY.**—Jesus Christ has expiated the guilt of believers; and yet death extends his empire over them equally with the wicked. Men, disposed to cavil, have formed from this an objection to the gospel of our salvation. The answer they usually receive is, that if death is a storm, it is yet a storm which wafts us into port, and expedites our passage to a happier state. But, it has been asked, why has not heaven conducted its children by an easier path? Death, after all that can be said, is formidable, and terrors lead on his approach. What pains—what toils—what struggles! What fluctuation and suspense precede that all conquering faith which enables the Christian to die with magnanimity! How rude the separations of the grave! How heart piercing the adieus of affection! No, my brethren, we cannot deny that, although death is a necessary, it is a violent remedy. It is a monument which God has erected of the severity of his justice; of that horror with which he turns from human crimes; and of that second and eternal death with which he will consume the impenitent, and avenge their unforsaken sins. The more exemplary the life of the deceased, the more affecting is the memento of his death. The more bright the graces of the expiring believer, the more signal the stroke of Almighty justice. Approach, sinner, and look into the uncovered grave. Dissolution has begun its office. In these cold mansions—this mouldering cell—thou seest a body once racked with disease, now yielding food to worms. Are these the reliques of one like thyself, sinner, who made a trade of wickedness, and declared hostilities against God? Or of a believer—a Christian—whose life was a pattern of

piety and virtue? Yes, this believer--this Christian--expires. Sprung from a man whose disobedience entailed a patrimony of maledictions on his posterity, he participates the universal destiny, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." What then, shall be thy condition, in whom sin predominates? If the righteous scarcely be saved, where-with shall the wicked appear? If the judgment of God begins in his own house--burns in his temple--strikes at his altar--what shall be the fate of those who obey not the gospel?

The death of persons thus worthy of our esteem and love, should awaken in us the fear of future retribution, and excite that grief which is necessarily connected with repentance. Sorrow for the dead therefore, originating in this principle, is innocent and becoming; and so far am I from wishing to repress it, that I would be grateful to God, could I make you feel all its force. I would carry you to the place of death where sleep the reliques of your friends. I would remove the sod that covers them, and expose the ruins of man. I would call on each to behold his wife--his child--his brother--his father. I would call on all to bend over the form of one who devoted the years of a long and honourable ministry to your salvation.

Could I so soon lose the impression of recent events Christians, the habiliments of grief by which I am surrounded, and the respectful solemnity visible in every countenance, would remind me of the particular object to which this service is consecrated. But a few days have elapsed since we were employed in performing the last offices for our very reverend and beloved father in Christ, whose memory be blest! No more is necessary to prove the veneration in which his character is held, than the unusual concourse of men of all denominations who attended him to his grave. That was the offering of general grief. This morning is devoted to sorrows peculiarly our own; sorrows, however, that hold no affinity to despondence, but harmonize with the

brightest hopes christianity can encourage. It is my consolation that I stand not here to eulogize a character which is appreciated by all; but to invite you to follow his example, that through faith and patience you may inherit the promises. To do justice to his merits, would indeed require an acquaintance of an earlier date; information more extensive; a judgment more matured by experience of human nature; and a tongue more eloquent than mine. Expect not, therefore, a detailed enumeration either of his personal virtues, or his ministerial furniture and excellencies. Of both, you are far more competent to form an estimation than I, to whom, unhappily for myself, he was unknown, except by general reputation, until disease had impaired his strength and arrested his publick functions.

He was a native of the state of Pennsylvania. The era of his birth is fixed in 1740. His early years discovered that vigour of mind which distinguished him in after life; and during the course of a liberal education, he afforded ample presages of the eminence to which heaven had destined him. In 1760, or 1761, he visited this place, and in about two or three years after, renewed his visit as a probationer for the office of the holy ministry. His labours being acceptable, he formed a congregation; officiating for some time at first in a small edifice, to not more, it is supposed, than six families. The numbers shortly increased to such a degree as to call for the erection of a new church; to which, at no long period after, an addition was made to accommodate the influx of worshippers. The augmentation of the society rendered it necessary, some years ago to erect the present building; which, while a propitious providence shall permit it to endure, shall be an honourable monument of the taste, industry, assiduity, and ministerial zeal of our deceased Pastor. None can wrest from him the title of our spiritual father, or refuse to acknowledge him as the founder, under God, of our religious establishment. at this moment one of the most respectable in the states of America. In vindicating



the rights of the presbyterian church against what he conceived to be the invasions of more favoured connections, he was firm and uncompromising. In the discharge of duties more immediately pastoral, he was exemplary. He watched and wept, he prayed and felt, for all: and where, upon retrospection, he apprehended that he might have been more faithful in any particular of ministerial obligation, his enlightened conscience evinced a tenderness of regret, which more than all other proofs, demonstrates the general integrity of his soul. In his pulpit compositions, he was chaste, correct, elegant, energetic. As circumstances required, they informed the mind—quickenened the fancy—or touched the springs of passion. He was particularly impressive on certain occasions; in the performance of funeral offices; in dispensing the sacraments; and, especially, in the service of the holy communion. In solemnizing the nuptial rite, the forms he employed were admirably calculated to inspire those present with the most exalted views of a relation on which too many cast but loose and superficial regards. In the deliberative assemblies of our church, he was distinguished for profundity of investigation—promptitude and vigour of decision. In the supreme ecclesiastical court, a body consisting of clerical and lay delegates, from the different presbyteries in the United States of America, where the force of ministerial talents and wisdom may be supposed to be concentrated, he had an ample theatre on which to display the distinguishing and combining powers of his mind. On that field, he stood among the foremost in the judgment of all—in the opinion of not a few; unrivalled. To close this very imperfect sketch of his publick character; he was orthodox, without possessing the asperity of sectarian bigotry; he was liberal, without subscribing to the fashionable indifference of the age, or assailing the eternal barriers between truth and falshood, rectitude and error. Such was the Pastor.

Alike eminent was the man. Let the tears of a wife, to whom, for the affectionate assiduity with which she attend-

ed him during a long and lingering malady, I am proud to pay this publick tribute of respectful admiration; let the tears of an only daughter, deprived of his example and instruction; let the tears of his domestics, whom, able as he was at once to command and conciliate, he had inspired at once with fear and with love; let the regrets of all whom he had ever honoured with his intimacy, describe to you the husband—the father—the master—the friend. In all the departments of life he was alive to the impulse of duty. Firm—incorrupt—undaunted—I deem myself warranted in applying to him that observation of the Earl of Morton at the grave of a celebrated Scottish reformer; “Here lies one who never feared the face of man.”

As dissolution approached, his wishes seemed to meet it. Some days previous to his decease, he intimated to the faithful and beloved partner of his sorrows, a fear that he might live to kill her by the fatigue of attending him; and he was frequently heard to express a desire to depart. More than once he exclaimed in an earnest and impressive manner, “My God!” laying a peculiar, and apparently, endearing emphasis on the first word of the exclamation. Pardon me, Christians, if I fondly undertake to supply the omission, and say, what I believe he would have said, “My God! why are thy chariots so long in coming?” At length, on the twenty first of August, 1802, between the hours of one and two, having himself closed his eyes and composed his features, with a radiant smile upon his countenance, and not a groan or a struggle to interrupt the awful stillness of death, he returned his spirit to the hands of Almighty God who gave it, and was delivered from the burthen of the flesh, and from sufferings very rarely equalled.

Such, Christians, was the life—such were the last moments, of our Pastor. He is gone; but his memory lives; and he, being dead, yet speaketh. Hear him then, Christians: It is the last time he ever will address you. My people, he says, forget me not, before I am cold in the grave.

The bonds which united us are holy. Lose not the recollection of them in the dissipations of the world, in the rounds of gaiety, and the avenues of pleasure, where man walketh in a vain shew. My people; sharp were my pains, and keen my sufferings; I am at rest. But pain and suffering may also be your portion. Death will certainly enrol you among his subjects. "All flesh is glass, and all the goodness thereof, as the flower of the field; that glass withereth, and that flower fadeth."\* "Consider your end and the measure of your days, that you may learn how frail you are."† My people, death is the wages of sin. It is sin that divides the parent from his child—the pastor from his flock. —It is sin that annuls the covenant of friendship, and severs the dearest ties of love. Sin no more. Repent—Believe—Purify your consciences from dead works to serve the living God—and triumph, with the apostle; "O Death! where is thy sting? O Grave! where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."‡ AMEN.

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## PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY and most merciful Father—with whom do live the souls of believers when the struggles of life are over, and death is swallowed up in victory; we render thee thanks as for all thy servants departed this life in thy faith and fear, so especially, for this thine eminent servant our Bishop and Pastor; beseeching thee to impress upon our minds the recollection of his Christian and social virtues; his public and private worth; to the end that by thy grace we may imitate him in all his excellencies. We thank thee for his deliverance from bodily pain and suffering, and for the good hopes we are warranted to entertain concerning his everlasting des-

\* Isaiah, xl. 6. 7. † Psalm, xxxix. 4. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 55.—57.

tiny; imploring of thy mercy to compensate his departure to his friends; his family; and his people; by lifting on us the light of thy countenance, and conferring on us thy favour which is life, and thy loving kindness which is better than life.

O! wean us from the world. By every instance of mortality, admonish us of the vanity of all things here, and raise our affection to that felicity which never departs; to that glory which never withers; and to that life which is immortal.

Accept these our thanksgivings, and grant these our petitions, for Jesus Christ's sake our only mediator and advocate.

Our Father who art in heaven; hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors; lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. **AMEN.**

## SERMON IV.

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### ON FAITH—AS A PURIFIER OF THE HEART.

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ACTS, xv. 9.

*“Purifying their hearts by Faith.”*

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WHEN the angel, commissioned to remove the suspicions which had arisen against the virgin mother in the mind of her betrothed husband, appeared unto him in a dream, he addressed him in these terms: “Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost; and she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name *Jesus*, for he shall save his people *from* their sins.”\* It is the peculiar glory of our religion that while other systems point their precepts and their doctrines to the regulation of exterior deportment, christianity dictates to the heart. Not content with forming its votaries to the practice of those splendid virtues which it is often difficult to distinguish from their counterfeits—not content with enjoining upon them to let their works shine before men that God may be glorified; the true religion professes to influence the internal springs of action. Its prophecies—its histories—its gospels—its epistles—all conspire to the same end, the reformation of the hidden man of the heart, and his deliverance from the servitude of sin. Whether we hear its voice amidst the thunders of Sinai, or on the mountain consecrated by the preaching of him who

\* Math. i. 20. 21.



spake as never man spake; whether we see it clothing the prophet's brow with terrors, or guiding the apostle's pen; this is its uniform testimony—the Paradise of God is accessible only to the pure in heart. But why detain you with vague eulogy? Purity of heart is of the essence of salvation.

Miserable my brethren, would have been our state, if, after having brought us thus far, and having revealed to us the nature of its requirements, the true religion had left us in ignorance respecting the means by which to meet them. Like its divine author, its work is perfect; nor will it relinquish its design before consummation. Accordingly, the text which has been read as the foundation of this exercise, together with many other passages of holy scripture, teaches us that *faith* is the happy means by which to attain *purity of heart*. “And God, which knoweth the hearts,” says St. Peter in the context, “bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, *purifying their hearts by faith.*”\* It is natural to ask; what is faith? Can it be that belief of revelation which we oppose to speculative infidelity? How comes it to pass, then, says one, that, among those who claim the Christian character, many are found, whose lives and conduct are as exceptionable as those of the professed unbeliever? If there is any truth in the maxim that men are to be judged by their actions, and that a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, surely it will not be pretended that such a faith will produce purity of heart. This is conceded: but we observe that, although the assent of the understanding to the genuineness and authenticity of revelation constitutes one species of faith, yet, if it proceeds no farther, it is not true Christian faith—it is not that faith which stands first on the list of graces, and is followed by hope and charity—it is not that faith of which St. Peter speaks in the text. Even the Devils are said to believe. But, when we are told that we are saved by faith; and that faith purifies the

\* Acts, xv. 8. 9.

heart; we are compelled to judge that this is not that faith, or at least that it extends much farther than that faith, which makes the devils tremble. Faith is in itself an equivocal expression, and is susceptible of as many interpretations as there are sources whence it arises—objects in which it terminates—properties which it possesses—acts which it exerts—effects which it produces. The question, therefore, returns; what is Christian faith? This question must be answered before we proceed to the main object of the present discourse.

With respect, then, to its origin, Christian faith is a grace of the spirit. With respect to its objects, it terminates in the being of God; the existence and official character of Jesus Christ; and in all those truths which support the systems of natural and revealed religion. With respect to its nature and properties, it forms the bond of union between Christ and the believer. With respect to its acts, which confer upon it a most peculiar distinction, it offers a personal and cordial reception to the divine mediator, and throws itself into his arms for justifying merits, sanctifying grace, and the recompense of eternal felicity. With respect to its effects; as it is the root of sanctification, or, to speak more accurately, as it is that principle which contains the elements of all holy desires and works; so in proportion as circumstances call forth its energy, it produces the lovely prints of piety and virtue. This is that faith of which we speak. This is that faith which alone denominates men Christians; because it corresponds with the genius of the Evangelical dispensation. This is that faith which constrains us to abjure our most beloved sins, and tread the world beneath our feet. “For what is the victory that overcometh the world? is it not our faith.”\*

How is this moral purification achieved? and with what propriety are effects so important attributed to faith? To answer this question is the principal object of the present

\* 1 John, v. 4.

discourse; in which it is proposed to illustrate and vindicate the position, that Christian faith purifies the heart.

It is a remark at once obvious and weighty, that sound principles are essential to right practice. But on no subject is this remark more pertinent than on that of religion. The characters of men are legible in the Deity who is the object of their adoration; in the precepts and doctrines which they affect to derive from him; in the rites and institutions which they consecrate to him; in the rewards which they implore, and the punishments which they deprecate. The objects, then, of Christian faith, or the truths in which it terminates, form one topick by which we illustrate and vindicate our position.

Permit me, my brethren, to call your attention to the first and noblest object of belief, the God whom you worship. Elevate your contemplations for a moment to the everlasting throne, and imagine yourselves in the celestial presence. What do you behold? A Deity—not such as corrupt nature and a vain philosophy characterize him; but such as his own most blessed book hath revealed him—a Deity, by the refulgence of whose glory, the splendours of the firmament are eclipsed—by whose power, the mountains are dissolved—by whose wrath, the earth is shaken to its centre—by whose wisdom, the policy of the wise is detected—in the eyes of whose purity, all things are comparatively polluted—before whose adorable sanctity, the angels of light are unholy—whose justice, when provoked by guilt, penetrate to the abyss and kindles the everlasting fires of retribution. Casting off the fear of this all holy and Almighty Deity, can you meditate the perpetration of deeds which stand condemned by his law? you believe that he is the source of virtue; and can you doubt that vice incurs his displeasure? Can you imagine that he regards with equal approbation the malignity of Shimei and the resigned forbearance of David? the affectionate fidelity of St. John and the black treason that lurked in the bosom of Judas? you be-

lieve that he is the author of your happiness—your protector—your father—and can you suffer that he should be paid by the ingratitude of those who are indebted to him for their existence—who are preserved in life by his unceasing bounties—and who rejoice beneath the favours of his propitious providence? you believe that every where and at all times, in your going out and coming in, your rising up and lying down, the immensity of the divine omnipresence encircles you; and can you sin under the immediate witness of God? you believe that the all-penetrating eye of the divine omniscience reads every half-formed thought, notes every sentiment and emotion that arises within you, and needs not that any should testify of you, because he knows what is in you; and can you, forgetting that your creator hath required the devotion of the heart, and hallowed it for his own temple, burn incense to vain imaginations? can you cherish pride, malice, impurity? My brethren, it is impossible that one who lives under a constant and lively impression of these truths; one who believes with his whole heart in the existence of a God such as has been described; in the immutability of his decrees; in the awful majesty of his justice; and in all those perfections with which his own sacred revelation has invested him, it is impossible that such a one should be other than a good and righteous man.

But there are other objects which offer themselves to the Christian's faith. He believes that Christ Jesus is appointed mediator between God and man. This article of his creed, involves the most interesting doctrines and most tremendous mysteries of our religion. The human race, fallen from a nobler and a happier state, and condemned to forfeit the privileges of innocence, excited the compassion of heaven; and the second person of the holy and incomprehensible trinity pledged himself for their redemption. Every step in the progress of this redemption; every circumstance of justice, of wisdom, and of grace, which distinguishes it; from its organization in the divine mind to its consummation in the final accomplishment of the purposes for which

it was instituted; affords an argument for purity of heart. On a field so immeasurable, we presume not to expatiate. We will confine ourselves to a single point; the mystery of the cross. Christians, when you contemplate this holy mystery, which most affects you, the atrocity of sin, that inflicted such unparalleled torments on the Son of God, or the compassion that induced him voluntarily to submit to them? which most excites your apprehensions, the horrors that envelop the divine victim suffering a vicarious punishment only, or the power of the everlasting judge when he shall arise to take vengeance on those who know him not, and obey not his gospel?

Whether you are among the number of those who maintain that a satisfaction was necessary, in order that the claims of divine justice might allow the remission of sin; or whether you choose to adopt that other opinion, which, denying the necessity, supports, however, the expediency of such a satisfaction; the consequence, as to the argument before us, will be nearly the same. On the latter supposition, you believe that Almighty God is possessed of such an infinite love of holiness, and such an inconceivable detestation of sin, that, although not impelled by necessity to exact an atonement, he has, nevertheless, seen fit to exact it, rather than suffer vice to escape unpunished. You believe that he has decreed the sacrifice of the cross merely as an expedient by which to remove the suspicion that sin is not execrable in his sight. And under these impressions can you flatter yourselves with the hope of impunity when you transgress his holy law? Can you go on to perpetrate crimes, when God has made such an illustrious display both of his will and his power to be the avenger of his guilt? But if you support the necessity of the satisfaction, the argument assumes additional strength. You believe that the disposition to maintain the rights and order of his moral government is so essential to the Deity, that he cannot, without renouncing his perfections, pardon the sinner, and not punish the sin; and can



you, notwithstanding this persuasion, neglect the cultivation of holiness? This would be to believe at one and the same time, that sin is infinitely abhorrent to the divine Being, and yet that he regards it with indifference. That the necessity of his holy nature impelled him to immolate his own eternal Son upon the altar of his justice, and yet that he is of a disposition so easy and indifferent, as to forgive those who despise the injunction; “Be ye holy, as I am holy;” and the admonition, “without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.”\*

But if the cross, by representing the atrocity of moral evil, and the severity of the divine justice, mortifies the impurity of the heart; it addresses also the ingenuous feelings. It touches the hidden springs of love and gratitude, and awakens the sleeping powers of generous affection. “The love of Christ constraineth us,” says the apostle; and you, Christians, if you contemplate in faith, this sublime mystery, you can testify that its irresistible, though secret influences, restrain from evil, and incite to the prosecution of a holy life. With this conviction, you would thus address the infatuated votary of sin. Call to mind as we have done the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth; the pains of his body and the anguish of his soul. Attend him in the various scenes of tribulation through which he passed. Follow him in imagination into the garden. See him nailed to the cross. Hear his departing groan—all nature sympathizing—and the dead and the living conspiring to celebrate the obsequies of a God. Recollect that every event of his sorrowful life was foreseen by him—that he saw the frailty of his friends, and the rage of his enemies—the garden which was to be consecrated by his tears and bloody agony—the tribunal of his judge—the scourge—the executioner—the cross; ignominy and death stood full in his view; he saw; he shrunk not from the awful undertaking; he closed his career of suffering in the grave, and gave himself a propitiation for us—

\* Heb. xii. 14.

for you—for the whole world; “that he might purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”\* In despite of all this love, which strikes the thrones of heaven with astonishment, go now and sin. Go, and pour contempt upon him who died to redeem you from contempt. Go, and assist the enraged populace to insult him in whose person all majesty centres. Go, trample on the grave where the angels of God worship, and the Son of God rests from his agonies. Impossible! if you are not devoid of every grateful sentiment—if you are not sold under impurity—from this moment the world will be crucified unto you, and you unto the world. From this moment, the idols you have served, shall flee from their falling shrines. From this moment, you shall die unto sin and live unto righteousness.

“Talk they of morals? O! thou bleeding Love!  
The grand morality is love of thee.”—YOUNG.

This, then, is one topick by which we illustrate and vindicate our position; “the objects of Christian faith.” Another is drawn from the nature of faith; and more especially from that property which it possesses of uniting the believer with Christ. It is by this union that we become personally interested in the benefits of his redemption, and the gifts and graces which, as mediator of the new covenant, he effuses upon his people.

In all those divine dispensations, which are denominated covenants, the Deity is revealed as transacting, not so much with a number of individuals severally considered, as with some one person who represents the rest. Thus, in the covenant of works, which was given to Adam, the whole of his numerous offspring were federally interested. And thus the new covenant is not, in strict propriety of speech, made with individual Christians, but with the head of the Church: “As in Adam all die; even so in Christ shall all be made

\* Tit. ii. 14.

alive."\* As in the transgression of Adam, all our race were reputed guilty; so, whoever are restored to heaven and immortality, owe it to their union with Christ, the source of saving influences. In the obedience, the sufferings, and the death, of the Son of God, he is to be regarded as the representative of his ransomed church. It is here that we recognize the condition of the covenant of grace; not in the imperfect works of the Christian; nor yet, to speak accurately, in his faith. Yes, if the gates of our Father's house shall ever open to receive his repentant children, we will not fail to ascribe it to you; bloody passion--agonizing death--infinite merits of our Redeemer! Nerveless be the tongue that would preach another gospel! "God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross!" But if we exclude faith from the honour of *procuring* our salvation, we neither diminish its necessity, nor weaken its efficacy. We assign to it, its peculiar province. We say that it is the mysterious tie by which God the Father has decreed to unite us with his Son. We say that the merits of the great sacrifice are, as it were, accumulated in an inexhaustible treasury, whence by the instrumentality of faith, we draw all these aids and supplies which are indispensable to the purification of the heart. These may be classed under two heads; justification, and the gift of the spirit.

Justification.--In vain do we endeavour to wash our hands in innocency, or to cultivate purity of heart, while that formidable sentence forever meets our eye; "Thou art weighed in the balance, and art found wanting." One sin unsatisfied, will frustrate all our attempts, and stamp disappointment upon all our efforts. The terrors of conscience are incompatible with the practice of holiness. The conviction that the displeasure of the offended Deity rests upon us, banishes every emotion that bears the impress of virtue. "If perfect love casteth out fear;"† perfect fear, also, casteth out love. But love is the distinguishing mark of Christian

\* 1 Cor. xv. 22. † John, iv. 18.

morality. Love is the end of the commandment. Love is the fulfilling of the law. The heart to which love is a stranger must be impure. Farther; in order that our services may meet the divine approbation, which is at once the test and the reward of virtue, it is previously necessary that our persons be accepted. "The Lord," as one remarks, "had respect unto Abel first, and afterwards to his offering." But the acceptance of the person is what constitutes justification, and is only applied to those who are in union with the Son of God.

The next benefit we mention which is derived from this union, is the gift of the holy spirit, in all his offices, and with his celestial train of graces. From the seat of his exaltation, at the right hand of the Everlasting Majesty, Jesus Christ regards in pity the imbecility of his people. "He knows their frame, he remembers that they are but dust."\* "For we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."† Taught by experience to sympathize with those who are called to withstand the assaults of earth and hell, he cannot leave them defenceless. He knows that, although to him, on whom the Almighty Spirit was poured without measure, the issue of that contest was victory; to them, unassisted by the communication of his strength, it is certain defeat. He calls to mind the promise which he made to his disciples, when, like a dying father in the midst of his family, he was employed in mitigating their sorrows, and preparing them for the approaching separation. "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you."‡ Believers in Christ, has he not fulfilled this promise? Has he not come to you? Who is it that helpeth your infirmities—that teacheth you what to pray for, and how to pray as you ought? Who is it that pours light upon the darkness of your nature—that gives you peace of conscience—that elevates your souls above the world, and inspires you with an equal

\* Psalms, ciii. 14. † Heb. iv. 15. ‡ John, xiv. 18.

contempt for its flatteries and its frowns? Who is it that makes you all-glorious within, by forming in your hearts the bright assemblage of his graces—faith—hope—charity—humility—heavenly-mindedness? Who is it that instructs your hands to war; that arms you against the conflicting powers within and around you; that makes you conquerors and more than conquerors? It is the spirit of Christ—the spirit of him that loved you, and to whom you are inseparably united—the spirit of the head communicated to the members—the spirit that perfects divine strength in human weakness—the spirit that vests you, we scruple not to say, with a delegated omnipotence. “I appoint unto you a kingdom;” said our Lord; “as my Father has appointed unto me.”\* “All things that the Father hath, are mine.” “Verily, verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.”† These passages imply the conveyance of no common powers to you brethren.—The name of Jesus has a charm, it seems, which Heaven cannot resist; and shall not carnal opposition perish? What is there that this sacred name cannot accomplish? Of old it filled a corrupt sanhedrim with consternation, and made princes tremble on their thrones. It quelled the rage of the elements; burst the cerements of the tomb; reanimated the ashes of the dead; put to flight devils, and called angels from heaven to minister to the church; and while there remains a sinner to be converted, or a saint to be preserved, the omnipotence of his august name shall be the salvation of both. Thus, the relation which subsists between Christ and the sincere disciple, is the fountain of inherent righteousness to the latter; and as faith constitutes the bond of that relation, or the medium by which the power and grace of the master are communicated to the disciple, it follows that faith purifies the heart. This, therefore, is another topick which illustrates and vindicates our position—the nature of faith.

\* Luke, xxii. 29. † John, xvi. 15. 23.



We offer a third which shall be the last, and on which we will be brief. It is founded in general observation, and in a fair comparison of the conduct of Christians with the principles of their religion. Here, however, we will not resort to the palace or the cottage. We will not present to you either the wealthy, the honourable, or the powerful, on the one hand; or, on the other, the poor and the abject. Our appeal is principally to those who are, in a measure, strangers to the difficulties and temptations which assail the two extremes of human condition. Those whom providence seldom calls to the display of the more celebrated virtues, but whom he at the same time exempts from the solicitations of the more atrocious and degrading sins. We exclude also from our view, the Christian abandoning ease and safety in his native land, "to make a voyage of philanthropy—a circumnavigation of charity—to dive into the depths of dungeons—to plunge into the infection of hospitals—to survey the mansions of sorrow and pain—to take the gauge and dimensions of misery, depression and contempt—to remember the forgotten—to attend to the neglected—to visit the forsaken—and to compare and collate the distresses of all men in all countries," that he might relieve some. Such a character is a phenomenon in the moral world which seems to be employed by the spirit of God to display to men the sublimity of Christian virtue, the power of his own holy operations, and the efficacy of that faith which worketh by love. But although we have a right to glory in the mystery of the cross that can work such a miracle of faith and practice, we content ourselves with paying this tribute of admiration, and proceed in our appeal. Who is it, then, that in the common walks of life, exhibits most of that temper and those habits which denominate men virtuous? Who is it that is most moderate in his desires; most exempt from irregularities; least subject to the dominion of passion; least enslaved to self-interest; least ambitious of honour; least covetous of riches; least devoted to sensual

pleasure? It is the believer in Christ. Who is it that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart? Who is it that is least addicted to backbiting, or injuring, or taking up a reproach against his neighbour? Who is it that most unfeignedly contemns a vile person and honours them that fear the Lord? Who is it that is most tenacious of his promise or his oath, even although the fulfilment of either should involve him in loss or danger? Who is it that is most benevolent; most merciful; most forgiving; most generous; most charitable; most ardent in his attachment to truth and holiness; most firm in his opposition to the dissipations and the vices of the age? It is the believer in Christ. Who is it that exhibits most of that noble spectacle, a rational creature bending in adoration before the throne of his creator? Who is it that is most assiduous in the performance of all the duties of publick and private devotion? That counts the sabbath of the Lord his delight, honourable and sacred? That contributes by his prayers and his active exertions to advance the kingdom of heaven? It is the believer in Christ. In a word; who is it that, through the whole course of moral and religious duty, approves himself most pure—most virtuous—most pious? Without doubt it is the believer in Christ. Not the Christian of rites and forms, whose belief is superficial and temporary only. Not the philosophick Christian, ambitious of applause, whose visions and theories often betray him at least into indolence and negligence. But the plain and sincere Christian, whose faith is an ever-abiding and ever-active principle; who asks no guide but the spirit; who desires no system but the gospel; who seeks no reward but the approbation of God. This is no figment of the imagination. Look around you, and be convinced that it is a reality.

Thus, we have attempted to illustrate and vindicate the position that Christian faith purifies the heart, by topicks drawn, first, from the objects of faith; second, from the nature of faith; third, from general observation, and a comparison of practice with principle.

We conclude, brethren, by exhorting you in all humility to “examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith.” It is a subject on which the human heart is too prone to deception. In the course of this exercise, we have had occasion to remark that the name of Christian and the character of a believer, are not unfrequently conferred on persons who know but very little of the holy religion of Jesus. And yet the test of true faith is no recondite matter. He who runs may read it, The most superficial mind may explore it. “Shew me thy faith without thy works,” says the apostle St. James, “and I will shew thee my faith by my works.” “Faith if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.”\* “Faith worketh by love.”† “*Faith purifieth the heart.*” This is the scriptural test. Let it be ours. And may the Eternal Spirit work in us that holiness, without which, no man shall see God, by implanting and cherishing in us that faith, without which it is impossible to please him.—AMEN.

\* James ii, 18. 17. † Gal. v. 6.

## SERMON V.

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### THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION.

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LUKE, X. 42.

*“One thing is needful.”*

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**R**ELIGION terminates and rests in God. Hence it is frequently called “the fear of the Lord.” Hence it is described as a habitual search after the divine Being; as a continued service offered to him. And hence, persons who are under its guidance and government are represented as “coming unto him,” and “obeying his commandments.”

Rendering to heaven what is exclusively and immediately its due, is doubtless, the most important constituent of religion. But we are under a multitude of obligations to mankind in our various connections with them. We owe much, also, to ourselves. The regular, faithful, and profitable discharge of what is thus incumbent on us, enters intimately into the notion of religion carried to its legitimate extent; in as much as without a reference to religion; without a respect to the great Being who is the object of religion, and from whom all moral obligation derives its sanction; man would be alike indifferent to the claims of heaven and earth: alike faithless to the ties by which they are bound to serve God, to love their neighbour, and to pursue their own essential interests. Religion, then, has but one object, and, in this respect, is “one thing.”

It is “one,” also, considered as a vital, or universally pervading and actuating principle. Let a person be under its influence, and that influence is sure to extend to every power

he possesses; to operate throughout the whole sphere of his moral existence. It is this principle of religion which enlarges the mind, enlightens and improves the conscience, bends the will to good and noble purposes, sublimates the affections, and renovates the heart. One in itself, this principle of religion effectuates union wherever it is permitted to have its perfect work. In the wide compass of human existence, all who own its sway form but one body of heaven compacted strength, vigour, and beauty, quickened by one spirit—the spirit of Christ and of God.

Although religion has but one object, and is one in principle, or considered as a principle operative on human life and manners, yet it consists of many particulars; it comprises a multitude of duties and requirements. But it is to be observed, that if symmetry and correspondence of parts be essential to the unity of a system, this multitude of duties and requirements, these many particulars, so far from cutting up or dividing that body of strength, vigour, and beauty of which they are members, place its unity in a new and powerful light. Religion magnifies no virtue at the expense of its neighbour. Religion sacrifices no one duty to another. Religion admits no plea for the violation of one commandment, or the disregard of one truth, founded in an alleged deference to any others, or even to all others. Religion forbids the severance of the minutest link of obligation from the chain which binds us at once to God, to our neighbour, and to our own well-being. Religion then, assuredly, is perfect in integrity and unity, or integrity and unity are words without meaning.

Unity of design is indispensable to the utility, beauty, and perfection of any system. But unity of design is no where more obvious than in religion. Our true interest, our real happiness, is the point which it keeps universally and invariably in view. By all its lessons and injunctions; by all its promises and threatenings; by all its hopes and fears; our true interest is the treasure sought, our real happiness is the prize contended for.



To demonstrate that *this one thing* is the "one thing needful," is the chief aim of the present discourse. To this, therefore, I proceed.

"One thing is needful."—Religion—and religion alone is indispensable to human happiness; for all persons; at all times; in all places, circumstances, and states of being.

*In the first place.*—Without religion men are, and cannot but be, miserable. The spirit of religion is love to God; and his favour its reward. Now, is it not a self-evident proposition that the man who is devoid of love to God, and destitute of the favour of God, must be unhappy? We were made to love him. This is our being's end and aim. Contravening the design of our introduction into existence, it is impossible that we should escape misery. The mercies of his throne perpetually surround us. His salvation attends our footsteps day by day. He crowns us unceasingly with his loving kindness. "He keeps our souls from death, our eyes from tears; and our feet from falling." Surely, then, the heart that, in return, throbs not with gratitude, must ache with the pulsations of misery. I cannot conceive how that man can enjoy one hour's peace or satisfaction, who is incapable of appreciating heaven's benignant care, and of repaying it with the movements of devout thankfulness.

As the spirit of religion is love to God, so his favour is its reward. I mean his special favour; his complacency: for it is a certain truth, and one which ought to heap coals of fire upon the sinner's head, that the goodness of heaven descends from age to age upon the indevout and the impious; the worldly and the sensual; and his forbearance upon their children's children: that the "Father of mercies maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth his rain on the just and on the unjust."\* But that favour of his which is life; that loving kindness which is better than life; that complacency which irradiates his countenance with the smiles of benediction; is the portion of the religious and

\* Mat. v. 45.

upright only. And can it be necessary to prove that unless the God of all grace vouchsafe to shine propitiously upon my soul, felicity must be a stranger there?

Of no other attainment, possession, or circumstance attached to the condition of our nature, can it be said that the absence or privation of it necessarily superinduces misery. It cannot be said of pleasure, of wealth, of honour, no—even of learning. In the humbler walks of life where the means of pleasurable or splendid indulgences, of civil or military promotion, and of scientific acquisitions, are circumscribed, you have doubtless observed much tranquillity, much contentment, and even much continued and uniform enjoyment. But have you ever seen tranquillity, contentment, uniform and continued enjoyment, among those who are devoid of religion; however prosperous, however elevated, however surrounded by the frolick sons and daughters of festivity? Have you not discovered in their varying features, in their fitful transitions from gaiety to gloom, that “there is a laughter, in the midst of which the heart is sorrowful; a mirth, the end of which is heaviness;”\* a pride of distinction which serves but to render infelicity more prominent?

*In the second place.*—Religion, and religion alone, is needful for mankind universally: for all ranks, orders and descriptions of persons, and for every individual among them. There are many attainments which are becoming and useful in some states and situations of life, and under certain circumstances and relations; but which, under other circumstances and relations, are superfluous; and in opposite states and situations are unprofitable, and even pernicious. For instance; what is admitted to be an indispensable appendage to the character and authority of a magistrate, a master, an instructor, a parent, may be preposterous or injurious when exhibited in the person of the child, the pupil, the servant, the private citizen. But religion is the com-

mon duty, and ought to be the common concern, the common qualification, the common characteristic, of all the posterity of Adam.

*In the third place.*—Religion is needful at all times, and in all places; an assertion that cannot be made respecting any other quality or endowment of man. In the progressive changes of human manners and the varying circumstances of society, what is at one period necessary and desirable, at a later period ceases to be so. Personal prowess, military skill, in process of time give place to the arts of peace, and the better directed efforts of the human mind to protect the weak and curb the wicked, by intellectual, rather than by brutal force. But whatever alterations occur on the face of the world, religion, like its divine author and object, remains ever the same. The bravery of the warrior may be required at one time, and the wisdom of the legislator at another; but religion, without which neither can much avail, is at all times, and in every stage of society, alike desirable; alike necessary.

And not only at all times; but in all places is it desirable—in every clime is it necessary. Wherever the sun of the material heavens emits his beams, the sun of righteousness must arise to gladden the mental creation, or all is dark and dreary. This is the sun, milder than his type in the heavens, that must travel with the stranger over the deserts of Africa. This is the sun that must gild the wastes of northern snows. In fine, wherever man is to be found, he needs religion, and needs no more, to enlighten, uphold, cherish, and comfort him.

*In the fourth place.*—Religion is needful not merely at all times, but perpetually and uninterruptedly. At no moment is it superfluous. At no moment is it a work of supererogation. At no moment must it be upon any account dispensed with. It is a fruit which is never out of season. It is a flower which is constantly in bloom. “To every thing,” says the wise king of Israel, “there is a season, and a time

to every purpose under the heavens:"\* but religion, which, heaven descended, aspires to heaven again, he carefully avoided limiting to seasons or to times.

Religion, considered as a habit of the soul; as a temper of the heart; as a principle, a source, a motive, of action; must be perpetually operative. It must experience no intermission; no, not for a moment; or it ceases to be religion. "When thou goest, it must lead thee; when thou sleepest, it must keep thee; and when thou awakest, it must talk with thee. For its commandment is a lamp; and its law is light; and its reproofs of instruction are the way of life."†

*In the fifth place.*—Religion is indispensable to render prosperity a blessing to those who receive it at the hand of God. We know the high authority that says, and we know too with what melancholy evidence daily experience confirms the saying, that "the prosperity of fools" or irreligious persons "shall destroy them."‡ It leads them to presumption; it leads them to unbelief; it leads them to hardness of heart, to earthly mindedness, to covetousness, sensuality, cruelty; to the life and death of criminals; and to the immortality of devils. Religion waters the plant of prosperity with the dews of divine grace, until it becomes a tree whose roots are deep and wide in the soil, while its top touches the heavens. Children of sanctified prosperity! what is it that yields a zest to every delight that dwells upon your raptured senses? that makes all nature "beauty to your eye, or musick to your ear," or luxury to your thankful hearts? You tell me, and you tell me truly, it is religion. Children of sanctified prosperity! what is it that directs you to such a use; such an improvement; such an application of your peculiar temporal advantages, as makes you eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame? as causes "the ear when it hears you to bless you, and the eye when it sees you to give you its witness of weeping gratitude? You tell me, and I know that you tell me aright, it is, it can only be that "one thing needful"—religion.

\* Eccl. iii. 1. † Prov. vi. 22. 23. ‡ Prov. i. 32.

*In the sixth place.*—Religion is eminently the “one thing needful” in adversity. There is, perhaps, nothing which mankind, the bad as well as the good, more generally admit, than this: and many a self-deluded sinner has vainly sought refuge under adversity in that “one thing needful,” which, while prosperity shone bright upon him, he has trampled under foot. Religion it is, and religion alone, that teaches complaining man at once the nature, the origin, and the design of his afflictions: that consoles him under them; that fortifies him to endure them; that enables him to improve them, that converts them into springs of never-failing peace, and joy, and glory.

*In the seventh and last place.*—Religion is the “one thing needful” in a sense far more important than any that have been hitherto exhibited: for it is religion *alone* that conducts to the everlasting life of the world to come. The present state is not conclusive of our being. When this “world and the works that are therein shall be burnt up;” when “the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll;” when “the elements shall melt with fervent heat;” man shall still exist; man shall exist forever; the inheritor of celestial glory, or the hopeless victim of his unrepented crimes. Often is this awful truth proclaimed in your ears; but, O my God! how little is it regarded! *Man shall exist forever, the inheritor of celestial glory, or the hopeless victim of his unrepented crimes.* This truth *will force* itself upon the mind at the approach of death. What shall console the dying man? The evils of life have many opiates, some more, some less effectual. Parental protection, filial duty, connubial love, these may soothe while the pulse beats animation; but what—what shall console the *dying man*? Nothing but *religion*. She tells the good man to look back without regret, and forward without fear. She tells him that as the life which he has been enabled, through divine grace, to live, is undeniably the best qualification and the surest preparation for the heavenly blessedness, so it cannot fail to meet the accep-



tance of that righteous Lord who loveth righteousness, and whose countenance beholdeth the upright.

And, now, let such as are conscious of possessing this one needful thing, religion, felicitate themselves, and be grateful to God.

Let them felicitate themselves. Let them rejoice that while the many around them are perpetually agitating the idle and fruitless inquiry, "who will show us any good?" they have obtained that "one thing which is needful," and which *alone* is *indispensably* needful to the happiness both of the present and the future. The unity and simplicity of that which is the great object of their cares and their desires, facilitates the gratification of these desires, the recompense of those cares. Pursuit here, is liable to but little interruption, and to no substantial discouragement. Success is certain. Persons under the influence of religious principle, are sure of acquiring what they have chiefly in view, the favour of heaven. They are firmly persuaded that nothing can more effectually propitiate the divine Being, than the sincere and uniform devotion of the mind and heart to him. And what happiness on earth can rival that which results from the consciousness that the most important of all acquisitions is assuredly in our possession? Nothing short of this, deserves the name of happiness. Men of the world have no certainty like this on which to repose themselves. Thick clouds of doubt rest upon their brightest prospects. Their best laid schemes are so often frustrated, that the fear of future disappointment is unconquerably hostile to their tranquillity.

Let the soul conscious of possessing religion, be grateful to God: grateful for the word of his grace and truth, by which we are taught the nature and properties, the origin and end, the effects and consequences of religion. Grateful for those effusions of his enlightening and sanctifying energy upon our faculties, to which we are indebted for the existence and operations of religion. Pure and undefiled

religion before God, even the Father, his own most holy word hath delineated so luminously and impressively, that he who runs may read and understand it. From this source of heavenly knowledge we learn that religion is at once the image of God impressed and drawn upon the inward man, and the life of God exhibited in the outward deportment; that it derives its being from God, and issues in the manifestation of his glory; that it *beatifies* the present state, and secures a crown of honour and immortality beyond the grave; that it is within the reach of all whose hearts are inclined to pursue it; that all who seek it shall find it, and with it everlasting life, and that all who despise or neglect it shall lose their own souls. And while the divine word communicates the knowledge so necessary to the improvement of the soul, the divine spirit, the author as well of moral as of natural good, who at first caused the light to shine out of darkness, irradiates the holy page, opens the intellectual eye, and capacitates fallen man to receive and profit by the instruction that leads to heaven. The virtues which distinguish, characterize, and adorn the Christian life, "are the fruits of the spirit"\* of God; and but for his beneficent power, would have no real or practical existence. O! never let the incense of gratitude cease to arise to God, our Father, our Teacher, Comforter, and Guide.

Religion being thus a matter of unspeakable moment, why should we not all view it in its true light, and pay it a corresponding deference? Surely, if there is any one thing essential to human happiness, so much so, that without it every human being cannot but be miserable; and that, at all times, in all places; under all circumstances, modes, and successive states of being; if there is any one thing exclusively vested with the power to bless prosperity, to sooth affliction, to disarm death, to render immortality glorious; surely, every wise and provident man will think it incumbent on him to labour indefatigably for the attainment of

\* Gal. v. 22.

this one thing. But it has been shewn that religion is this one thing; "the one thing needful," and exclusively needful for all these purposes. Let us lose no time, then, in cultivating its principles and acquiring its habits. Let us devote ourselves to it in defiance of every obstacle. Let us devote ourselves to it with all possible diligence and assiduity.

Let us devote ourselves to it in defiance of every obstacle. If we believe that any temporal acquisition, whatever it may be, is necessary to our repose or our enjoyment, there are no obstacles, ordinarily speaking, of such magnitude as to deter us from the pursuit of it: there are even no comforts and conveniencies, however highly valued under other circumstances, which we will not resign for the attainment of it. The avaricious man places his supreme delight in a multitude of possessions; and, to secure this object, tired nature must forego her rest, and the cravings of appetite be disregarded. The man of pleasure, infatuated fool, encounters, in one guilty intrigue, perplexities, embarrassments, and dangers, for which Mohammed's paradise could not compensate. But, while vice, in some one or other of her thousand varying shapes, has power too easily and too effectually to bind us to her service, the "one thing needful" solicits us in vain. This, is frequently sacrificed to the merest trifle of opposition: too seldom is it allowed to surmount the most inconsiderable impediment. But let us be persuaded to consider, "that there is not the same necessity for indulging our animal part, that there is for saving our immortal souls; for living in pleasure a few days, as for being happy forever."\* Let us remember that religion is emphatically the "one thing needful," and abjure whatever interferes with it, and set at defiance whatever militates against it. Let us estimate it as that pearl of great price which invites us to sell all that we have and buy it. Between the solicitations of religion and the allurements of the world, let us not hesitate or balance for an instant. If sinners en-

\* Grove, vol. v. page 254.

tice, let us not consent: if they insult, let us not regard: if they threaten, let us not fear. Let us turn a deaf ear to the importunity of temptation; renounce the tyranny of passion; obey the call of celestial wisdom; and, convinced of the indispensableness of a religious temper, and a religious deportment, let us pray that God would be pleased to fortify us in this conviction, and form us by his grace to a life corresponding with it.

The arguments that should induce us to embrace religion *at the first* as the "one thing needful," powerfully persuade us to persevere in the holy and happy course, when we have entered upon it. Let us therefore, devote ourselves to religion with all possible diligence and assiduity.

If "it is good," as the apostle says, "to be zealously affected always in a good thing," how, I would ask, ought we to be affected towards the very best thing? a thing which originates and terminates in the infinite God?

Religion is no matter on which to trifle. Where shall a man reflect and be serious, if not here, where the everlasting life of his soul is at stake? Indifference, luke-warmness, sluggishness, on a point like this, are worthy a severer animadversion than any words of mine can inflict.

To embrace religion, and perseveringly to cultivate religion, it is imperiously necessary that we refrain from all excessive solicitude respecting things temporal. Recollect the mild rebuke of our Saviour in the context to his too anxious friend: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but *one thing is needful.*" Much as he loved this affectionate and hospitable friend, or rather, in consequence of the esteem which he had for her, he could not avoid administering a gentle reproof to her misplaced carefulness, her improvident attention to what was earthly and perishing, to the neglect of what was spiritual and eternal. It is to be regretted that there are too many who resemble Martha, in this particular, even among those who are acquainted with something more than the mere form of

religion. And if delinquency is discoverable among such as these, what is to be expected from the worldly-minded million, the multitudes, of whom it may be said, that "God is not in all their thoughts?"

Impressed as I am with the solemnity and awful importance of the subject, allow me to suggest certain directions, which, if observed and acted upon, may be found beneficial. Allot more time to the special concerns of the soul. Bestow your affections in justifiable measures; giving to no object more, in this respect than its due. Let not the concerns of life temporal take such firm hold of your hearts and minds, as to unfit you for the superior concerns of life eternal. Suffer not the pressure of affliction to disturb your serenity, or deprive you of self-possession.

FIRST.—Allot more time to the special concerns of the soul. "Our present frame and condition, I confess, is such, that the greater part of our time is unavoidably taken up in attendance on the body and the things relating to it; which is more especially the case of those in narrow circumstances: but then, none, and much less such as have a greater command of their time, should from their rising up to their lying down, be incessantly employed in the drudgery of the world" or in the chase of pleasure. "This is to be cumbered with much serving in a much worse sense than Martha was." And we need not be so cumbered. I take leave to repeat it; we need not be so cumbered. None—I will make no exceptions—not one of us need be so entirely devoted to the world as to have no precious minutes left for the duties and the pleasures of religion.

SECOND.—Bestow your affections in justifiable measures; giving to no one object more, in this respect, than its due. There is a beautiful order and subordination designed to prevail among the objects of man's affections; an order and subordination which sin has disturbed, and which religion alone can restore and maintain. Human loves and friendships are allowed and encouraged, but we are not permitted



to cherish them in an equal degree with love to God and our Redeemer. The best affections of our hearts are to be placed on objects most worthy of them. And what are these objects? Certainly, God and his service: Christ and his religion: heaven and its undying glories. And shall the devotion which is properly and consistently bestowed here, be wrested hence and lavished on the worthless baubles of a day? Perish the thought!

THIRD.—Let not the concerns of life temporal take such firm hold of your hearts and minds, as to unfit you for the superiour concerns of life eternal. It is when comparatively disengaged from earthly fetters, that we can serve our Creator to most advantage, most pleasure, and most acceptance. The world, like our evil genius, follows us even into the divine presence, pollutes our offerings with its touch, and mingles its unhallowed fire with the flames of sacrifice. Hence it is that God is so frequently adored by the lips of those whose hearts, in the mean while, are far from him. Let Christians be reminded that one of their chief aims should be the conquest of the world. It should not be their serious or familiar friend, but their gay and passing acquaintance, whose occasional society may be pleasing, but whose constant and intimate converse is the thief of time, the murderer of virtue.

FOURTHLY AND LASTLY.—Suffer not the pressure of affliction, whether it be on memory, anticipation, or present feeling, to disturb your serenity, or deprive you of self-possession. Self-possession—self-collection—serenity—evenness of mind—a calm and unruffled temper, proof against the shafts of adversity—these constitute the ornament of man. The ornament of man did I say? This, perhaps, may be thought faint applause. I will say then that they exhibit an instance of the sublime in morals. To the sublimity of Christian morals they are undoubtedly essential. And it is a splendid attestation to the dignity of our high calling in Christ Jesus that to this sublimity of morals, this proud em-

inence of virtue, the obscurest follower of the Lamb is incited daily and hourly to aspire. It is a commandment delivered to us all, and binding upon us all, that we “take no thought for the morrow, saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed?”—that we “endure hardness as good soldiers of Christ”\*—that we “possess our souls in patience”†—and that “in suffering according to the will of God, we commit ourselves unto him, as unto a faithful Creator.”‡

Be assured, brethren, that unless you are cast into this mould; unless you cultivate this even temper; unless you acquire this mental habit of placidity, and rise superiour to the vicissitudes incident to the present state; it is in vain that you expect to make any satisfactory attainments in the “one thing needful.” The tumult of the passions—the disquietude of the soul—the painful retrospect upon the past—the gloomy foreboding of the future—all this is at war with religion. That peace of God which passeth understanding, must keep the heart and mind, or the knowledge and the love of him must remain unattainable by man.

Hear, now, brethren, the conclusion of the whole matter. “Follow after godliness—for godliness with contentment is great gain. Godliness is profitable unto all things—having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.” “One thing is needful”—choose, therefore, “that good part which shall not be taken away from you.”

Which, may the Lord enable us all to do, and to his name shall be the praise.—AMEN.

\* 2 Tim. ii. 3.

† Luke, xxxi. 19.

‡ 1 Peter, iv. 19.

## SERMON VI.

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### FAMILY RELIGION.

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ACTS, X. 12.

*“There was a certain man in Cesarea, called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man, and one that feared God, with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.”*

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**T**HE excellent and justly celebrated author of the Family Expositor, remarking upon these words, has the following expressions: “Most amiable and exemplary is the character of Cornelius, who, though exposed to all the temptations of a military life, maintained not only his virtue but his piety too. He feared God, and he wrought righteousness; and daily presented before God prayers and alms, which added a beauty and acceptance to each other: and he was also an example of domestic, as well as of personal religion, as if he had been trained up under the discipline of that heroick general and prince, who so publickly and so resolutely declared before an assembled nation, even on the supposition of their general apostacy,”\* “as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”†

To recommend and enforce that domestic or family religion which deservedly attaches such veneration to the name of this Roman officer, and which is so deplorably neglected by multitudes among the professors of christianity, is the design of the following discourse. May the good spirit open our hearts that we may receive the truth in the love of it!

\* See Doddridge, vol. iii. † Joshua, xxiv. 15.

When I speak of family religion, none can be at a loss for my meaning. By family religion is understood, religious instructions given to a family, and acts of devotion performed by them jointly, or in their name and presence by their head, or by some other person whom he may for wise reasons employ, or whom circumstances may point out as most fit, to be his substitute.

Family worship is, if I mistake not, a duty dictated by what is termed the religion of nature. It is the voice of reason that the Creator is entitled to all the homage his creatures can give him; that it not only behoves us, but is our interest to fear and adore him; that to entreat his blessing is the most probable means of obtaining it; and to praise him for his benefits is no more than the natural return of an upright, an ingenuous, and grateful heart. The same arguments that lead to the performance of acts of religion, generally establish the propriety of social and domestick devotion. Society, in all its forms, but especially domestick society, is of divine institution. "It is God who setteth the solitary in families."\* He who is the father of our spirits and the former of our bodies, and hath united both parts of our being so closely; hath appointed other relations nearly as intimate; the relations of husband and wife, parent and child. Of a grade inferiour to these, and as the result of posteriour coincidences, he hath ordained the important connection of master and servant. A society formed by some or all of these relations, constitutes a family, or household; and I would ask, is it not reasonable that all the individuals composing such a social body, should join in the service and adoration of that Almighty and most merciful Being who hath created them with social affections, whose benevolence hath capacitated them for the tender charities of life, and whose providence hath conjoined them with the soft but strong ties of blood, and kindred, and common interest? The same reason that induces an individual to

\* Psalm, lxxviii. 6.

pray for personal favours, should lead his family to the throne of grace that they may obtain domestick mercies. The same reason that induces an individual to acknowledge his transgressions, tells his family that they should make joint confession of their sins: for the sins of the domestick relations, alas! are manifold, and none of them perhaps more general and crying than the neglect of that very domestick religion for which I am contending. The same reason that induces an individual to make thankful mention of the loving kindness of the Lord experienced in his own person, informs his family that they should unitedly praise the fountain of all good, nor be unmindful of the author of their common happiness, the rock of their common salvation. The same reason that induces an individual to study the things which belong to his everlasting peace, and that of all men, forbids his family to remain in ignorance respecting these things, warns them to seize every opportunity of acquiring instruction, and convicts him of most criminal negligence, who though appointed by nature and by nature's God, to be their protector, their guide, their teacher, and their priest, withholds the faithful lesson it is his incumbent duty to give, sleeps over their soul's damnation, nor leads them up to God, their rest.

Numerous are the examples on record in holy scripture of the conscientious discharge of this duty. How honourable is that testimony given to the fidelity and loyal piety of Abraham by the mouth of heaven itself! "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord."\* What magnanimity appears in the resolution of the illustrious Hebrew chief, addressed to the assembled tribes of his country who had so often followed his banners to battle and to conquest. Whatever you shall determine; whether to listen to my admonitions, and maintain unshaken fidelity to the God of Israel, or traitorously to transfer your service to the

\* Genesis, xviii. 19.



idols of the nations, however this may be, "as for me," your general, "and my house, we will serve the Lord;"\* who delivered our fathers from slavery, and under whose auspices, I have so often led you to victory. Again, it is recorded of David, that after certain solemnities of publick national religion celebrated with that splendour which usually attended the Hebrew worship, and in which the king himself bore a principal part, he "returned," in pious duty, "to bless his household."† From these instances, allow me to remark in passing, the extreme vanity of the opinion, which I am afraid is sometimes entertained, that family religion is beneath the attention of men of a genteel and liberal spirit. Mean pride! contemptible presumption! that sets itself against the rights of God! The virtues of kings and princes and victorious captains, surely cannot be beneath the practice of a gentleman!

The text affords an additional instance of "one who was a devout man," one, "who feared God *with all his house*, and prayed to God alway;" that is, who led his household to the throne of the heavenly grace at all proper and convenient seasons. Indeed, so reasonable and evident is the principle of this duty, that Cornelius might have imbibed it in the school of Heathenism. Every reader of ancient history must remember the Lares, and Penates, the household gods, to whom prayers and sacrifices were offered up in families that knew not the true God. And shall it not be more tolerable at the day of judgment for them, than for Christians, who, although God has manifested himself to them, raise no domestick altar in honour of his name?

The advantages resulting from the faithful and steady discharge of this duty are manifold. It throws a lustre on the most elevated rank, and lifts the house of humble poverty into a temple for the Most High. It calls down upon our families the merciful regards of him whose favour is life and whose loving kindness is more desirable than life. If any

\* Joshua, xxiv. 15. † 2 Samuel, vi. 20.

one part of our deportment more than another can influence the Almighty to bless us in our children, to enrich our basket and our store, and to prosper and establish our temporal and domestick concerns, unquestionably it is this. For God has peculiar blessings in store for the habitations of the just, for the families that call upon his name.

Domestick religion is ordinarily productive of domestick love and harmony. In its nature, it cannot but be a peacemaker. It is the best reconciler of family differences; the best cement of family attachments. It sanctifies the endearments of connubial affection; inspires the infant mind with that veneration for the parental character which, next to piety to God, is the first and noblest of human virtues; enhances the value of children in the parent's eye who considers them as young immortals whose everlasting destinies are in no small measure committed to his care; and who shall live in the world of spirits while the beloved forms they now inhabit, and on whose tender charms they gaze with pardonable rapture, shall moulder in the dust—softens the asperities of the superiour towards his servant and dependant, and so moulds the heart and temper of the inferiour, that he will most generally obey not only for wrath but also for conscience sake. Did these obvious truths receive due attention; were they suffered to influence the conduct of men; family infelicities, now, I fear, too frequent, would give place to a tranquillity, a serene blessedness, approaching nearer to the joys of heaven than any thing which this earth can afford.

Domestick religion affords the most consoling reflections to a parent and a master in the hour of death. Who would not give worlds at such a time for the right of saying, with our blessed Saviour, “I have manifested thy name to them which thou gavest me.” “I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them.” “Father keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me!”\*

\* John, xvii. 6, 8

But where shall I find language, my brethren, to describe the raptures of the rising dead followed into God's presence by the blessings of those to whom they have given a second birth in the regeneration of the soul, those whom they present at the feet of the throne, saying, "behold us Lord and the children whom thou hast given us!"

You have been viewing the advantages resulting from the performance of this duty. It is time now to consider the disastrous consequences arising from the neglect of it.

What reasonable and candid man will censure the equity of the Most High in blasting all family comforts to those who take no pains to make their families devoutly sensible of the source whence their common comforts flow? Who would not expect domestick judgments where domestick mercies are never thankfully acknowledged? Who is so ignorant of the ways of providence as to wonder at the inquietudes of a house where family religion is unknown, and the voice of social prayer unheard? No, "the curse of the Lord is in the house of the irreligious." "He will pour out his fury upon the Heathen and upon the families that call not on his name."\*

The neglect of family religion has a most deadly influence on the church at large. While the spirit of piety is extinct in the domestick circle, it is in vain that you wish and pray for a revival of it in the ecclesiastical assemblies. Bar the inhospitable doors of your houses against the God of heaven, and do you imagine he will honour your temples with his presence? Alas! when I reflect on our lamentable dereliction of the usages of our pious forefathers in this respect, I no longer wonder at the decay of the spirit of true religion amongst us; I can no longer wonder at our base conformity with a vain and wicked world. If there be any publick spirit yet left, if there be any love of God who is the hope of Israel and the Saviour thereof, if there be any love of Christ and of the church, no longer neglect the offices of domestick religion.

\* Jer. x. 25.

It is said of those who neglect to provide for their own, and especially for those of their own household, that they have denied the faith and are worse than infidels. If this be true of persons who are remiss in consulting for the temporal sustenance and comfort of their dependents, how much more of the man who gives no diligence to ensure the eternal salvation of his household, notwithstanding the admonition to train up his children in the way they should go that when they are old they may not depart therefrom; notwithstanding he is commanded to "bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?" Without your stated instructions, expect not that your children will be wise unto salvation. Expect not that they will make it their concern to worship God, if you set them not the example; if you do not persevere in praying, I do not say for them, as this they cannot always know, but before and with them; if you do not lead their devotions up to Heaven. Not more true is it that the pastors of the church shall account for their people, than that every parent shall account for his child, every master for his dependent. If they perish through your neglect "their blood will be required at your hands."\* Look for a moment within the black veil that covers the realms of torture. Fix your regards on the wretched victims of eternal justice. See you none, not one—whose looks strike reproach into your very souls? Behold thy dependent, unhappy master. From ignorance he advanced to vice, and has at length finished his career in perdition. Had he breathed in thy service the air of religion; had he seen aught in thy family to distinguish it from those profane houses that know not God; like Onesimus of old, he might have been a son and member of the church on earth, and a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. Now, where is he; now, where shall he ever be?

Behold thy child, unhappy father; given thee to be "thy joy and crown,"† and in return solemnly devoted to God,

\* Ezek. iii. 17. 18. † Phil. iv. 1.  
J.

in holy baptism. Can it be possible that through eternity he shall execrate thee as the author of his misery? Can it be possible that thy irreligious example, thy neglect to afford him Christian nurture and admonition, thy remissness in leading his young devotions to his father and thy father, to his God and thy God, hath brought thy child, once thy best beloved, the pride of thine heart, the light of thine eyes, the most cherished part of thy very self, hath brought him to these abodes of horreur? O! then, my brethren, if there be any bowels of mercies towards the tender offspring of your love, no longer neglect the offices of domestick religion.

Talk not to me of business and of your multiplied avocations. A Christian's first and principal concern ought ever to be, to cultivate the life of God in himself and in the members of his household. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," and all needful temporal benefits "shall be added unto you."\* Was the life of Joshua, an idle life? Was the life of David, an idle life? Was the centurion in the text exempt from military occupations, labours, and fatigues? My brethren, if you will not make time to ask God's blessing on your pursuit of family interests, expect not that he will grant it.

Urge not, I beseech you, the plea of incapacity. It redounds only to your disgrace. The Christian of sound faculties, who has numbered thirty, forty, fifty years, ought certainly to have acquired some knowledge of divine truth, some capacity to communicate the result of his reading and hearing, some aptitude to express his spiritual thoughts and desires in prayer, and consequently, a sufficient command of words and ideas, to qualify him for bearing the chief part in the devotions of a family.

If this plea of incapacity be at all entitled to deference, it is, when urged in excuse of deficiency in that part of domestick religion which consists in offering up the prayers of a family. But I will at once destroy this plea by observ-

\* Matt. vi. 33.



ing that our church, although she certainly prefers the free effusions of a pious heart adopting its train of thought and expression to the circumstances in which it may be placed, is by no means inimical to set forms of prayer, when, as in the case supposed, they may be helps to devotion. Use such forms therefore, until you shall find yourself able to pray without them. Especially avail yourselves of the many paraphrases of that most excellent pattern, commonly called the Lord's prayer. And to enable you to impart the necessary religious instructions to your families, besides the reading of the Bible, call to your aid the Westminster catechism, together with the most approved practical commentaries and discourses.

As to the most proper times for the exercises of domestick religion, they must be in a great measure left to the convenience of every family. This much however I must be allowed to insist on, that not a day should pass, on which the sacrifice of prayer and praise does not ascend from every Christian house. And with respect to the instruction of your families in the principles of religion, whilst every convenient opportunity ought to be embraced, our church hath wisely recommended that the sabbath evenings, after publick worship, should be sacredly preserved for this purpose. "Therefore she highly disapproves of her members paying unnecessary private visits on the Lord's day; admitting strangers into their families, except when necessity or charity requires it; or any other practices, whatever plausible pretences may be offered in their favour, if they interfere with the above important and necessary duty."

To conclude; my brethren, if you value the everlasting life of those who ought to be most dear to you; if you value the prosperity of the church, and the advancement of pure and undefiled religion; if you value the best interests of the republick, which can never be so effectually promoted as by the practice of piety and virtue; rebuild your domestick altars; revive the spirit of family religion.—AMEN.

## SERMON VII.

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### THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

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JOHN, i. 1.

*“In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.”*

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I SHALL not, my brethren, go into a formal proof that the word here alluded to is Jesus Christ. Neither will I consume the short time I have allotted for this portion of service by noticing the two first members of the text; the eternity implied in the phrase, “In the beginning;” and the personal distinction of Deity revealed to us in the terms, “the word was with God.” My object is contained in the last clause, “the word was God:” and I call for your attention whilst from this holy oracle I endeavour to vindicate the most fundamental doctrine of our religion; the *Godhead of its author*.

Blessed Saviour, to whose glory we consecrate this and all other services, vouchsafe to guide us by thy spirit into all truth, and keep us in it; and especially now, when we are about to assert thine essential Deity, enlighten our minds and affect our hearts; that being convinced of this most important verity, we may honour thee even as we honour the Father!

My Brethren, the divinity of a crucified Redeemer, is the most mysterious article of the Christian’s faith. “Without controversy,” says an apostle, “great is the mystery of Godliness; God manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on

in the world, received up into glory." The mystery we presume not to scan. If we establish the fact, the humble inquirer will be satisfied. If then, the names—the attributes—the works—the worship—and the prerogatives of Deity are ascribed in our scriptures to Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ is God. Let us search these holy treasures. Let us bring to the inquiry, honesty and singleness of heart. The result, it is hoped, will be the conviction of this simple truth, "Jesus Christ is God."

FIRST.—The names expressive of Deity are ascribed in our scriptures to Jesus Christ. He is called God. Witness our text: "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God." He is called by St. Paul "God manifest in the flesh"—and "over all, God, blessed forever." Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign," says the prophet; "behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel,"\* "which being interpreted," says the evangelist, "is, God with us." "The Lord whom ye seek," says Malachi, "shall suddenly come to his temple;"† which prophecy is applied by St. Mark and St. Luke to our blessed Saviour.‡ "For unto us a child is born," saith Isaiah,§ "unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called *the mighty God*." "We are in him that is true," writes St. John,|| "even in his Son Jesus Christ." "This is the true God, and eternal life." That the latter member of this passage refers to Christ, is evident, from the force and position of the relative, "this," particularly in the original. It is evident also from the scope of the writer; which is to teach as that Christ hath come into the world to give us the knowledge and fellowship of God; and that we are in the true God by being in his Son Jesus Christ, since Jesus Christ is himself the true God and eternal life. To confirm this interpretation, we

\* Isaiah, vii. 14. † Mal. iii. 1. ‡ Mark, i. 2. Luke, i. 76.

§ Isaiah, ix. 6. || 1 John, v. 20.

may observe, that in the elevated style of St. John, the panegyric appellation "eternal life" is never once assigned to the Father, but very frequently to the Son. I have not time to enumerate all the passages which vindicate the essential Godhead of our Redeemer, Christians; and I must be permitted to say that to believe him less than God, is to charge the holy scriptures with using expressions whose natural and unperverted import is to lead us into the crime of idol worship.

This will hold equally true, when we consider, next, that the attributes of Deity are ascribed in our scriptures to Jesus Christ—eternity—immensity and omnipresence—omnipotence—omniscience—immutability.

*Eternity.*—He is Alpha and Omega; the first and the last; the beginning and the ending; the Lord which is and which was and which is to come.\* "Having neither beginning of days nor end of life."† This is unintelligible if we view him merely as "the man Christ Jesus." It is unintelligible even if we regard him as a super-angelick nature. It is intelligible only when we believe him to be God. "Before Abraham was," says he to the Jews, "before Abraham was, *I am.*"‡ I am? Mysterious expression! In me there is neither past, present, nor future—I fill my own immortal *now*—Within the circle of my eternal existence time revolves, but its revolution affects not me. *I am?* It is the name worn by Jehovah when he commissioned Moses to be the Saviour of his oppressed countrymen. "Thus shalt thou tell the people; *I am* hath sent me to deliver you."§

*Immensity and Omnipresence.*—Wherever two or three are gathered together in his name, there is he in the midst of them.|| Hear his own declaration to his apostles and ministers; "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you

\* Rev. i. 8. † Heb. vii. 3. ‡ John, viii. 56. § Ex. iii. 14. || Matt. xviii. 20.

always, even unto the end of the world."\* "No man hath ascended up to Heaven, but he that came down from Heaven; even the Son of man which is in Heaven."† Jesus Christ, "the Son of man," while speaking upon earth, places himself in Heaven. But who can be at one time in Heaven and on earth, unless it be he whose mysterious presence pervades all worlds? By incarnation *he* descended to dwell on earth who by the immensity of his divine nature ever was and ever will be in Heaven.

*Omnipotence.*—In the visions of Patmos, Jesus Christ expressly designated himself to the enraptured prophet, "The Almighty."‡ And the inspired author of the Epistle to the Hebrews represents him as "upholding all things by the word of his power."§ "For our conversation is in Heaven," writes St. Paul to the Phillipians,|| "from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body; according to the working whereby *he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*" The evangelical histories record a multitude of facts which reflect the omnipotence of Christ in the brightest colours. Unto the tempestuous element he addressed himself, "peace—be still." The obedient waters ceased to rage, and the storm became a calm. To the famished crowd that followed him he dispensed the blessing of food in that miraculous manner to which none but divine power was competent. To those who pined in darkness, unconscious of the lovely forms of nature, he restored in a moment the lost power of vision; and they on whose ear the melody of sound had long since ceased to vibrate, heard the voice of our Redeemer. At his command, the tongue, that had been sealed in silence, resumed its office—the palsied limb regained its strength—the cripple threw by his staff and exulted in the renovation of his vigour—the nearly extinguished spark of animation

\* Matt. xxviii. 19. 20. † John, iii. 13. ‡ Rev. i. 8. § Heb. i. 3. || Philip. iii. 20. 21.



brightened to a flame—and even the dead, the entombed dead, awoke at his call—burst their cerements, and emerged from the cold horrors of corruption. Having power to lay down his own life, he had power also to resume it; and the same omnipotence that brought Christ our master from the dead, shall one day rekindle the vital spark that lies buried amidst the ashes of the Christian.

*Omniscience.*—When Jesus, to impress solemnity upon the charge he was about to give St. Peter, three several times put this question to him, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?—The apostle appealed to him as to that all-conscious power before whom the human heart lies open, “Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.”\* “Now we are sure that thou knowest all things,”† said his disciples on another occasion. “All the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts:” saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand; even Jesus Christ the Almighty Saviour, himself. And what is this but saying, “I am he of whom my prophet sings “O Lord thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine uprising; thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compassest my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?”‡ “When our Saviour was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day,” records the evangelist,§ “many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men; and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man.”

*Immutability.*—“Jesus Christ” is “the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever.” In that beautiful Psalm,|| which

\* John, xxi. 17. † John, xvi. 30. ‡ Psalm, cxxxix. § John, ii. 23.—25.  
|| Psalm, cii.

is the fifth of those styled penitentials, the mourning prophet thus addresses Jehovah; "The heavens shall perish but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end."\* On this place, a commentator makes the following remarks; "Amidst the changes and chances of this mortal life, one topick of consolation will ever remain; namely, the eternity and immutability of God our Saviour: of him who was, and is, and is to come. Kingdoms and empires may rise and fall; nay, the heavens and the earth, as they were originally produced and formed *by the word of God*, the Son, or second person in the Trinity, to whom the Psalmist here addresseth himself; so will they, at the day appointed, be folded up and laid aside, as an old worn out garment; or, if the substance remain, the present form and fashion of them will perish, and they will be utterly changed and altered from the state in which they now are. But Jehovah is ever the same; his years have no end, nor can his promise fail any more than himself." "Heaven and earth," saith he, "shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away."† That it is Messiah, or Christ, my brethren, whom the Psalmist addresses, is put beyond doubt by the express testimony of inspiration. The writer to the Hebrews, in his first chapter, quotes these very words and applies them to our Saviour.

To close this argument, however; not one; not several; nor yet most of the attributes of Deity are assigned to Jesus Christ by the sacred books; but, as far as we can recollect, *all*.

*In the third place.*—We find the works of Deity ascribed in our scriptures to Jesus Christ. "All things were made by him;" saith our context; "and without him was not any thing made that was made." "Thou Lord," says the Psalmist,‡ in an address quoted by a New Testament writer and

\* Psalm, cii. 26, 27. † Matt. xxiv. 35. ‡ Psalm, cii. 25.

by him interpreted as having the Son for its object; "Thou Lord in the beginning, hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thine hands."\* "For by him," declares St. Paul, "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: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist."† Besides this most signal of all miracles, creation, a multitude of corresponding, though inferior miracles, glorified his ministry on earth. These he performed either by the immediate exertion of his own power, or through the instrumentality of his apostles and disciples. "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickened whom he would."‡ We will not enlarge upon these instances of supernatural energy, which establish incontrovertibly Christ's unlimited control over the creatures; lest we should be chargeable with occupying the same ground we took when speaking of his omnipotence. To his miracles he himself appeals as incontestable proofs of his Divinity. They were acts performed in his own name and by his own authority, not ministerially, or by an adventitious and communicated energy. The extraordinary actions of his apostles and disciples, on the contrary, however illustrious, were achieved in the name and by the authority of Christ. "By what power, or by what name have ye done this?"§ said the priesthood of Jerusalem to St. Peter after he had performed a beneficent miracle; "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, ye rulers of the people and elders of Israel, if we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole." To the paralytick

\* Heb. i. 10. † Col. i. 16, 17. ‡ John, v. 21. § Acts, iv. 7—10.

Eneas, also, did the same apostle address himself in this style; "Eneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole; arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately."\*

In like manner, the works of grace and redemption are referred by scripture to our blessed Lord. But the prosecution of this subject must be deferred till evening service, if God shall permit us to celebrate it, to whose name be praise forever.—AMEN.

\* Acts, ix. 34.





## SERMON VIII.

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### THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

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JOHN, i. 1.

*“In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.”*

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IN discoursing from these words at morning service, my brethren, we stated it to be our design to vindicate the doctrine of Christ's divinity. In the prosecution of this design, the following proposition was offered—If the names, the attributes, the works, the worship of Deity, are ascribed in our scriptures to Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ is God. We found that various names expressive of Deity are assigned in scripture to Jesus Christ, that he is called the Lord—God—the mighty God—the true God and eternal life—and we intimated that it was to charge upon divine revelation language of a most pernicious and dangerous tendency, to interpret these expressions and others of a similar kind in any other than their most literal sense. We found also that the attributes of Deity are ascribed in scripture to Jesus Christ. As eternity; which, when asserted of our Saviour, necessarily leads us to invest him with Divinity; since it cannot be the property of a creature. Immensity and Omnipresence—to evince which, we cited, among other authorities, his own promise to his apostles and ministers when he commissioned them to preach and baptize, that his presence should accompany them at all times, and in all places, in the discharge of their functions:—Omnipotence—displayed

in several passages which we presented to your meditation; and in the multitude of miracles he performed while ministering on earth—miracles, differing from those of his apostles and disciples in this, that he wrought in his own name, and by his own authority, in the immediate exertion of inherent power; but they wrought in his name and by his authority, in the exercise of communicated power: Omniscience—exemplified, as in other instances, so in the conversation of our Lord with St. Peter, and in the oracle pronounced by his own sacred lips when St. John beheld him in prophetick vision: Immutability—confirmed by a passage we produced from the CII. Psalm and applied to our Saviour by the inspired author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. We found in the third place, that the works of Deity are ascribed in our scriptures to Jesus Christ. We found it, particularly, with respect to the creation and preservation of all things, and the performance of miraculous acts. Thus far we had proceeded; and will now resume the subject by observing, under this head, that

Works of grace are referred by scripture to our blessed Lord. Election is ascribed to him; “I speak not of you all,” says he, “I know whom I have chosen.”\* Redemption—“Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves,” says St. Paul† to the bishops of Ephesus, “and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” Vocation—“Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold:” says Christ; “them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.”‡ Sanctification—“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.”§ The mission of the Holy Ghost—“Nevertheless,” says he to his disciples, “I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not

\* John, xiii. 18.    † Acts, xx. 28.    ‡ John, x. 16.    § Eph. v. 25. 26

away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.”\* “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.”† Defence against spiritual enemies and the gift of eternal life—“I am come,” said our Lord, “that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”‡ “And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.”§ The reanimation of the body and the resurrection of the dead are attributed to Christ; as we have already had occasion to notice. To all these, I add, the general judgment which will be instituted and conducted by Jesus Christ. The works, therefore, of Deity; creation—providence—redemption—asccribed to our Saviour, demonstrate unanswerably that he is God. But, perhaps, there can be no argument more illustrative of this position than that which constitutes our fourth general head, and to that we will proceed.

The worship of Deity is ascribed in our scriptures to Jesus Christ. There is no principle of our religion more incontestable than this—that worship is to be offered to God only. Idolatry is a crime which is classed with adultery and murder, and at which the whole artillery of heaven’s vengeance is pointed. If notwithstanding this, we are led by the fair construction of scriptural language to pay religious homage to Jesus Christ, how shall we avoid the consequence, Jesus Christ is God? Worship comprises faith—hope—invocation—adoration, and ascription of glory. Each of these acts of worship may terminate, on the warrant of scripture, in Jesus Christ. Faith—“Ye believe in God; believe also in me:”|| said our Lord. “Blessed are all they that put their trust in him;” saith the Psalmist;¶ “but, cursed be the man that trusteth in man;”\*\* saith God by the mouth of Jeremiah. Hope—“Paul, an apostle of Jesus

\* John, xvi. 7. † John, xv. 26. ‡ John, x. 10. § John, x. 28.

|| John, xiv. 1. ¶ Psalm, ii. 12. \*\* Jer. xvii. 5.

Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope.”\* Invocation—“Grace—mercy and peace—from God our Father, and Jesus Christ our Lord;”† is that of St. Paul in behalf of Timothy. And such forms of invocation, which implore equal blessings from the Son, and the Father, abound in the writings of that apostle. Persuaded of this truth, that Jesus Christ is intitled to the prayers of his people, we hear St. Stephen address him—“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;”‡ and it is characteristic of the faithful generally, that they “call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.”§ Adoration—The Epistle to the Hebrews hath these words; “when he bringeth in his first begotten into the world he saith, and let all the angels of God worship him.”|| “Kiss the Son,”¶ saith the Psalmist, that is, be reconciled to his dominion—bow to his supremacy. “For the Father judgeth no man,” saith our Saviour, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father.”\*\* “Wherefore, God also hath highly exalted him,” writes the apostle,†† “and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Ascription of glory—“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,” were heard by the apostolical prophet‡‡ to say, “Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the *Lamb*, forever and ever.”

My brethren; we have executed the plan proposed in entering upon this subject. We have found, in pursuing it, that the names—the attributes—the works—the worship of Deity, are ascribed in our scriptures to Jesus Christ: and

\* 1 Tim. i. 1. † 1 Tim. i. 2. ‡ Acts, vii. 59. § 1. Cor. i. 2. || Heb. i. 6. ¶ Psalm, ii. 12. \*\* John, v. 22. 23. †† Philip. ii. 9.—11. ‡‡ Rev. v. 13.

we, therefore, conclude that Jesus Christ is God. But before we dismiss the subject, you will allow me to touch briefly upon three additional topics.

FIRST.—I argue the Deity of the Son from his equality with the Father. “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.”\* This passage, the Jews, to whom it was addressed, very reasonably understood as making Christ, from whom it proceeded, equal with God. Therefore, we are told, they sought to kill him. And how did our Lord treat this inference from his words? Did he disown or confute it? So far from this, that he justified and confirmed it both from the equality of his operations with those of the Father, and from the equality of their honour. Equality of operations—“What things soever the Father doeth, these also doth the Son likewise.”† Equality of honours—“That all men should honour the Son *even as* they honour the Father.”‡

SECONDLY.—I argue the Deity of the Son from his unity with the Father. “I and my Father are one.”§ To interpret this as unity of consent only, and not of nature, is to do violence to the words of Christ; because they are immediately preceded by two verses which evince it to be his intention to infer the unity of essence from that of power: These are the verses, “And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.”|| From these words we learn the unity of power in the Father and the Son. His own inference follows very naturally—“I and my Father are one”—one in essence. This interpretation is corroborated by the conversation of our Lord with the Jews, when, in consequence of his declaring himself one with the Father, they took up stones to stone him. “Jesus answered them, many good

\* John, v. 17. † John, v. 19. ‡ John, v. 23. § John, x. 10. 30. || John, x. 28. 29.



works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of these works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, for a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God." Did Christ repel the charge, and deny his divine character? By no means. His answer served to encourage them in their construction of his words, and he concluded it in this remarkable manner; "That ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him."\*

FINALLY.—I argue the Deity of the Son from his mediatorial function. To constitute a true mediator between God and man, such a mediator as the exigencies of our fallen race demand, the person bearing that character must be a *teacher* whose influences, not confined to the external means of instruction, enter within the veil of corruption; pour light upon the darkness of the understanding; and change the evil propensities of the heart. He must be a *ruler* that protects his people from the assaults of earth and hell, and governs them unremittingly by the potent agency of his spirit. He must be a *priest* who can achieve the eternal redemption of sinners; who can expiate human guilt, and satisfy divine justice, by the merit of an equivalent and corresponding sacrifice; and by one offering of himself can perfect forever those for whom the offering is made. Now what being less than divine—what being less than divine in nature and in might, can effect these wonders? But such a teacher—such a ruler—such a priest—is Christ. And must we not believe him to be God? "I speak as to wise men, judge ye."†

In entering upon this discussion, my brethren, we observed that the divinity of a crucified Redeemer is a mystery we presume not to scan. We have, it is hoped, established the fact to the conviction of such as will allow themselves to regard the plain decisions of holy writ. Jesus Christ is God equally with the Father; and yet there are not two Gods, but one God. "God is in Christ." The manner in

\* John, x. 32. 33. 38. † 1 Cor. x. 15.

which the Almighty exists in these personal distinctions baffles our investigation. Nor is it our concern to ascertain it. Perhaps it is inexplicable by the most perfect intellect of the finite order. And who art thou, O man! that launchest thy frail bark upon the ocean of infinitude to explain what thou canst never understand? And who art thou, especially, that venturkest to reject the testimony of Jehovah because it may not be supported by thine own imperfect reason? Canst thou fathom the unfathomable abyss? Canst thou measure the circle whose centre is every where and its circumference no where? "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as Heaven; what canst thou do? It is deeper than hell; what canst thou know?"\* Retire into thyself, child of the dust; be humble, and adore—be modest, and believe.

And you, brethren, who meekly receive this doctrine as it is conveyed to you by the word of truth, beware of supposing that in doing this you discharge yourselves of your obligations: on the contrary, you make them more binding. In the proportion that we elevate the dignity of the lawgiver, in that proportion do we increase the guilt of those who neglect or transgress the law. I cannot close the subject in a better manner than by reminding you of some of the obligations under which you come in receiving this doctrine of Christ's Deity. You must love that God with all your heart who so loved the world as to humble himself for its salvation. You must make this doctrine the foundation whereon to build your noblest hopes. He that wore your nature, and offered himself upon the cross to redeem you, shall he not freely give you all things? You must imitate the multitude of his virtues; but, particularly his humility; and sacrifice, when requisite, the honours and the splendours of the world. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of

\* Job, xi. 7.

no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death.”\* You must reflect how much more inexcusable you will be for sin than those to whom an incarnate God was never revealed—reasoning as an apostle did in a similar instance; “For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?”† You must habitually anticipate the day when the despised Galilean shall come in the majesty of the eternal Godhead to judge all flesh; “when every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him.”‡ When “the sun shall become black as sack cloth of hair, and the moon become as blood; when the stars of heaven shall fall unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind; when the heaven shall depart as a scroll that is rolled together, and every mountain and island shall be removed out of their places; when the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, shall hide themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains; and shall say to the mountains and rocks, fall on us and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of *the Lamb*: For the great day of his wrath is come; and *who shall be able to stand?*”§ Such must be your dispositions, my brethren; such the exercises of your hearts, and the actions of your lives; believing, as you profess to do, that Jesus is divine. Forget not that it is the Almighty’s will that you honour the Son even as you honour the Father. Believe in him, therefore—hope in him—invoke his name—adore him—lend your voices to swell the seraphick harmonious “Hallelujah, glory to the Lamb forever.—AMEN.”

\* Philip. ii. 5.—8. † Heb. ii. 2. 3. ‡ Rev. i. 7. § Rev. vi. 12—17.

## SERMON IX.

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### NATURAL AND REVEALED RELIGION.

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ROMANS, i. 20.

*“The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.”*

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A SLIGHT transposition of this passage may be expedient for the purpose of illustrating it. “The invisible things of him,” that is, of the divine Being, “even his eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen from the creation of the world,” that is, from the earliest ages down through every age, “being understood by the things that are made.”

From these words, I think we may collect that, whether the idea of God be, or be not innate in the human mind, the mind is, at least, capacitated, when its faculties attain a certain degree of expansion, to deduce inferences respecting the Deity, and his perfections, founded in the relation of cause and effect, which inferences constitute what may be distinctively called natural religion, as opposed to such knowledge of the same objects as may be derived from revelation, either immediately from heaven, or mediately through tradition.

Now the importance of this natural religion cannot reasonably be disputed; since even revelation itself presupposes it: presupposes the existence of certain principles—certain notions in the mind, by which its own importance, necessity, and reality, are in a great degree, to be tested. And it is observable, that however feeble the light of this natu-

ral religion, it was sufficient, as we learn from the context, to leave the Heathens who had misimproved it, without excuse.

Let us discover, if we can, the extent of natural religion. Let us ascertain its limits; so that we may avoid the two opposite faults of undervaluing the intellectual faculties given us by the God of nature, and of derogating from the necessity and superiour excellence of that knowledge which is communicated to us by the God of grace.

“The invisible things of him, even his eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen from the creation of the world, being understood by the things that are made.”

The spirituality of God, renders his nature and his attributes imperceptible by our senses. In condescension, therefore, to our wants and our inability, he is pleased, if we may be allowed the expression, to embody himself in his works. These give us somewhat more than an intimation of their operator, and his transcendent majesty. The order of the apostle’s words, in which the eternal power of the Creator precedes his Godhead, leads us to the manner in which the objects that every where meet our eyes bespeak a great, an Almighty, and all-wise first cause. No reasonable man who contemplates the face of the universe can avoid concluding immediately and unhesitatingly, that it is the production of an omnipotent Being; and if so, of an eternal being; and if so, again, of a divine being: for, combine the ideas of omnipotence and eternity, and you necessarily have the idea of Godhead. Every sound mind will concur in the reasoning of Job; “Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee; or speak to the earth and it shall teach thee; and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?”\*

The nineteenth Psalm affords a very beautiful and animated illustration of this subject. “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handy-work.

\* Job, xii. 7—9.



Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun; which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof."

Thus, although the immaterial divinity eludes our sensible perception, yet he cannot fail to be recognized by the eye and ear of reason in the harmony, the beauty, and the splendour of external nature. From the creatures, we ascend to the knowledge of the Creator—from the excellence of the things formed, to the glory of the mighty former. Years have been gathered into the grave of time—age has succeeded to age—still the worlds that lie scattered over yon immeasurable expanse, continue to publish the unwasting grandeur of the Architect of nature. Still,

"The spacious firmament on high,  
With all the blue ethereal sky,  
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,  
Their great Original proclaim.

The unwearied sun, from day to day,  
Does his Creator's power display,  
And publishes to every land  
The work of an Almighty hand.

Soon as the evening shades prevail,  
The moon takes up the wondrous tale,  
And, nightly, to the listening earth,  
Repeats the story of her birth;

Whilst all the stars that round her burn,  
And all the planets in their turn,  
Confirm the tidings as they roll,  
And spread the truth from pole to pole.

What though, in solemn silence, all  
 Move round the dark terrestrial ball?  
 What though no real voice nor sound  
 Amid their radiant orbs be found?

In reason's ear they all rejoice,  
 And utter forth a glorious voice;  
 Forever singing, as they shine,  
*The hand that made us is Divine."*

The language of the creation is in very deed, a universal language. It is addressed to all, and is intelligible by all. It is not locked up in books; neither is it confined to a chosen nation: all nations are blessed in it; all the inhabitants of the earth can read, understand, and profit by it. "From the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same," it carries the knowledge of the divinity, and makes his name a praise in the earth.

But this knowledge of the divinity, necessarily implies a certain measure of information concerning such of his adorable attributes as have an influence more or less direct upon human conduct: his power; his wisdom; his sovereignty; his holiness; his justice; his goodness.

His power and wisdom are alike discoverable by the attentive observer; in the creation, preservation, and government of all things.

Of his absolute sovereignty and uncontrollable dominion every man must be convinced, who reflects that he who made the universe, and for whose pleasure it is continued in existence, is of necessity the rightful proprietor of it; and may do what he wills with his own.

Of his goodness no man can be insensible who beholds the material sun shedding his genial and enlivening beams upon the evil as well as upon the good; the rains of heaven falling in kindly showers upon the unjust as well as upon the just; summer and winter, seed time and harvest, succeeding each other to all; and fruitful seasons crowning the toils, and gladdening the hearts, of the children of men.

His holiness and his justice are perceivable by all who will attentively follow the footsteps of his providence, and faithfully compare the actions of moral agents with their general consequences; the prosperous and adverse events which occur in respect to individuals and communities with the moral causes which give them birth. For surely the holiness and justice of God may be inferred from that distribution of good to the righteous and evil to the wicked which takes place even in the present life.

It is certain that where there is a law, there must be a law-giver. The notion of the one can never be entertained irrespectively of the idea of the other. The two are not to be disassociated.

It is equally certain that the character of the law-giver is rationally inferrable from the nature and qualities of his system of laws.

But it would appear from experience, observation, and history, that, as there is a law in our members, so there is another law in our hearts, which scripture denominates the law of God. It is a law which "is holy; and its commandments are holy, just, and good."\* It is very evident, therefore, that the giver of this law must be a lover of holiness and justice; and that holiness and justice are among his perfections.

On this ground it is that our apostle in the context builds his condemnation of the Gentiles: "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful: but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools; and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore," adds the apostle, and the judicial recompense which he records is truly formidable, "Wherefore, God also gave *them up* to uncleanness through the lusts of *their* own hearts,

\* Rom. vii. 12.

who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge," (observe, it is not said that they did not, or could not, know God, but that they did not like to retain God in their knowledge; the fault being more in the will than in the understanding) "God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient."\*

But, since such was the state, and such the deportment, of those who were in possession of this natural religion, and who ought to have been influenced by its principles, it is obvious that, whatever discoveries it may make, and however it may suffice to render mankind inexcusable for their sins, it is, of itself, inadequate to satisfy their wants—to strengthen their infirmities—to lead them to Heaven.

Let us mark the principal particulars in which it falls short of that perfection of religious knowledge which is indispensable to human nature in its degenerate state.

It is deficient in certainty. This is its grand and distinguishing reproach. In many instances it amounts to little more than surmise; and in no case perhaps reflects the unclouded light of truth. It must of necessity vary with the different capacities and powers of different minds. Thus it came to pass that however universal and permanent the impression of the divine existence, the doctrine of the divine unity gradually yielded to Polytheism; until, at length, the idols of the nations were multiplied to a degree not less absurd than wicked. And certainly the present state of the unevangelized world, authorizes inferences respecting the competency of natural religion altogether as unfavourable as those derivable from the opinions and practices of pagan antiquity.

Natural religion gives no assurance of a state of being after temporal death, how much soever it may encourage the hope of it. The immortality of the soul was a point much

\* Rom. i. 21.—23.

contested among the learned Heathens. Many of them wished it to be true: some of them suspected it to be true: but I think I am correct in affirming, that not one of them can with propriety, be said to have believed it to be true. It was reserved for the Son of God to bring life and immortality to light by the gospel; to certify the doubting, trembling soul that she should survive the wreck of her material tene-ment, and live forever.

Very little more than a superficial observation of the world and what passes in it, may suffice to shew that, with respect to intellectual and spiritual things, it is the theatre of disorder and irregularity. But on the origin and extent of that disorder and irregularity—on the cause and magnitude of those evils both physical and moral, which disfigure the creation of God—natural religion is, and cannot but be silent. The knowledge of these, however, is of the last importance; as it serves to vindicate and illustrate the proceedings of divine providence in the present state, and disposes us to avail ourselves of those means which God has been pleased to announce for the recovery of our lost virtue and happiness. We must believe and know that the disease under which we labour is rooted in our system, and threatens to destroy, or, at least, to impair it, before we will either seek after a remedy, or use it when found.

The religion of nature allows us to hope that repentance *may* protect us against *punishment*, but not to believe that it *will* so protect us; still less does it authorize the expectation that repentance will place us in the condition of those who have never sinned.

From the religion of nature we may perhaps, learn the placability of the divine Being; but we cannot learn from it whether any, or if any, what atonement, or sacrifice, or propitiation may be necessary to avert his just displeasure against our sins.

There is one point on which this natural religion is perfectly barren of information—on which it throws not the



most feeble glimmering of light—I mean the resurrection of the body. This is an article of pure faith—a doctrine which reason never could have discovered; but which, when established by well attested revelation, converted and enlightened reason submissively and gratefully receives. If any apprehensions of this truth existed without the pale of God's covenanted people, they can only be regarded as the feeble vestiges of primitive faith—the traditionary remains of original revelation. When the wise and polished Athenians “heard” St. Paul\* discourse “of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked; and others said we will hear thee again of this matter.”

Natural religion, thus uncertain—thus dark and obscure—opposes an ineffectual shield against the terrors of death. Reflect for a moment on the condition of the man, who, with no higher attainments than such as he derives from this source, finds himself placed on the connecting point between time and eternity: life, with its tender ties and bland enjoyments, receding, and the darkness of the grave, with all its attendant horrors of suspense and fearful surmise, gathering fast about him. The household charities muster around the departing spirit. The wife and infant cling to the heart and intertwine themselves with its every string. Shall I see them no more forever? Must love and happiness expire? The light that shews me affection in anguish, is it, or is it not to revisit these eyes? Objects dear to me as my existence, is our separation to be eternal? Or is there, indeed, another state of being? If there is, what is to become of me? Conscience has long since told me that I am a sinner; and I have endeavoured to repent of my offences. But can repentance save me? Can repentance blot out the handwriting of accusation, and snatch me from deserved punishment? Is Heaven ready to pardon? Does Heaven require expiation for its violated laws? What shall be my propitiatory offering? Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord,

\* Acts, xvii. 32.

and bow myself before the high God? Who will be my advocate? O, for some arm to pluck the sting of death! O, for some conquerour to triumph over the grave, and lead captivity captive!

Thus do the teachings of nature fall short of that perfection of religious knowledge which is indispensable to the best interests of mankind. Thus are they inadequate to satisfy our wants—to strengthen our infirmities—to lead us to Heaven.

Let no one imagine however, that they are devoid of utility. Although natural religion cannot do every thing for us, yet it is very far from being unimportant. What was said in the former part of this discourse, has shewn that it is amply sufficient to convict men of transgression, and to represent them in their own eyes as inexcusable for their sins: and from this we may easily collect, that it is our best preparative for the reception of the superiour light of divine communications: that in proportion as men possess it in purity and power will be their disposition to submit to revealed truth, and their qualification to enjoy and improve the advantages of heavenly tuition. Accordingly, to use the words of an eminent writer,\* “we find, in fact, that where there was any thing of the knowledge of the true God, either by light of nature, or by tradition, there the gospel was soonest received; the minds of men were better fitted and prepared for faith in Christ the Son of God, by this degree of knowledge of God the Father.”

I will conclude with a few words of improvement. And,

**FIRST.**—I observe that there is a measure of respect due to what is called the religion of nature; and to refuse, or withhold it, does no service to the cause of revelation. Whatever religious system purports to be a revelation from God, must, to a certain extent, submit to be tested by those universal impressions which are made upon the human mind by the exercise of its own reasoning faculty. Thus, sup-

\* Dr. Watts.

pose that a religious system should be offered to our faith containing doctrines and precepts at war with the plainest notions of justice and equity; would not these notions at once prompt us to doubt, or rather to deny that the system proposed, came from God; and consequently, to reject it? The truth is, natural religion, considered as a series of deductions made by the efforts of the understanding, is to be traced to the same divine source whence revelation confessedly emanates. Reason is the candle of the Lord in man. Let no one, therefore, imagine that he honours the great fountain of light and truth, by magnifying one of his gifts at the expense of another. All his ways are ways of wisdom; and all his works minister to the glory of his name. But,

SECOND.—I am sorry to say that there is much more need to caution men against an over weaning deference to natural religion, than against the opposite error. Strange as it may seem, and disgraceful as it undoubtedly is to the human understanding, there are those who turn in disgust from the splendour of heavenly wisdom, or convert the very gifts of revelation into engines by which to assault its strong holds. Availing themselves of knowledge which they obtain solely from the teachings of the inspired servants of God, they straitway become wiser in their own conceit than their instructors; assert the sufficiency of natural light; and boast that by the strength of their own reason they have elicited truths for which they are indebted to the Bible alone; and which the exalted intellect of a Socrates, a Plato, or a Tully, was unable to discover. Absurd! to choose a glimmering, rather than a blazing light. The bat and the owl prefer the twinkling of a star, or darkness itself, to the solar glory: and none but the fool, who is even disposed in his heart to say there is no God, will forsake certainty for doubt; the meridian lustre of truth, for the obscure intimations of probability.

Pleasant, my brethren, are the places in which our lot is

cast; and goodly is the heritage which we possess! The Heathen prostrates himself in stupid and ineffectual worship before the shrine of his dumb idol. The world by wisdom knoweth not God. But the day-spring from on high hath visited us: on us the Son of righteousness hath arisen with healing under his wings: the night of ignorance hath retired; and the clouds of uncertainty no longer rest upon the face of day. What shall we render to the Lord for all his benefits? for that law of his which is perfect, converting the soul: that testimony which is sure, making wise the simple: those statutes which are right, rejoicing the heart: that commandment which is pure, enlightening the eyes?\* In every case which the religion of nature leaves doubtful, the religion of the Bible makes plain our way before us. The unity of God; his moral attributes; the cause of those mixtures of good and evil which characterize the dispensations of his providence; his pliability; the means of reconciliation with him; the efficacy and happy consequences of repentance; the immortality of the soul; the resurrection of the body; the eternal life of the righteous; the everlasting destruction of the wicked; such are the truths which we learn from the sure word of inspiration; such the motives to deter from sin, the allurements to persuade to virtue, held out by the religion of the Bible.

Soon may these truths be known to the wide world! Soon may these motives and these allurements be published to every descendant of Adam! Son of God! soon may the Heathen be given to thee for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession! that the nations may learn war no more—that the habitations of cruelty, may echo the song of praise and thanksgiving—that those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of spiritual death, may exult in the inextinguishable light of Heaven—and that righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost may descend and abide forever in the regenerated dwellings of mankind!—**AMEN!**

\* Psalm, xix. 7. 8.





## SERMON X.

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### WORLDLY-MINDEDNESS.

INIMICAL TO THE RECEPTION OF SACRED TRUTH.

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GENESIS, XIX. 14.

*“And Lot went out and spake unto his sons-in-law which married his daughters, and said; Up, and get ye out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law.”*

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THE city here alluded to was Sodom. Its inhabitants were preeminent in sin. Corrupted by the conveniences, and yet more by the luxuries which they possessed; by abundance, ease, and idleness; they gave themselves up to voluptuousness in its vilest and most unnatural forms. So multiplied and so atrocious were their provocations, that the Judge of all the earth, who cannot do wrong, saw fit to awake his long sleeping thunder, and literally to burn them up in the flames of destruction.

In this miserable city, ripe for the sacrifice of the divine indignation, resided Lot, the nephew of the patriarch Abraham. He was a righteous person, and therefore exempt from the fate of his guilty countrymen. Two angels were sent to him; who appeared in human shape, and were his guests. “And they said unto him; Hast thou here any besides? Sons-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place: for we will destroy this place; because the cry of them

is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it. And Lot went out and spake unto his sons-in-law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get ye out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law."\*

"He seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law." Not that they supposed him to tell them what himself believed to be untrue: his character was too well established to countenance, or even admit such a supposition. But the subject matter of the prediction appeared so improbable, so unlike the ordinary dispensations of providence, that they regarded their father-in-law as the victim of a superstitious credulity.

On what would this vain imagination—these injurious doubts be grounded?

Certainly, the subject matter of the oracle was of no common importance. It was the total perdition and annihilation of their city and its dependencies. There was no time to lose. The fulfilment of the prediction, was, as to time, indefinite. The prediction, in itself, could not but derive weight and consequence from the character of the person predicting. He was a wise and prudent man; his integrity well established, his domestick attachments well approved. It was equally improbable that he should be deceived, and that he should deceive others. Added to this, he evinced a disposition to exemplify in his own conduct what he exhorted others to perform. He manifested this willingness to exile himself from a country which he was anxious to persuade his friends to abandon.

What he announced, was far from being improbable.—There could be nothing incredible in the threatened destruction, considering the immutable justice of the Most High, and the inordinate vices of those who provoked it. The simple fact, that Sodom was to be destroyed, was all of which a doubt could be entertained. And even of this

\* Gen. xix. 12.—14.

fact, no doubt ought to have been suffered to remain on the part of those who had been credibly informed of the declaration of the angels appointed to reveal it.

To what, then, shall we ascribe the unbelief of the sons-in-law of Lot? That, like the mass of their countrymen, they were totally insensible to the principles and obligations of religion, is a supposition altogether inadmissible. Whatever modern fathers may do, Lot would never have thrown away his daughters upon irreligious and immoral husbands. But a man may externally make a profession of faith, and, to a certain extent, shape his actions according to the divine rule of right, who, nevertheless, is far from believing in spirit and in truth. A man may lead what is generally called a moral life, and yet perish in the midst of the wicked. Lot's sons-in-law were deficient in that faith which is practical and operative. They walked by sight, rather than by faith. Looking at the things which are seen, they could not forsake Sodom. They were not to be persuaded that a place which had subsisted so long the favourite seat of pleasure and prosperity, should be thus speedily subverted. They apprehended that God was too lenient and compassionate to devote such multitudes to destruction.

Blinded by these and similar misconceptions, they yielded no credence to the representations of their pious relative. He had the mortification to find that all his warnings were lost upon them; to see their hearts still cleave to the threatened city; and to anticipate, with fearful certainty, the execution of that menaced vengeance in which they were about to participate.

And soon did that vengeance overtake them. The angels expedited the escape of their righteous entertainer, his wife and his daughters. The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar, a neighbouring city, exempted, on his account, from the extended desolation. And "then the Lord rained upon Sodom, and upon Gomorrah, brimstone and fire from the Lord out of Heaven. And he overthrew

those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.”\*

Religion is an affair of the utmost moment and solemnity: and yet, how many are there who appear, like the sons-in-law of Lot, to treat it as if it were a mockery! Whence does this dreadful infatuation arise? and what have they to expect who are chargeable with it?

In the consideration of these particulars; in the answer to these inquiries; you will be possessed of the subject of this discourse.

*In the first place.*—Religion is an affair of the utmost moment, solemnity, and, let me add, certainty. Its solemn importance, there lives not the man of sane mind who will deny. It is too evident to require demonstration. It is of all imaginable things the most awfully momentous. In the emphasis of inspiration, it is *the one thing needful*. To be religious, is to obey the laws—to keep the commandments—to promote the glory—and to secure the favour of Omnipotence. The salvation of the soul is staked upon religion. Eternity, with all its horrors and its bliss, is staked upon it. Yes—religion, bear witness alike ye spirits of the damned, and ye glorified inhabitants of light; religion is solemn as immortality is desirable—momentous, as the redemption of the soul is precious.

But religion is matter of fact. There is all possible certainty in it. Not a doubt can shake its foundations.

The annunciation of the temporal judgment that was to exterminate the guilty countrymen of Lot, as I have already intimated, contained nothing that was improbable; and therefore his sons-in-law were censurable for refusing obedience to it, as though it were an idle tale. But, to say that religion contains nothing that is improbable, would be to say incalculably less than enough. There is not a solitary doctrine, precept, or history, among those which it proposes, that does not approve itself to sound reason and en-

\* Gen. xix. 24. 25.

lightened conscience. Let appetite and passion be at rest; let vanity and folly be awed into silence; and I scruple not to assert that religion will enshrine itself in every heart as the truth of the Most High.

The arrival of the commissioned angels in Sodom; and the character of Lot, made venerable by wisdom, integrity, and piety; ought to have recommended the annunciation of the approaching event to the belief of his family. But is not religion conveyed and confirmed to us by the only begotten Son of God—the word made flesh—celestial wisdom sojourning on earth in human form? O ye, who are in search of truth, what would ye more? After the attested manifestation, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, let the gainsayer be dumb—let hesitancy be ashamed.

The family of Lot might have discovered the probable truth of the denunciation of which they were notified, in an event which had already occurred in Sodom: I allude to the blindness with which the heavenly strangers had affected the mob that surrounded the house of their entertainer. In like manner we ought to be convinced of the reality of that future awful and impartial reckoning which religion foretels as the sanction of its obligations, by a faithful retrospect of the various other predictions it has published. Consider the subversion of the cities of the plain, and the extermination of their inhabitants: Consider the universal deluge of waters from above and from beneath, from which Noah and his household alone were permitted to escape: both which manifestations of divine justice were alike foretold and disregarded: consider these events; and tell us if there is not a God who judgeth in the earth. Consider these events; and tremble at the sure prospect of a judgment to come. Listen to the reasoning of an apostle: “If God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; and spared not the old world, but saved Noah, the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness; bringing



in the flood upon the world of the ungodly: And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; and delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked; the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.”\*

*In the second place*—Although religion be an affair thus solemn—thus momentous—thus unquestionable—how many are there, nevertheless, who appear, like the sons-in-law of Lot, to treat it as if it were a mockery?

That I do not speak unadvisedly, a few observations may convince you. Attend to the opinions entertained by the greater part of mankind on the subject of religion. Do they seem to you to consider themselves as under an obligation strictly and scrupulously to cultivate a religious life? Enforce upon them the distinguishing principles of the gospel. Recommend to them the love of God and the love of man. Exhort them to renounce the world; to deny themselves; to take up their cross; to be humble, lowly, contrite; to forgive enmity, and return good for evil, blessing for cursing. What, in general, will be the consequence? They will arraign your system as oppressively severe. They will deny that to embrace it is their indispensable duty. But would they arraign *your* system, would they recede from *their* duty, if they were convinced that the matters proposed to them were serious truths?

Attend, again, to the external deportment of most men. They, whom the kinsman of Abraham warned of the approach of a signal desolation, evinced their mistrust of the admonition by remaining in the menaced city. In like manner, is it not obvious that multitudes of those who name the name of Christ, persist in refusing to depart from iniquity, however faithful and vigorous the efforts made to reclaim them?

\* 2. Pet. ii. 4, 5, 6, 7, 9.

Sinners: the ministers of religion, anxious to pluck you as brands out of the burning, endeavour to make you sensible of the tremendous consequences of enmity to God. Did we not seem unto you "as those who mocked," could you be content to sit down in calm indifference, persevering in iniquity, and fearless of the gathering storm?

We tell you, that, unless you be born again, you cannot see the kingdom of God: that you must love and serve God here, if you would aspire to his presence in Heaven: that wisdom's ways are ways of peace, while the paths of the destroyer, vice, lead down to the pit: that righteous dispositions, and subjected passions and affections, must be your preparation for a judgment to come. Did we not seem unto you "as those who mocked," would you delay your conversion? would you say to us, go thy way for this time; at a more convenient season we will listen unto thee?

You often hear from us that sensual indulgence is poison to the soul: that pleasure, inordinately pursued, is the grave of virtue and tranquillity. Did we not seem unto you "as those who mocked," would you still with unresisting submission wear the fetters of voluptuousness?

Contrast the conduct of numbers when the world courts their regard, with that which they exhibit when religion puts in her claim. The contrast, unfortunately for them, is so marked, that the most inattentive observer cannot fail to perceive it. The persons to whom I refer, (and there are multitudes of them) will act, in the affairs of this world, with deliberation, steadiness, perseverance, engagedness, vigour, and zeal. However intrinsically inconsiderable the interest which excites their pursuit, they are diligent—they are provident—they are indefatigable—they invite counsel—they submit to rebuke—all their faculties are alive—every procurable resource is put in requisition. But the most weighty of all concerns, alas! how is it slighted! Here, inquiry is painful—here, conversation troublesome—here, ardour is extinguished—exertion loses its spring—opportuni-

ty passes by unimproved—and year follows year into the Eternal Presence with the record of impenitency and obduracy. But, were this whole business of religion viewed as any thing better than an idle deception, could men be thus infatuated?

*In the third place.*—Whence does this dreadful infatuation arise? Why is it that God, and they who speak for God, should seem unto any “as those who mock them?”

An unbelieving temper, and a worldly mind, wrought upon the sons-in-law of Lot, and induced them to undervalue the counsels of their venerable relation. An unbelieving temper, and a worldly mind; a disposition to doubt when God speaks; and an overweening attachment to things present and temporal; a predeliction for the walk of sight, in contempt of the walk of faith; these form the sources of opposition to religion in every age. I speak not now of the avowedly profane—of the unblushing infidel. I speak of unbelief in the household of faith—of irreligion in the external family of the Saviour. The majority of the nominal friends of Christ have as little of the true and *saving* faith as his undisguised enemies. Nor can it be otherwise. In early life they are uninstructed by those whose duty, whose privilege, and whose interest it is, to “train them up in the way they should go;” “to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” In consequence of this neglect, they are averse in riper years, to study and meditation on these subjects. Whatever good impressions they may have accidentally received, are checked by the cares and the pleasures of after life. Under these circumstances, what wonder if divine things be regarded as *mockery* by the eye of an unimproved, if not a perverted intellect?

Indeed, so far are many who call themselves Christians from possessing the true and beneficial faith of Jesus, that they encourage themselves in notions diametrically opposed to it, and fundamentally subversive of it: notions, calculated to banish the fear of God from the bosom of man. God,

say they, is too lenient and compassionate to execute his threatenings. Were he to execute them, what multitudes, and among them how many of our dearest friends, would perish! And, after all, who is there amongst us, that can lead such a life as the evangelical system requires?

Now, that men reasoning in this way, should cordially embrace religion, is not to be supposed. That they should yield a ready assent to the promises, and, especially, to the comminations of christianity, is not to be expected.

An unbelieving temper, however, is not more inimical to the reception of sacred truth than is a worldly mind. The love of the pleasant places and goodly heritage of Sodom, prevented the perverse part of Lot's family from profiting by his careful admonitions. The love of the world, its pleasures, its wealth, and its honours, cannot co-exist, in equality of influence, with religious sentiment. The one, or the other, must give place; and, as present feeling will generally be consulted by the infirmity of lapsed nature in preference to the expectations of futurity, worldly-mindedness too often succeeds in banishing the superiour affection. Yes, my brethren: when we see you disposed to revolt against the salutary restraints of religion, the inference cannot be evaded, that the love of this perishing--this treacherous world, is paramount in your hearts: that you are strangers to the powers of the world to come: and that the unsullied and undecaying glories of the kingdom of heaven in vain solicit your aspirations. You love this world! In other words, you love a nothing! A nothing, did I say? Alas! would it were nothing! You love that which every day betrays your hopes, and will, sooner or later, pierce you through with ten thousand sorrows; and, at the same time, you pour contempt upon an inheritance which fadeth not away; you lightly esteem a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory; you impiously reject a crown of unalloyed and immortal splendour!

*In the fourth, and last place.*—What have they to expect, who are chargeable with such deplorable infatuation? Thus

saith a voice from Heaven: hear it, despisers of the gospel; hear it, ye whom the God of this world hath blinded; hear it, sinners in Zion; hypocritical formalists, hear it and tremble: "As it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from Heaven, and destroyed them all; even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed."\* Self-apologists, God leaves not himself without witness among you. In the awful reckoning which awaits you, (and how soon it may be instituted, Omniscience alone can tell) this day will be forced upon your recollection. This day, in the name of God, I again admonish you of a judgment to come—of a fiery indignation that shall devour all those who are lovers of the world and its pleasures more than lovers of God. By the mercies of God—by the love of Christ—by your immortal spirits—by Heaven and hell—I adjure you, prepare for your escape. "Flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before you." Embrace religion. Be the followers of Jesus. Heirs of immortal blessedness, or misery! let me once more remind you that this world of gaiety, of fashion, and of folly, is not your resting place. However you may desire it, you cannot be here forever. There is a solemn hour approaching. It is an hour of apprehension—an hour of honest and searching potency—an hour which teaches more than years had done—the hour of death. At that hour, what shall become of those who know not God, and obey not his gospel? At that hour, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

When eternity opens upon the eye ere it closes in sepulchral darkness; when wife and children cling to the dying couch; when the departing spirit casts a fond retrospect upon the loves of earth; sustain me, O! my God, in the consolatory reflection that I have been a follower of Jesus; and fearlessly I will march with thee through the terrors of

\* Luke, xvii. 28.—30.



the valley--through the surging billows of the gulph--to the promised rest of Heaven: and there, where no tear is shed; no pang is felt; no groan of suffering is mingled with the hallelujahs of the just made perfect; there, will I thankfully bless, and adore, and serve thee, with every faculty of a glorified and imperishable existence.—AMEN.



## SERMON XI.

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### ON INCONSIDERATION.

AS CHARGEABLE AGAINST THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

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ISAIAH, i. 3.

*“My people doth not consider.”*

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**T**HE external church of God, or in other words, his covenanted people, is divisible into two great classes. Those who are in sincerity and truth of heart turned to God and holiness; and those who, according to the scriptural phraseology, have a name to live while they are dead; who are, by profession, believers, and in practice, sinners. The charge of inconsideration brought against Israel of old, will lie in different degrees, and in a variety of ways, against both these classes at the present day.

My design, in the first instance, with the blessing of God, is to offer a few remarks upon it, as applicable to the generality of true believers; enlightened Christians; the cordial friends of God; the sincere friends of righteousness; men who “have thought on their ways, and turned their feet to the way of Heaven’s commandments.”

Numbers there are who have thought with solemnity on divine things; who have been deeply impressed with the conviction, that without holiness no man shall ever see the Lord; and who, stimulated in consequence, to exertion, have laboured successfully, under the superiour workings of the Holy Ghost, to acquire habits of religion and virtue. The fault of inconsideration, however, still adhering to them in greater or less degrees, keeps them frequently far more short of

their duty—far more beneath the dignity of their high calling in Christ Jesus, than otherwise they would be. What I have now affirmed may be illustrated several ways.

If you look with attention upon the lives and deportment of persons, in the main, good and upright, you find them at times indulging in unjustifiable practices. You find them indolent and negligent in religious matters; not rarely indeliberate in temper, or indisposed to religious acts and exercises; retreating before the assaults of adversity; impelled by an ignorant and immoderate zeal; sinking into a melancholy and dejection dishonourable to the gospel of Christ.

FIRST.—You find them, at times, engaged in actual sins. I do not allude to the infirmities, in a manner, inseparable from our fallen nature. I allude to improprieties which a reflection such as we ought to possess; a reflection always alive—always awake—always operative, could not but make avoidable. Persons, whose attachment to Christian purity it would be alike uncharitable and unreasonable to doubt, permit themselves occasionally to trespass upon its laws in a very unjustifiable manner, and wound their own peace by yielding to the solicitations of the world and the flesh. But to what is this inconsistency imputable? Certainly to *inconsideration*. They do not reflect with sufficient steadiness and seriousness upon the consequences of every deviation from the strictness of religious principle. They do not weigh with scrupulous exactitude the result of suffering which is decreed to be the recompense of every sacrifice of conscience to gratifications whose permissibility may be doubtful. It is certain, that in proportion to a man's reflection, will be the congruity and uniformity of his deportment. Levity and thoughtlessness are inimical to the Christian life. They are traitors in sworn league with temptation. Where they are admitted into the camp, alternate triumph and defeat characterize the spiritual warfare. It is carried on with various success. Persevering watchfulness alone can give decisive victory; confer ultimate success;

and crown with permanent security. The utility and indispensableness of deep, serious, and solemn thought, is by no means confined to our entrance upon a religious course. They are equally evident at every stage of our progress. Godliness is a system of habits; and the same pious and anxious solicitude is to be cherished for their continual maintainance as for their original acquisition. And it is undeniable, that where pious and anxious solicitude; where deep, serious, and solemn thought; where persevering watchfulness; where sober and steady reflection are wanting, the character will also be defective in that sacred purity, and that beautiful consistency of life and conversation which are the highest glory of real christianity.

SECOND.—If you look with attention upon the lives and deportment of persons, in the main good and upright, you find them sometimes reprehensibly indolent and negligent in the concerns of their salvation. It may be that they do not err and stray so far from the paths of heavenly wisdom as they might, and as the earthly-minded multitude do. But the important question is, do they advance? do they increase? do they improve? Negative virtues do not suffice for the disciple of Jesus. It is not enough that he is exempt from the imputation of any marked evil. Mankind are not unreasonable in expecting, what the evangelical statutes require, *positive good*. Why is it that they who not only name the name, but, as in a judgment of scriptural charity we must suppose, have also imbibed the spirit of Christ, yield so little of those fruits that bring credit to his cause? Why is it that they are not more zealously affected towards the good service in which they have enlisted? Why is it that they redeem not more of their time from trifles unworthy the contemplation of a Heaven-enlightened spirit? It is because they are not sufficiently considerate. This is their radical defect. We need go no farther to account for the paucity of their attainments. Their minds are not entirely intent upon the one thing needful; therefore, their pi-



ety and their virtue are stationary. They are very prone to forget the things which are behind; but, alas! it is too seldom that they may press towards the things that are before. Were it otherwise, would they not be more diligent in working out their own salvation? in making their calling and election sure?

**THIRD.**—If you look with attention upon the lives and deportment of persons, in the main, good and upright, you find them not rarely indevout in temper, or languid and spiritless in the performance of religious acts and exercises. This is a defect arising from inconsideration, more than from any other cause. The more a Christian is addicted to meditation, the more spiritual he becomes; and the more cordially inclined to the various services of religion. “While” the royal Psalmist “was musing” he tells us “the fire burned within him,”\* and his emotions forthwith found utterance. How can a good man be habitually engaged in the contemplation of the attributes of God; the favours communicated by his munificent hand; our obligations to adore him for his majesty, and love him for his goodness; the number and magnitude of the advantages enjoyed by the church and her children in virtue of the everlasting covenant sealed and established in the blood of Christ; the experience of the pleasantness and peacefulness of wisdom’s ways; and the certainty that a life of religion will issue in an immortality of bliss; how can a good man be habitually engaged in contemplating such things, and not be the better for the contemplation? and not derive from it fresh vigour to his Heaven-excited and Heaven-ascending passions and affections? The truly serious mind that would appreciate religious subjects, will not be remiss in reflecting upon them; remissness in this particular being undoubtedly at the foundation of much of the apathy and indevotion prevailing among Christians.

**FOURTH.**—If you look with attention upon the lives and

\* Psalm, xxxix. 3.

department of persons, in the main, good and upright, you find them too frequently retreating before the assaults of adversity. It is astonishing how closely the hearts of many whose general conversation may be said to be in Heaven, remain wedded to the desire of temporal good; and how timidly they shrink from contact with temporal evil. Surely *inconsideration* is the root of bitterness from which these ill weeds spring, to deface the new creation. Surely the man who remembers, as he ought to do, that this life is a life of vanity; that man cometh up to be cut down like a flower; that the world, and the fashion of it, alike pass away; the man who bears in mind the essential mutability and perpetual fluctuation of the things that now are; the impression of the touch of death upon every object beneath the sun; and the total and radical incompetency of this world to fill the ever-asking and never-satisfied spirit; surely he who is wont to reflect in this manner, cannot but experience a turning of his views, his hopes and fears, his joys and sorrows, into a channel widely different from that in which, without such reflection, they would continue to flow. To men who accustom themselves thus to think and meditate, afflictions make their approach, in a measure, stingless and disarmed. If I see you, notwithstanding your religious principles may have estranged you to a certain extent from the world, still unduly engaged in its pursuits; still inclined to dally with its pleasures; still aspiring to its acquisitions; have I not reason to conclude that you do not consider? But especially, if I see you depressed to an extreme by this world's reverses, bewailing its vanished joys, possessions, splendours, and renown; thrown into inordinate agitation by the images of a prosperity departed, as you figure to yourselves, to return no more, have I not reason to conclude; and God, has he not reason to complain, that you do not consider? Certainly, were you to consider as you ought; were you to meditate; were you to reflect; were you, retiring within the sanctuary of your hearts, to hold communion there, in sacred stillness

with God and your own souls; views and emotions so erroneous would have no place. Habits of consideration would discipline your virtue. They would enable you to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. They would place your feet upon a rock, and establish your goings; and convince you that a believer should glory in the tribulation through which he enters into rest.

**FIFTH.**—If you look with attention upon the lives and deportment of persons, in the main, good and upright, you find them very often actuated by an ignorant and immoderate zeal. There is a zeal for God which displeases him, because it is not according to knowledge; and not restrained by the wholesome limitations of religion. Perhaps there is no period in the history of the church of Christ, that does not disclose the pitiable ravages committed on her peace, by irritable, and doubtless, in some instances, well-meaning zealots. And why is it that accrimonious controversy has separated, not only individuals, but entire sections of the heritage of God? Alas! it is because “his people do not consider.” If they would but reflect—if they would but accustom themselves to bear in mind, that zeal, like every other virtue, has its limits—and that these are defined by the superiour law of charity; internal persecutions, fiery contests, exclusive claims to truth, preeminence, and authority, would be unknown in the household of faith. Caution and deliberation would precede the adoption of opinions, and brotherly kindness qualify the expression of them. God speed the day when his church shall be purged of zealots!

**SIXTH AND LAST.**—If you look with attention upon the lives and deportment of persons, in the main, good and upright, you find them sometimes, too often indeed, sinking into a melancholy and dejection, dishonourable to the gospel of Christ. Here, if any where, inconsideration is perniciously at work. Who that possesses, and will exert the faculty of reflection, can avoid perceiving that the tendency, and not more the tendency, than the design of the religion

of the Son of God, is to make his followers happy, and through them to promote the happiness of all mankind? How often have we to lament that either erroneous views of the gospel, or a disordered constitution of body, and, perhaps, both these united, throw an atmosphere of forbidding gloom around men who fear the Lord? O! would they but consider that God is good to all, and that his tender mercies are over all his works! O! would they but consider that like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him; and that he who knows their frame, forgets not that they are but dust! O! would they but consider that God, who is rich in mercy, hath given them a most expressive sign of his favour and protection, by receiving them, through baptism, into the number of his chosen people; into the arms of his church, and the salvation of his holy covenant! Inconsiderate Christian! "Why art thou cast down, and why disquieted within thee? Hope thou in God; for thou shalt yet praise him who is the health of thy countenance, and thy God."\* Let thy memory be faithful to the record of his glorious deeds of compassion and condescension performed for believers in every age; and doubt not that he will extend his grace to thee. Avouch him to be thy God. Repose thyself upon his care. Stay thyself upon his arm. Rely with implicit confidence upon his holy promise; and the sure covenant ratified in the blood of his dear Son. God is incapable of deceiving the poor trembling spirit that takes refuge under his paternal wings. The great interceding angel perpetually beholds the face of thy Father who is in Heaven; and he whose name is love, and whose essence truth, will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

Thus I have mentioned a few of the grounds which warrant the charge of inconsideration against good men—the real people of God. I have specified several unhappy consequences resulting from it; and also several benefits growing naturally out of its reverse.

\* Psalm, xlii. 11.

I will conclude with one word of exhortation to those of my audience who may humbly hope that what has been said has a particular reference to them. Brethren, abjure inconsideration. It has a most unpropitious influence upon your present peace and satisfaction; and in proportion as it is submitted to, it will disqualify you for the better life of the world to come. Be instant in self-examination, meditation, and prayer. Commune with your own hearts. Consider your ways; and take heed unto your doings. Remember that religion is a serious thing; salvation an arduous work; the soul precious beyond calculation; life short, frail and precarious; death certain, and near at hand; eternity before you; and a deceitful world labouring to detain you from its joys. Be sober; be vigilant. Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

“Now, the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ: to whom be glory forever and ever.”\*—AMEN.

\* Heb. xiii. 20. 21.



## SERMON XII.

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### ON INCONSIDERATION.

AS CHARGEABLE AGAINST THE MERELY NOMINAL  
CHRISTIAN.

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ISAIAH, i. 5.

“*My people doth not consider.*”

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**M**y design, on the present occasion, with the blessing of God, is to offer a few remarks on this charge of *inconsideration* as lying against a very different class of persons in the church from those to whom it was applied in the morning's discourse.

Among the outward professors of the gospel faith, there are, undoubtedly, very many who, having a name to live, are yet, to the best of purposes, *dead*; and who, submitting in speculation to that doctrine which is according to Godliness, are, in practice, sinners: for, that there are sinners in Zion, is no new thing.

Now, that such people are *inconsiderate*, in a very conspicuous degree, and to a very deplorable extent, may be made appear from the following observations.

FIRST.—“The wicked, through the pride of his countenance,” says the Psalmist,\* “will not seek after God; God is not in all his thoughts.” The nature and perfections of the Divine Being; especially his essential disapprobation of moral evil, and his fixed determination to avenge the violated laws of virtue in every unrepented instance; these are things which are rarely permitted to occupy the meditations, or disturb the enjoyments, of worldly men. They do not

\* Psalm, x. 4.

reflect that while God, being a spirit, is imperceptible by mortal eyes, he is yet every where present; and that the eye of infinite purity is in every place, beholding the *evil*, as well as the *good*. They banish the remembrance of what his inspired servants have written for their instruction; "that the foolish," or ungodly, "shall not stand in his sight;" that he "hateth all workers of iniquity;" that "he is not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither, shall evil dwell with him;"\* that "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish,"† shall be the inevitable portion of the impious and unrighteous; of all those who shall be found ignorant of God and disobedient to the gospel. They will not allow themselves to think on the immutability of *him* who, to mark the perfection and stability of his works, is in scripture denominated *a rock*. They lose sight of the sword of justice suspended by Heaven's unchangeable decree over the heads of the impenitent. They try to forget that what God hath once spoken, that will he infallibly perform; the threatenings of his tribunal, being, like the promises of his mercy-seat, sure of their accomplishment. Were these awful truths received into the bosom of serious consideration, sinners would no longer persist in treasuring up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Were these awful truths received into the bosom of serious consideration, the vestibule of the temple would, as in primitive times, be crowded with weeping penitents, and the altar encompassed with contrite adorers.

**SECOND.**—The mass of nominal believers take no thought respecting the end of their being, and the true felicity of their nature. They may speculate handsomely upon the subject, perhaps, but in this case they treat it rather as an exercise of ingenuity, than as an inquiry fundamentally connected with their salvation. The business of glorifying their Creator and Redeemer is not in their contemplations.

\* Psalm, v. 4. 5.

† Rom. ii. 8. 9.

Their happiness is not found in the joys of the Divine Presence, because they will not suffer their thoughts to run in such a channel, or to rest on such an object. They seem to be industrious in forgetting that in their formation God had designs more exalted than in giving a temporary being to the beasts that perish; that the superiour faculty of intelligence with which he has endued them, indicates a superiour destination, and should conduct to superiour pursuits and attainments; and that the interests of the soul require to be consulted in preference to the demands of the flesh, and of the sensual appetites and passions. They push from them the reflection, as often as it intrudes, that, in the nature of things, the chief good of a human being can no where be found but in the bosom of his Eternal Parent: that to fear God, is the beginning of wisdom, and its final issue, to be received into his glorious and happy presence.

THIRD.—The inconsideration of most men is but too evident, if we regard the inexcusable ingratitude manifested in their deportment. Where is the tongue that can count up the mercies of God's throne? Where is the power of calculation that is not left behind by those compassions of his which fail not—which are renewed every morning and repeated every evening? Hath he not made us? Hath he not endued us with the capacity to know him? Hath he not opened his hand liberally and supplied our fast recurring wants? Hath not his kind providence prevented our wishes? Hath he not healed our diseases, and preserved us alive amidst countless invisible deaths and dangers? Hath he not borne with our provocations—our treasons—our infidelities—our stiff-necked, rebellious, and ungodly murmurings? Hath he not given us redemption by the blood of his Son, even the remission of sins? Is he not now in Christ reconciling us unto himself, not imputing to us our flagrant trespasses? Does he not bestow his holy spirit on all who ask him? Does he not seal to us and to our children the grace of his gospel in the laver of regeneration? Does he

not give us line upon line and precept upon precept; and does he not send to us messenger after messenger, rising up early and sending them—and sending them even at the eleventh hour—warning us to break off our sins by repentance, and adjuring us to live, and not die? O, my soul! what wilt thou—what canst thou render to the Lord for all his benefits?

Great as these benefits are, however, there are men who can forget them; there are multitudes—yes—multitudes—whom we cannot persuade to think upon them with any degree of seriousness. If it were not so, would the sinner persevere in iniquity? If it were not so, would persons in covenant with God repay his goodness with ingratitude? Impossible! Men sin, because they undervalue that goodness which should lead them to repentance; and that goodness they undervalue, because they will not suffer their meditations to rest upon it; because they do not *consider*. Shameful inconsideration! The most stupid of reasonless animals are wiser than the professed children of light; for thus saith God, of old; and in every age the complaint is justifiable—“I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib; but Israel doth not know—my people doth not consider.”

FOURTH.—The indevout and impenitent do not reflect upon the nature and inestimable value of the Christian salvation. With eminent truth may it be said of them, that “this so great salvation, they *neglect*.” Little do they think on that tremendous wrath which awaits the unrepenting children of disobedience, and from which this salvation shields the returning sinner! Little do they think what an awful fate it is, to fall into the hands of the living God—to die in sin—to come forth out of an unblest grave, and go away into everlasting punishment! And not much more do they think of those eternal abodes of sinless virtue, of cloudless enjoyment, and unsullied glory, to which the justifying, adopting,

and sanctifying salvation of the gospel elevates its humble and self-denying followers.

Neither do men reflect more upon the nature, than upon the worth of Christ's salvation. They do not reflect upon the conditions of the covenant in which it is contained; upon their suitableness to the relations subsisting between God and man; the uniformity of their application; and the unchangeableness of their character. They seem willing to take for granted, without the trouble of examination, that these conditions are not the same to all persons, and at all times, indiscriminately. Some inconsiderately conclude that they impose a yoke too grievous to be borne; and, trusting in their vague apprehensions of divine mercy, give themselves no trouble about compliance with them. Others inconsiderately conclude that they are accommodated to the lusts and evil-propensions of fallen man, relieving him from the severity of God's law, and permitting him to live at his ease; and imagine that outward profession affords evidence sufficiently credible of their compliance with them. Neither of these two descriptions of people will consider--neither of them can be brought to reflect that he mistakes the conditions of the covenant--that evangelical repentance implies reformation from dead works--reformation unto life--a hearty detestation and relinquishing of sin--a sincere love and pursuit of holiness--that evangelical faith is invariably a faith that works by love--a faith that purifies the heart--and is victorious over a tempting world. How many misconceptions respecting the nature of the covenant of grace, and its mild, but equitable and holy conditions, are assignable to inconsideration?

FIFTH.—Too many there are, it should seem, who pass through life without bestowing a serious thought on the manner in which they conduct themselves, or the result to which their actions and conversation tend. It troubles them to anticipate consequences. They dread the pain of retrospection. "Every one that doeth evil," said our Lord on a



certain occasion, "hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."\* To business and to pleasure he resorts that he may avoid self-accusation. Amidst the din and bustle of the world, conscience is not heard. From its fascinating dissipations, sober thought retires. The honest and faithful trial of self at the bar of enlightened reason, the persons to whom I have reference, dare not abide. It would lead to a condemnation which would be painful; in as much as it would demand the immediate amendment of their ways and their doings; the immediate dereliction of cherished iniquities; the immediate divorce of the heart from its idols—of the senses from their dear but destructive lusts.

SIXTH.—The precarious tenure by which sinners hold their present existence, is not weighed by them in the balance of just and sober reflection. They live as if death were a chimera; as if this were their home; as if their foundation were deeply, strongly, and immovably laid in a continuing city, walled with everlasting adamant. They go forth in the morning to their labours, or their wonted chase of enjoyment. Funeral after funeral passes before their eyes. At every turn, badges of mourning remind them that a spirit has gone to its dreadful account. But how rarely does the thought occur, even for a moment, "this day may be *my* last: this very night, perhaps, *my* soul may be required of *me*." O, how do men presume upon a pulse that beats this moment, and may beat no more! They know not how soon their last breath may go out, the last glimmer of the lamp of life sink into darkness; they are in total ignorance of this, and they will not consider! They sing and dance, and carouse and revel, on the edge of damnation. Deluded men! Think not, if indeed you will be *at the pains* to bestow a thought even *here*, think not that you can avert or delay the visitation of death, by expelling the contemplation of his spectral horrors from your minds. Remember that your times are not in your own hands. "With God the

Lord are the issues of death." "He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up." You know not what the revolution of one hour may produce: and if you were wise, if you would consider your latter end, you would live as though every revolving hour were to be your last.

SEVENTH, AND LAST.—The greater part of the Christian world will not allow themselves to look with steady regard upon those eternal things which are invisible to the bodily eye. In their estimation, an air of uncertainty envelops the other world. But were they to consider matters as they ought, this uncertainty would afford them no solid plea for continuing in sin. On their admission, there may be a state of final recompenses. Would it not, then, be prudent to prepare themselves for it? And should we grant that they will experience no return of benefit and advantage hereafter, are not wisdom's ways thick strewn with pleasures, which, even in the present life, compensate the renunciation of vicious indulgences? But, thanks be to God, even the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, on this subject there is no uncertainty. Revelation divests it of every doubt. The Divine Existence is not now more evident, than the everlasting existence decreed for man. "Life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel of him who hath abolished death,"\* and broken the prison bars of the grave. "A resurrection both of the just and the unjust" is announced; and at the trumpet of the Archangel, the magnificent event shall be accomplished. "But who considers, as he ought, this subject, at once so awful and so delightful? Who carries his devout meditations within the veil that overhangs the invisible world? Who revolves in his mind the irreversible recompenses of eternity? Who ascends on the wings of a contemplative faith to the abodes of the just made perfect, or looks down with pious dread upon the habitations of despair? Who weighs in the balance things future against things present—things invisible against things which are

\* 2. Tim. i. 10.

seen—things eternal against things temporal?” O, thou spirit of inconsideration! what ruin dost thou not carry through God’s moral creation? What sin is it that thou dost not engender? What misery is it that thou dost not inflict? What thanks are not due to thee from the power of darkness, for the souls which thou has bound in his chains?

Thus, I have made it appear that *inconsideration*, in a very conspicuous degree, and to a very deplorable extent, is chargeable upon those who, while they are, outwardly, professors of Christ’s discipline, in works deny him.

If there be such in my audience, I must be permitted to entreat them to abjure this most pernicious principle of inconsideration. In vain has God given you reason, if you will not use it. In vain has he recorded his will on the page of inspiration, if you will not study it. In vain does he address you in the words of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Ghost, if you will not lend a patient and attentive hearing. Let me counsel you to seek after God, and to keep him continually in your thoughts. Consult the end of your being, and the true felicity of your nature. Weigh well your great and manifold obligations to Heaven. Reflect much on the nature and inestimable value of the Christian salvation. Think seriously on your general course of conduct, and the result to which your actions and conversation tend. Bear constantly in mind the precariousness of the tenure by which you hold your present existence. “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.” Regard not the present state as your final destination. Have respect unto the recompense of reward. Meditate much upon the ultimate issues of things—of death—judgment—Heaven—hell—eternity. And pray to God that he would be pleased so to teach you to number the days of the years of your pilgrimage, that you may apply your hearts to the wisdom of the just.—AMEN.

## SERMON XIII.

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### ON INCONSIDERATION.

AS CHARGEABLE AGAINST THE MERELY NOMINAL  
CHRISTIAN.

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ISAIAH, i. 3.

*“My people doth not consider.”*

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I HAVE already animadverted at some length on the fault of *inconsideration*, as chargeable upon two descriptions of characters in the visible church; the true believer, and the baptized sinner; the man of real goodness, and the mere nominalist. Deeming it advisable to pursue the subject farther, as it respects persons of the latter class, my present design is to represent to such, with all plainness and sincerity, the pernicious tendency, and, in very many cases, the fatal effects, of inconsideration. And may the Holy Ghost open their eyes and incline their hearts to attend to the things which belong to their peace, before they be eternally hidden from them!—Amen.

Inconsideration, then, let it be remarked, keeps men in ignorance on the only points which are of essential importance to them. It deadens their moral sensibilities. It renders them criminally and dangerously indifferent to the great salvation of the gospel. It reduces and detains them under bondage to corrupt affections. It contributes more than any other thing, perhaps, to the victories of temptation. It betrays them into refuges of lies, and encourages them to build their confidence on the most deceptive foundations.

FIRST.—Inconsideration keeps men in ignorance on the

only points which are of essential importance to them; points inseparably connected with their real felicity, both in this life, and in the life of the world to come. To persons who will not permit themselves to think—to reflect—to be serious—reason ceases to be a light—the Bible becomes a dead letter—and the occurrences of providence, so many fortuitous accidents, without guidance, and without design. It is only he who is in the habit of communing with his own heart, and whose spirit maketh diligent search, that can become a proficient in the science of religious truth and duty. What can he know of the divine Being, or his works and ways, who never turns his contemplations upon these noblest of objects? What can she know of herself, who is always abroad in quest of what may not immediately concern her, and seldom, or never, at home, exploring her own heart, and meditating on the end and aim of her existence? Now, if acquaintance with these interesting subjects be desirable, how much is that inconsideration to be reprobated which detains us from it?

**SECOND.**—This same fault deadens the moral sensibilities of men. If the opinion be well founded, that before a bad man can be converted, or turned to that which is right, he must be convinced that he is a bad man, and that his principles and deportment are wrong; it is equally certain that before he can be convinced, he must be brought to reflection. How can we reach the conscience wrapped up in the security of indifference; or diverted from our appeal by the seductions of unreflecting levity? Unless we can prevail upon the sinner to make a solemn pause, and deliberately to inquire what that thing is which we call sin, and which we affirm to be exceedingly sinful, and in the divine view abominable and detestable; unless we can prevail upon him impartially to scrutinize his own actions; unless we can prevail upon him to open his eyes and fix his thoughts on the perilous issues of unrepented vice; vain is the hope that we may bring him into the fold of salvation, or reclaim him from sinful habits. He will be unconscious of alleged



guilt. He will be insensible to threatened misery. The longer he indulges himself in this absence of serious thought, the more difficult it will become to work upon his apprehensions. The susceptibility, of which, at first, the operations were but dormant, will at length be extinct; and what began in lethargy, will end in death.

**THIRD.**—Inconsideration renders men criminally and dangerously indifferent to the great salvation of the gospel. Not reflecting that God is angry with the wicked every day, it is not to be expected that they will seek to be reconciled to him. Not aware that without shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin, it is not to be imagined that they will avail themselves of the blood of sprinkling, dropping from the wounds of that Lamb of God who only taketh away the sin of the world. Unimpressed with the conviction that they come from a degenerate stock, that they have lost the moral image of their Maker, and that of themselves they are incompetent for any thing of value in the sight of spotless excellence; it would be no better than absurdity to suppose that they will discern the necessity of divine succours, or feel an impulse to pray for the influences of God's renovating and quickening spirit. "They that are whole, need not a physician," said the Master, "but they that are sick."\* And surely we may add, that neither will these apply to the physician, unless they believe themselves to be sick, and in need of his services. It is true, we readily admit, in a certain sense, that every man who wears the Christian name pays respect to the Christian salvation. Amongst all the sinners with which Zion abounds, there is not an individual who does not hope for happiness, and who does not profess to hope for it, through the name of Christ. But what we have to deplore is, that from this unfortunate temper of inconsideration, the hope is too often such an one as must eventuate in shame; a groundless, treacherous, and destructive hope.

\* Matth. ix. 12.

FOURTH.—Inconsideration reduces and detains men under bondage to corrupt affections. A little sobriety of thought, one should imagine, is all that is wanted to demonstrate to the sinner that every lust is a tyrant, and every vicious habit slavery of the vilest and most ignoble species. Men may glory in rejecting what they are pleased to call the fetters of superstition; they may revolt against the salutary restraints of wisdom and religion, as against a yoke too grievous to be borne. But while they call themselves free, and promise freedom to all who will adhere to them, they are, in truth, the bond slaves of corruption, the veriest drudges in the service of Satan. Their boasted liberty is much like that political licentiousness which has never yet failed to settle down into despotism. Happy they whom the Son of God shall enfranchise! Happy they who submit to the influences of true religion!—For where the spirit of the Lord is, there, and there only, is liberty. But who are they? Shew me the persons thus made free, and thus voluntarily submitting to the wholesome government of divine grace. Shew me these, and I will shew you in them men who have accustomed themselves to think with seriousness and sobriety; women who have brought themselves to believe that they were placed in this world, and made to occupy the stations of daughters, wives, and mothers, for some better purpose than to dress, to dance, to sing, to visit, and be admired. It is not to be expected that persons blind to their real situation; persons too thoughtless and careless to be convinced that they are enthralled by sinful principles and affections which say to them, come, and straightway they come; which say to them, go, and with a promptitude of obedience, equally despicable, they go; it is not to be expected that these unthinking persons will arise from their degraded posture, and assert the holy liberty of redeemed Christians; of enlightened believers; or of understanding men.

FIFTH.—Inconsideration contributes more, perhaps, than

any other thing to the victories of temptation. Temptation is indebted to this cause for by far the largest proportion of its power; and generally retires from a conflict with the man of thought and reflection. But inasmuch as human nature is encompassed with infirmities; inasmuch as the things of the present life assume a diversity of forms, each captivating to the senses, the appetites, and the passions; and inasmuch as our nature has to struggle, not only against flesh and blood, but against spiritual wickednesses in high places; against the rulers of the darkness of this world; against our original enemy, who is still intent upon our destruction; how can they be safe who will not permit themselves to reflect upon their dangers? How can they escape present infelicities and future perdition who leave the passes to their hearts unguarded by serious consideration? Persons who cannot be brought to weigh in the balance of a sober spirit the limited extent of this world's possessions, splendours, and enjoyments, against the large capacities of their minds; the insignificance of things temporal against the dignity of their high calling in Christ Jesus; and the mutable and fleeting character of the utmost good that can now be attained, against the eternal duration of that state to which their faith and hope should be directed; have no shield to protect them in the day of trial; no armour which can withstand the shock of the meanest of their spiritual foes.

SIXTH.—Inconsideration betrays men into refuges of lies, and encourages them to build their confidence on the most deceptive foundations. Hence it is that we so often find sinners reposing themselves, amidst the uninterrupted pursuits of iniquity and profligacy, upon the infinitude of the divine mercy. They do not allow themselves to remember the multitude of comminations published on the part of God against the impenitent workers of iniquity. They have no memory for those terrors of the Lord, which are set in array against the obstinate sinner by the volume of

inspiration. They will not reflect that HE who has denominated himself the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, slow to anger, abundant in goodness, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, has in the same breath, declared that he will by no means clear the guilty. Neither will they reflect upon the legitimate character of this attribute of God. They will not take the time or the trouble to discriminate between the blind impulse of natural feelings amongst susceptible men, and that compassion, which being in indissoluble union with wisdom and righteousness, is worthy of the Supreme Ruler of the universe. For what justice would there be to upright beings; what encouragement to virtue, if the wicked were permitted to add sin to sin—outrage to outrage—ingratitude to disobedience—obduracy and impenitency to ingratitude—and all this in peace and safety? But, in this way, the *inconsiderate* never reason. On these things they never think. And in this respect, it may well be said of them, that they trust in a lying vanity.

Hence, also, it is not uncommon to find persons leaning with full, but mistaken reliance, on the great atonement of the gospel. They have been introduced into the church by baptism. They have been educated in the Christian faith. They have never renounced their creed, and feel no disposition to renounce it; and are they not told that whoever believeth on the Son of God shall not perish, but have everlasting life? Would they but read and reflect, surely they would learn that there is such a thing as a creed of no significance as to our acceptance in the sight of Heaven; they would learn that there may be a dead faith; a faith consistent with the loss of the soul; a faith no better than that belief which makes the devils tremble. Would they but read and reflect, they would be convinced that for this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil; that he cannot be in any sense the minister of sin; that he was appointed to save his people *from*

their sins; and that no man who remains in his sins can of right encourage himself in the hope that Christ's redemption has had its full and proper effect upon him. Would they but read and reflect, they would be satisfied that if it is written, "there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus," it is thus written on the express supposition that "they walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit."

Again—from this same unreflecting temper it is that men are so prone to procrastinate in spiritual matters; and to depend upon the anticipated reformation of some future and more auspicious day. It is impossible to conceive of any thing more uncertain than the life of man, as it respects his own knowledge of its duration, and his own power over it. Notwithstanding which, so little do most men concern themselves to deliberate on their course of conduct with reference to this particular, that, were we to judge from appearances, they count with all the fullness of assurance upon length of days, vigour of faculties, and stability and constancy of resolutions. Not only do they overlook the uncertainty of life; but they forget that habit is a second nature; that sin, like its opposite, holiness, is in its nature progressive; that it acquires vigour from indulgence; that to renounce it becomes a task every hour more difficult; and that there is but too much reason to fear lest the difficulties which are in present operation against the work of repentance, may continue to operate; and that they will, most probably, grow into more formidable dimensions, and fortify themselves by auxiliary obstacles until oppositions shall at length become morally insuperable. What thinking man will neglect a comparative certainty for a real uncertainty? But this does the man of inconsideration. What thinking man will defer his most important concerns when he has it in his power to attend to them? But this does the man of inconsideration. What thinking man will retire from collision with minor inconveniencies, and delay the encounter, until from age they become more seriously formidable? But



this does the man of inconsideration. What thinking man neglects the opportunity that serves for making his calling and election sure, and establishing his hopes upon the rock of everlasting ages? But this does the man of inconsideration. What thinking man defies the King of Terrors; makes a covenant with his eyes that they shall not look upon the yawning grave; presumes on long life and vigorous health; builds on to-morrow's resolutions, and trusts in next year's repentance? But this, all this, the man of inconsideration *does*, or *seems* to do. And were we even to admit that the accumulated transgressions of a long life may be followed by bitter regrets and poignant anguish in the hour of death; what thinking man will stake his eternal repose upon the sufficiency of a death-bed repentance—a point in almost every case, problematical? But this, it is to be feared, the man of inconsideration is too prone to do.

Thus, I have, as was proposed, endeavoured to represent with plainness and sincerity, the pernicious tendency, and, in very many cases, the fatal effects, of *inconsideration*.

I cannot relinquish the subject without exhorting you to guard against a fault so formidably inimical to your best and highest interests. You have sometimes heard of fundamental errors and damnable heresies in doctrine. How much soever these are to be deprecated, they are not more pernicious, I am well persuaded, than the error of having no doctrine—the heresy of having no thought. *Inconsideration* is the root of all errors. Nor does any thing tend with a more efficacious and rapid momentum to the everlasting ruin of the soul, than *inconsideration*.

The capacity to think—to reflect—to compare—to contrast—to infer—to weigh and ponder things, is that which, of all peculiarities, most eminently distinguishes you from the brute tribes, and most nearly allies you to angelick natures. Why, then, should you neglect your privileges? Why undervalue your prerogative? Why betray the essential dignity of your rank in the scale of being? Why sink,

self-degraded, into the level of baser natures? Made, in this respect, but a little lower than the angels; made lords over this inferiour creation; let not the order of things be so far inverted that your subjects may ascend to an unnatural equality with those appointed to govern them.

Men are seldom indisposed to consideration on the pursuits and business of the present life. You can bring all the powers of your minds, however enlarged these may be, to bear upon a point of great temporal concernment. You do not require much intreaty to induce you to deliberate maturely in matters of worldly prudence. However you may mistake in your reasonings here; however you may reason yourselves into unjustifiable views of the importance of favourite objects of pursuit; you still *reason*. Whence is it in the name of all that is valuable, whence is it that a conduct which you deem provident and wise as it respects things temporal, is abandoned by you when things eternal are at stake? It is true, things temporal are visible, tangible, audible; things eternal are not. But is this sufficient to authorize such fluctuation and diversity in the behaviour of a rational nature? Take less thought hence forward, what ye shall eat, and what ye shall drink, and wherewithal ye shall be clothed; and provide with more diligent and anxious study things that may be found unto praise, and honour and glory at the coming of the great God, and our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Put forth the exertions of an honest and resolute mind, and doubt not of the propitious co-operation of the spirit of God. He is never wanting to those who are not wanting to themselves.

If you make vigorous efforts to fix your attention on the realities of religion and the eternal world, he will crown these efforts with success. If you consider what he says in his word and providences, he will give you understanding in all necessary things, and lead and guide you into all necessary truth. Pray fervently and importunately for illu-

minating, animating, and confirming grace; and it shall assuredly be communicated for your furtherance and aid in the spiritual life. What great works may not he do, who has omnipotence working in him both to will and to do?

Although the difficulties attendant in the first instance upon the duty which I am enforcing, may present it in a repulsive attitude, yet this will not long continue. As you proceed in it, it will acquire facility. It will assume a more winning form. New habits will beget new tastes; and perseverance in sober reflection give you at length a disrelish for inconsiderate levity.

If you will suffer yourselves to be prevailed on to think upon your ways, then, and not before, will you be brought to turn your feet into the happy paths of God's commandments: then, and not before, will you exhibit to Christ and his church that reformation which is unto life, and which shall never be repented of: then, and not before, will the spell in which corruption has bound you, be broken, and your eyes will be opened to behold your chains, and your deliverer; your guilt, and your propitiation; your misery, and your advocate; your danger, and your shield; your ignorance, and your teacher; your helplessness, and your supporter; your indigence, and your portion; your dependence, and your God.

And above all things, I beseech you to remember that the duty which I am requiring at your hands, lies deep at the foundation of whatever hope the Bible permits you to entertain. As religious belief and religious practice are the most serious of all serious things, so it is expected of you on the part of Almighty God that you think upon them with all imaginable seriousness. Do not allow yourselves to imagine, for one moment, that Heaven is to be gained by the careless and the inconsiderate. No: they that forget God shall surely be turned into hell. Those hopeless regions, where the impenitent suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, could disclose many a sad tale of *inconsideration*, and many an awful catastrophe of unthinking sin.

There is a path in which the sober-minded few pursue their patient and their thoughtful journey. It leads to the gates of the new Jerusalem; to the abodes of the just made perfect; to the everlasting rest in which the labours of virtue are recompensed; to the immediate presence of Jesus. Brethren, this—this—is the way: walk ye in it.—AMEN.





## SERMON XIV.

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### ON DEVOTION.

AS INCLUDING THE READING AND HEARING OF THE  
WORD OF GOD—MEDITATION—PRAYER—PRAISE—AND  
ATTENDANCE ON RITUAL ORDINANCES.

A SACRAMENTAL DISCOURSE.

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PSALM, LXXIII. 28.

*“It is good for me to draw near to God.”*

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“IT is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts?”\* “What is the Almighty that we should serve him? and what profit should we have if we pray unto him?”† Such expressed or implied, is the language of multitudes. But it is, in all who use it, the language of misconception: in some, of a misconception, criminal in a very high degree, because with perfect ease vincibile. No satisfaction that a rational nature can desire, is foreign to those ways which are pleasantness, to those paths which are peace. Every man who has tasted, has found that the Lord is gracious. Every man who has made the trial, will confess that God’s commandments are not grievous, and that in keeping them there is great reward. Every man, the eyes of whose understanding are opened upon the beauties of holiness, will be prompt to say, in the words of the holy Psalmist, “It is good for me to draw near to God.”

\* Mal. iii. 14. † Job, xxi. 15.

Devotion is "profitable unto men." This in brief, is the proposition embraced by the text.

Devotion, with reference to this proposition, must be viewed comprehensively; as including the reading and hearing of the word of God; meditation; prayer; praise; and attendance on ritual ordinances.

It is my design, at present, to take this view of it. I hope, through the divine favour, to recommend these particular and highly important duties of Christian devotion, by illustrating the benefits to be expected from the serious performance of them.

*In the first place.*—"It is good for us to draw near to God," *in the devout reading and hearing of his most holy word.* "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple: the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes: the fear of the Lord is clean enduring forever: the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold; yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned; and in the keeping of them there is great reward."\* "All scripture, given by inspiration of God, is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."† From this source we may derive "understanding in all things" necessary to virtue and happiness, to our present sanctification and our future glory. God's word is the best resolver of our doubts and scruples. It makes us acquainted with ourselves. It is a mirror presenting to us in their true appearance the thoughts and intents of our hearts. He who reads his Bible, and with it collates the ordinary operations of his mind, and general tenor of his conduct, may, with no small measure of certainty, decide

\* Psalm, xix. 7.—11.

† 2. Tim. iii. 16. 17.

upon his own moral standing. He will discover his peculiar weaknesses, the points in which he is most exposed to vicious influences and suggestions. He will acquire a familiarity with the road delineated by the author and finisher of his faith, which will enable him to walk in it with uprightness, resolution, steadfastness, and zeal.

I confidently appeal to the experience of believers when I assert, that, for the most part, in no way is that languor of spirits which too frequently depresses and retards the religious man, so effectually removed; in no way is his soul so speedily and happily invigorated, as in the diligent reading of the word of God, and attending upon its ministrations. There is a voice in the word of God which will make itself be heard. There is an agitating and vivifying power in it which will make itself be felt. You peruse a passage of it, and take fire at some burning thought. You listen to the faithful exposition of it in the publick assemblies, and find a living and prolific principle transfused by it into your souls.

With equal confidence I make my appeal to the experience of believers when I assert, that no where can the afflicted saint look for so rich and sweet a consolation as in the pages which record the sure mercies of David. Hence the author of the CXIX Psalm; "Remember thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope." "This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me."\* There is no distress which may not find here both its refuge and its balm. If worldly sorrows prevail; if the tears of nature fall upon the tomb; if deep call unto deep, and wave chase wave, the gloom thicken, and the tempest lower; the Bible and the preacher tell you that whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth; that the more you suffer, being righteous, and retaining your integrity, the nearer you approach in resemblance to the captain of salvation, who was made perfect

\* Psalm, cxix. 49. 50.

through sufferings; while like him you shall be clothed with a recompense proportioned to your obedience; in a word, that “your affliction,” which, however poignant, is comparatively “light,” and however protracted, is relatively “but for a moment, worketh for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”\*

If you labour under the inward disquietudes of a wounded spirit; if you walk in darkness, and see no light; if you lament that God hath hidden his face from you; if you tremble lest the spark of holy fire be extinct in your bosoms, or lest you have deceived yourselves in imagining that it was ever lodged there; if you fear that you are aliens from his mercies who wore our nature; the Bible and the preacher tell you to wait for a God of providence in his mysterious ways: the Bible and the preacher tell you, that though justice and judgment be the habitation of his throne, mercy and truth go before his face; that he is the father of mercies, and the God of consolation; that he will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax; that with him there is forgiveness, and with him plenteous redemption: the Bible and the preacher bid you, in the language of divine compassion addressed of old to the weary and the heavy laden, “come unto Jesus and find rest:” they place the cross before you, and bid you confess, that it is impossible God should spurn the trembling penitent—the broken spirit—the contrite heart—for whom Christ died. O soothing voice of truth! O healing balm of heavenly consolation! O lively oracles of that God who is love! It is good for us to draw near where your blessed influences are like the dew and the rain upon Israel!

*In the second place.*—“It is good for us to draw near to God,” *in devout meditation.* I do not mean that solemnity and fixedness of mind with which every religious duty ought to be performed. I mean that particular collection and concentration of thought on divine things, which exists

apart from other duties; which is, itself, a *specifick service*, and *direct act* of religion.

That you may form an estimate of the benefits of meditation, I will select for your consideration a few of those particulars which should form its subject matter. I will propose the chief end of man—the benevolence of the Deity—the beatitude of Heaven.

I.—“What is the chief end of man?” This is the introductory question in the catechisms of our church; the answer to which is thus made by the largest of these excellent summaries; “Man’s chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy him forever.” Yes, my brethren; such, and *no less than this*, is the exalted destiny of human nature. Look around you: is there that object in all the wide creation of matter and of form in which your souls can rest with a plenitude of satisfaction undiminished by a farther wish? a placidity of contentment unruffled by a higher aspiration? Look within you: are there not capacities of wishing—of desiring—of expecting—in whose boundless extent all things beneath the heavens are lost? As well might the maniac think to imprison the ocean in a cave dug by his own vain industry, as the immortal spirit seek her being’s end and aim in things temporal. God has made all natures for himself. “For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever.”\* All his works bear the print of his perfections. All creation publishes his praise. But *man, especially*; man made after his image; man endued with understanding to know him; with affections to love him; with capacity to imitate, serve, and enjoy him; man should “glorify him, with the body and the spirit which are his.”† Thus glorifying him, thus dedicating your being to its mighty author, look forward with exultation to the completion of your destiny, to the magnificent recompense in which the services of a few fleeting years shall eventuate. For man’s chief end is not more

\* Rom. xi. 36.

† 1. Cor. vi. 20.



to glorify God, than to enjoy him forever; eternally to possess the utmost possible good, in its uncreated fountain and original. "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory. Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon the earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever."\* How useful, then, the meditation that fixes in the mind of man this holy, this sublime truth, that he is made for God!

II.—Consider, as a subject of meditation, the benevolence of the Deity. In his essence, in his character, and in his operations, "*God is love.*" "His mercy endures forever." But what is this quality in God? It has nothing of the weakness of animal affection. It is wholly moral or spiritual. It is not communicative in equal degrees, or in like manner to all. All intelligent creatures, as such, are beloved of their Creator; although by obduracy and impenitency in crime, they may compel him, in vindication of his authority as governor of the universe, to treat them with destroying severity. But his more refined, his godlike benevolence; that property of his nature, which among theologians bears the name of complacential love, is reserved for upright and holy beings; for the happy spirits, whether angelical or human, who are his children not more by production, than by the stamp of his likeness in righteousness and true holiness. "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, and, therefore, his countenance beholdeth the upright."† His approbation is proportioned to their attainments, and grows and advances with them. What, my brethren, should constitute the chief object of your pursuit, if not this special favour of God? What will inspire you with true delight—what will surround you with true glory—what will endow you with true riches, and imperishable possessions, if not this complacential love of him whose gifts and calling are without repentance?

If you reflect but for a moment on the character of the

\* Psalm, lxxiii. 24—26. † Psalm, xi. 7

Almighty; if you keep in your minds this memorable account of him, "that he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,"\* and cannot look upon sin but with deep abhorrence; if you maintain the impression of this solemn truth, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord;"† if your meditations run customarily in this channel; blessed are the consequences which may be expected to result from them. To secure that favour of his which is life to the immortal soul; that loving-kindness of his which is more to be coveted than the highest felicities of your secular condition; I think I hear you disclaiming all obedience to the law and its members; I think I see you walking with invigorated step and blameless constancy in all the statutes and ordinances of the Lord.

III.—Consider, as a subject of meditation, the beatitude of Heaven. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."‡ But though the soul be impeded in her flight, let her not cease to soar. The proudest eminences of worldly splendour and felicity remain so indescribably below "the glory to be revealed" in the righteous, that there are few points of similitude, if any, by which the one may be made illustrative of the other. Hence, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be."§ But, however, clouds and darkness rest upon our distant inheritance, the darkness is not total; the clouds are not impenetrable. So far hath the gospel of the Son of God "brought life and immortality to light," that the fact of a future state of rest and peace and glory for believers is irrefutably demonstrated; and its character and properties sufficiently developed to convince us of its unspeakable excellence and desirableness. The present life is chequered by the alternations of pleasure and pain. It is exposed to rapid changes; to deceptive promises; to fearful apprehensions; to successive separations; to crumbling fortunes; to withering attachments; to violated trusts; to cankering ingratitude; to poverty, disease, and

\* Habak. i. 13.

† Heb. xii. 14.

‡ 1 Cor. ii. 9.

§ 1 John, iii. 2.

death; and what is more bitter than all these, to that enemy of God and man, that soul-murderer, *sin*. Turn then, from this spectacle of vanity and disorder, and contemplate “the rest which remains for the people of God.”\* Contemplate that presence of God, and of the Lamb whence “sorrow and sighing flee away.”† Contemplate that assembly where no breath escapes that does not wait eternal hallelujahs. Contemplate that state of being which no impurity defiles, no reverse impoverishes, no malady afflicts, no death interrupts, no vanity impairs.

It is not difficult, my brethren, to foresee the issue of such contemplations. It is not difficult, nor is it unreasonable to believe that, with such objects in view, you will hasten to abjure allegiance to a world whose most flattering prospects die upon the pained vision; whose most seducing fashion passeth speedily away. Preferring the feeblest hope of a reception into these everlasting habitations, to this world arrayed in its most fascinating attire, you will implore the grace of the Holy Spirit to cause you to abound in this hope; you will improve the influences of God the sanctifier, to make you meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Need I ask you, then, if it be good to draw near to God *in devout meditation*? Or is it a subject on which you can permit yourselves to hesitate? Can you doubt that it is profitable rightly to estimate the end and aim of your existence? Can you doubt that it is profitable to know as much as you can know of the love of God? Can you doubt that it is profitable to anticipate with the faith and hope of a regenerated soul, the beatitude of Heaven? No—I will not suppose it possible that you can entertain a doubt on the subject.

*In the third place.*—“It is good for us to draw near to God” *in prayer*. Having, not very long since, in several successive discourses, treated at large of the duty of prayer,

\* Heb. iv. 9. † Isaiah, xxxv. 10.

it is not necessary, at present, to say more in commendation of it, that that it animates those graces, in the exercise of which every godly person finds his surest comfort and highest felicity.

I.—Prayer keeps alive in the heart the sacred fire of love to God. I have proposed, as one subject of your meditation, the love of God to man. It is a theme on which you cannot long meditate until your souls burn within you. Soon, however, will the fire become extinct, unless it be “fanned by the breath of prayer.” Prayer familiarizes you with an object which you cannot behold without a soul-possessing interest. Prayer detains you in a presence whose attractions, the longer you contemplate them, the more you will admire; and the longer you admire, the more firmly will your inclinations and wishes be rivetted to them.

As gratitude includes love, so does prayer generally include the expression of gratitude. Prayer, properly so called, or petition, is the language of anticipation; thanksgiving, the language of memory. If, then, you accustom yourselves to record in your bosoms the mercies of God’s throne; if it be your habit to give thanks at the remembrance of his deeds of power and wisdom, of holiness and justice, of faithfulness and truth, of goodness and compassion; you will act more conformably to that statute which bids you “love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind;”\* “you will run in the path of duty and not be weary, and walk in it and not faint;”† your affection will soar with a bolder wing, and to a loftier height.

II.—Prayer cherishes confidence in God. Prayer, indeed, to be acceptable, must be “the prayer of faith;” of reliance on God’s promises; on his protecting care and providing goodness; his ability and his willingness to do whatever may be for our true interest, our everlasting welfare. This is a disposition of mind which is improved by cultiva-

\* Matth. xxii. 37.

† Isaiah, xl. 31.

tion, and derives solidity and force from habit. The multiplied and strongly-marked vicissitudes of providential appointment, have a tendency to confirm you in this holy confidence; and their tendency, in this respect, will invariably issue successfully, if with them you connect "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks."\*

Very opposite are the consequences ensuing to two opposite descriptions of persons, from the trials through which both are alike made to pass. The one *consecrate* their trials by their *prayers*; the other do not; the one see God in all events; to the other he is as invisible in his operations as in his essence; *these*, therefore, are left, by every change of circumstance, in disquietude and irritation; while *those* are rendered more tranquil, more resigned, more submissive, more patient, more meek, more dutiful, more unshaken in confidence on *him* whose providence is over all. What, then, my brethren, cannot prayer do, when it thus extracts sweets out of bitterness, and joy out of grief?

III.—It is of the essence of prayer to spiritualize. So long as you cultivate a praying temper of soul, you may be said, in the strictest import of the phrase, to "have your conversation in Heaven." This is the natural and only practicable intercourse of man with God. And how desirable the maintainance of this divine intercourse! How worthy of pursuit and cultivation, that habit of sentiment and action, whatever it may be, which promises most effectually to secure its continuance amidst so many seductions by the world and the flesh! The spiritualization of man, his abstraction from the grossness of material and sensual influences, his deliverance from the dominion of principles merely animal, the implantation of the kingdom of Heaven within him, this is the grand aim of the gospel; this, the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us; and this aim, my brethren, is *then* promoted; and this will of God concerning us is *then* fulfilled, when we draw near to God in prayer.

\* 1 Tim. ii. 1.



Habituating yourselves to think of the Almighty, and to address him as the Creator and first cause of your well-being, you will not be able to divest your minds of the persuasion that he is that *one great object*, the possession of which comprises all that the most enlarged capacities can contain, or the most towering desires pursue; the possession of which is in itself, *the eternal life of the soul*. But in the continued workings of this persuasion, is it possible for you not to discern your progress in spiritualization? Is it possible that in the devout exercise of prayer, you can contemplate the Deity with eyes thus opened upon nobler scenes, and turn them again with animal delight to "behold vanity?"

IV.—Prayer fosters *piety* not more than *philanthropy*. Performed in the spirit and manner in which it ought to be, and out of which it need not hope to be accepted, it expresses love to man, as well as love to God; thus casting the soul into the mould of universal kindness; thus feeding in her that holy flame of sweet affection, which an apostle asserts to be "the fulfilling of the law."\* Accustoming yourselves to unite in social addresses to the throne of grace, do you not feel a growing interest in each others weal? I speak to believers on whose souls faith has imprinted the image of a benevolent God. Accustoming yourselves, in your pious supplications, to identify your own helplessness with the necessities of others; to regard all mankind as one with you in derivation from a sinful stock, and one with you in redemption by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ; are not your hearts enlarged? Are not your sympathies enlivened? Are not your aversions buried? Is not your love without dissimulation? Do you not bow to the constraining power of that charity which is "the end of the commandment," a charity proceeding "out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned?"†

Since then, prayer keeps alive in the heart the sacred fire of love to God; since it cherishes confidence in him; since

\* Rom. xiii. 10.    † 1 Tim. i. 5.

its distinguishing tendency is to spiritualize the human character; since it fosters, expands, invigorates, and sanctifies the social principle; justifiable surely, and worthy of all credit and acceptance is the assertion that "it is good to draw near to God" *in prayer*.

*In the fourth place.*—"It is good for us to draw near to God" *in the celebration of his high praises*. I mean particularly that celebration in which musick is employed. The introduction of musick into divine worship, has been nearly universal; and that, both as to time and place. It has entered into the rites of all religions. Paganism enlisted it into its service, and fabled that the musical art was the invention of its gods. And, indeed, I know not what art, working upon the soul through a corporeal medium, merits more than this the title of divine. The law of Christ's house on this subject is too evident, one would suppose, to have been mistaken. "Is any one rejoiced? let him sing psalms."\* It is the recommendation of one apostle, while another enjoins the use of "psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs."† Hence, one of the most admired, and most useful to the church of the canonical books, derives its name.

The glory of musick, as connected with the worship of God, the private devotion of believers, and the solemn service of the church, is secured by the frequent employment of it in scripture to illustrate the occupations and pleasures of the blessed in Heaven. There, with the loud and deep and clear intonations of a musick in which the voice and the instrument are mingled, every thing that hath breath is made to praise the Lord. "I heard a voice from Heaven," writes St. John, "as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps; and they sung, as it were, a new song before the throne."‡

Are there none of you, my brethren, who can sympathise with the illustrious Augustine in the expression of his pious

\* James, v. 13. † Eph. v. 19. ‡ Rev. xiv. 2. 3.

sensibilities? “O! how have I wept,” said this good pastor, “how exceedingly moved and affected have I been at the hymns, and songs, and harmonious voices of the church! These voices pierced my ears; the truth penetrated my soul; devout affections were stirred up; and tears of holy sentiment succeeded.” Your experience can surely attest that this eminent man stands not solitary among Christians, in the confession, “it is good for me to draw near to God” *in the celebration of his high praises.*

*In the fifth and last place.*—“It is good for us to draw near to God” *in attendance upon ritual ordinances,* and more particularly as it regards Christians, on the solemnity of the holy communion: I might say, indeed, in the use of both the exhibitory seals of the covenant; but, at present, I will confine myself to the ordinance of the supper.

My brethren, is it possible for you to conceive of truths more important, facts more awfully impressive, than those which the sacramental table submits to your view? It is a monument erected to perpetuate the memory of the love of God to a perishing world. It is an altar loaded with the emblematical body and blood of Christ crucified. It reminds you that “God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life: for God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved:”\* It reminds you that “Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.”† “The kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man”‡ *thus “appearing”* in these lively and eloquent tokens of the atoning crucifixion; the Son of God *thus “set forth before you, humbling himself to death, even the death of the cross;”*§ are you not filled with the most exalted sensations? Do you not experience a fulness of joy which the language of mortals in vain essays to express? Supposing yourselves to be

\* John iii. 16. 17.

† Eph. v. 2.

‡ Tit. 3. 4.

§ Phil. ii. 8.

specially and savingly interested in the great events commemorated; of which you may be assured by a conscience testifying that you love God and make it your honest endeavour to keep his commandments; supposing this, where is the favourite of high fortunes, proud prosperity, laureled triumph, or gay revelry, with whom you would exchange conditions? There lives not the man to whom you would say, be mine thy fading and delusive gratifications, and thine my hopes of heaven and glory. And do not these hopes and joys add new weight to Christian obligation? Do they not lead you to conclude that if the Son of God "died for you, you should not henceforth live unto yourselves, but unto him who died for you, and rose again?"\* Assured, by the memorials of divine grace exhibited before your eyes; of a propitiatory offering made in your behalf by the Lord Jesus Christ, can you hesitate to love him with the whole heart, and obey him with the whole life? Can you hesitate to bear about with you the dying of the Lord Jesus, that his life also may be manifested in your mortal bodies? There is no person, I am persuaded, who, partaking of this divine ordinance with becoming affections, does not retire from it with renewed zeal and animated loyalty.

Consider, also, that reflection which must suggest itself to the mind of every devout communicant, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for me, how shall he not with him, also, freely give me all things?"† Having bestowed on you this inestimable gift, is it to be supposed that he will withhold aught that may be necessary to your true felicity? What may you not expect from that loving kindness, that tender mercy, which mingles its streams with the blood of the Lamb? "Reconciled to God by the death of his Son, shall you not much more be saved by his life?"‡

Such are some of the reflections which naturally grow out of the service of the holy communion. Their beneficial complexion is too evident to require illustration.

\* 2. Cor. v. 15.

† Rom. viii. 32.

‡ Rom. v. 10.

It is good for us, therefore, to draw near to God in this solemnity.

I have substantiated the position of the text to the full extent of my design; I have demonstrated the profitableness of devotion, in its most important particulars; and hasten to relieve your attention.

God has commanded you to seek him while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near. He has, moreover, taught you by his holy apostle that, if you draw nigh to him, he also will draw nigh to you. The present discourse has shewn you that a sense of interest, not less than a sense of duty, demands of you submission to his lessons; obedience to his commandments.

Search the scriptures, therefore. Be not remiss in attendance upon the ministry of the word. Meditate on God's testimonies; on the end and aim of your being; the goodness of him who is your Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier; and the beatitude of those celestial habitations where dwell the spirits of the just made perfect. Pray without ceasing. Praise the Lord for his mercies, and for his wonderful works. Lift up your hearts unto the Heavens. Unite your voices with the angelick harmonies, and say, great and marvellous are the works of God—worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive the blessings of a ransomed church.

Come to the altar of thank-offering, to the table of communion; and there, with the cross before your eyes, take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord; there, be it said by each of you, "it is good for me to draw near to thee, O God! Unto whom should I go but unto thee? thou hast the words of eternal life. Thou art my soul's portion—thou my inheritance—thou my exceeding joy. Draw me, and I will run after thee. O, that I knew where I might find thee, that I might come even to thy seat!"—  
**AMEN!**





## SERMON XV.

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### ON DEATH.

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JOB, xvii. 11.

*“My days are past, my purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart.”*

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THESE words were spoken in anticipation of the period of death, which was *then*, as Job imagined, rapidly approaching. The prospect affected him, as if it had been the present reality. “If I wait,” said he, “the grave is my house: I have made my bed in the darkness; I have said to corruption, thou art my father; to the worm, thou art my mother and my sister. And where is now my hope? As for my hope, who shall see it?”\* “My breath is corrupt; my days are extinct; the graves are ready for me.”†

Man’s preeminence in the lower creation exhibits itself in nothing with more conspicuity than in his ability to transport his thoughts into the regions of futurity, and travel back in speculation to the scenes and occupations of former years. There is a species of immensity in the human intellect. Its powers are circumscribed by no narrow limits, unless they be considered relatively, and in contrast with infinitude. Past actions and deportment—past sentiments and inclinations—give abundant employment to the faculty of *conscience*. Events to come, their circumstances, their characteristics, their connections, their causes, and their consequences, demand the exercise of human providence.

\* Job, xvii. 13—15.

† Job, xvii. 1.

Futurity is an object of deep concern to us, my brethren; it can never be improper for us to take thought for to-morrow, or to frame purposes for to-morrow, provided that to-morrow be eternity, for we are immortal beings. The great error of mankind is that they do not extend their meditations and their plans to a point sufficiently distant. They are too apt to contract them within the limited sphere of this system of vanity and shadows. Instead of thinking and resolving with an eye fixed on everlasting objects, they are all anxiety, and perpetually scheming, with reference to what they shall eat and what they shall drink, and wherewithal they shall be clothed; with reference to the interests, the satisfactions, and the blandishments of a life that perishes.

Resolutions are sometimes formed which have an aspect towards God and eternal things. But these are too often the produce of necessity; the fruits of an agitated conscience, apprehending the bitter consequences of past sins. It is rarely that we see them prosecuted with perseverance, or performed with fidelity. The wound is soon healed over; fear becomes pacified, and the resolution is forgotten or dismissed. You determine upon amendment of heart and life; you determine to forsake the paths of folly, and to become wise unto salvation. If you define the period when this purpose is to be carried into execution, it is generally either too remote to countenance any thing like the certainty of attaining to it, or so unwisely selected with regard to attending circumstances that any very desirable improvement of it need not be expected. It is either when advanced years shall have destroyed that pliability so necessary to change of habit, or when disease shall have impaired the powers of the soul, and obscured her lights.

How frequently do you hear persons, not altogether blind to the attractions of piety and virtue, express a design to do great things for God and man. They will assist the poor. They will reward the meritorious. They will subscribe bountifully to the establishment or repair of religious and

charitable institutions. They will exert themselves to extend the interests of that kingdom which is not of this world. But before they act upon these noble designs, they have others, it seems, which more immediately and imperiously demand their attention. They must labour for the meat that perisheth. They must enlarge the curtains of their habitations, and adorn their palaces with new magnificence. They must make up a particular sum to invest in a certain lucrative concern. They must add house to house, and field to field. When the purposes of temporal interest, prosperity, and splendour are served, then, and not before, they will act upon those nobler designs. Foolish calculators! who would extend their operations into another year, while they are ignorant what another day may bring forth; whose meditated "purposes" may be "broken off" by death.

As it fares with men's purposes, so fares it with "the thoughts of" their "hearts;" their reasonings and their hopes. Their condition, in this particular, is forcibly expressed in the Psalmist's exhibition of the delusive inferences of the rich and powerful sinners of his times. "Their inward thought is that their houses shall continue forever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names. This their way is their folly; yet their posterity approve their sayings."\* Not only do mankind generally count upon the perpetuity of their secular establishments. They seem also, unwilling to admit the possibility of any change affecting their persons and their lives. Their mortal nature—the precarious tenure by which they hold their present existence—is not retained with much depth or permanence of impression in their remembrance. They put far off the hour of death as an evil hour. It is particularly difficult to persuade those of early years to view it in any other light, or indeed to admit it at all into their meditations. Go, they will say, to those whom time has covered with his frost, or whom fatigues and cares may

\* Psalm, lix. 11. 13.

have reconciled to the prospect of a new state of things. We have but just approached the festive table, why should we think of rising from it so soon? We have scarcely done more than commence our onward march; why bid us prepare already for a retreat? We will not interrupt our joys by groundless surmises of an approaching end to them. "The earthly house of our tabernacle" has all the stability of a recent and unimpaired construction; and we cannot allow ourselves to anticipate its ruin or its subversion. And is it so? are these surmises groundless? May not a conflagration consume the house? May not a tornado tear down its walls? May not an earthquake shatter its very foundation and swallow up both its materials and its inhabitant? Boast not thyself, O youth, as the tenant of a castle of brass and of adamant; but rather look upon thyself as a passenger in a vessel of bulrushes over the trackless and perilous main. Gaily careering over the billows, impelled by the gentle but swift winged breeze, thy bark touches the concealed rock, and in an instant, thou are lost.

If it be asked, "do not multitudes attain to a far greater number of years than I have as yet been suffered to reckon up?" the answer is presented in another question; "do not multitudes, also, descend into the tomb with fewer years than those which thou canst reckon up?" does death spare the vigorous, or the beautiful form? has he pity on the infant of days? The dark and silent grounds where the dust of thy forefathers and thy brethren sleep, will teach thee a reply.

Expectations of bright, glowing, and felicitous scenes are apt to animate the bosoms of all, but, in a peculiar manner, those of young persons. These are fondly industrious in painting for themselves highly coloured prospects of gaiety, enjoyment and worldly success. They look forward with confidence to the possession of every means of happiness, every facility for the gratifying of their wishes; as if the control of all occurrences were lodged in their hands. Hope, certainly, is not a companion interdicted to the pil-



grim of earth. Sad would be his journey uncheered by this angel *hope*. But that hope ceases to be innocent which blinds the soul's eye to the all governing providence of God; of that infinite Being who has both the power and the right to order all things according to the council of his own most holy will. What multitudes has not this insubordination to Deity—as I must be permitted to call it—this presumptuous and sanguine temper—what multitudes has it not ruined? It issues in vanity and lies. He who cherishes it “walketh in a vain show.” In this view, how pertinent that sentiment of the wise king; “childhood and youth are vanity;” vain are the pictures of unchastened fancy; and vain its airy flights. One touch of the darkening hand of death may, in an instant, obliterate them forever. The short span of life forbids us to lengthen out our prospects or our plans. “My days are past, my purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart.”

We are not to suppose that the power of thought is destroyed by the event which separates soul and body. The material part of man moulders into temporary ruin. This soul survives, perceives, is happy, or is miserable. Neither are we to suppose that the interruption of our upright and holy purposes which such an event effects renders them entirely abortive. The fulfilment of them may be prevented; but they are remembered and recompensed. The failure of their accomplishment, being grounded in the decree of him with whom are the issues of life, is not imputed to us; but on the contrary, our intentions are infallibly and most generously accredited.

No; my brethren: it is meant that man's mortal hour precludes the acting upon his thoughts; the effecting of his purposes. When this hour arrives, his plans present the appearance of a work commenced upon a large and magnificent scale, but never to be brought to its completion. “His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts concerning worldly undertakings per-

ish.”\* “The living know that they shall die; but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward,” *here*; “for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion forever in any thing that is done under the sun.”† “There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave.”‡ There “I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world.”§ “There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground, yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant. But man dieth and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost and where is he?”|| He is in the land of silence, where no project heaves his bosom, and no fancy rekindles the extinguished fire of his eye.

And how rapidly, in many instances, is this change effected? how momentary is its process? Death met the mighty Julius, in the midst of his plans, civil and military; and all his thoughts of glory, his purposes of conquest, his schemes of municipal reformation, and political economy; all his clustering laurels and proud hopes; perished by the unforeseen blow of the dagger of Brutus.

The king of the Chaldeans was arrested in the midst of his lewd and idolatrous revels. The holy vessels of gold and silver which his father, the victorious Nebuchadnezzar, had brought from the temple of Jerusalem to Babylon, this voluptuous prince sacrilegiously employed in his banqueting house, where he was on a certain occasion, entertaining his concubines and his courtiers. He lifted them to his own unhallowed lips: he passed them into the impure hands of his guests: he poured out of them libations to his Gods. To-morrow, he vainly promised himself, shall be as to day, and more abundant. I will eat and drink and be merry as

\* Psalm cxlvi. 4. † Eccles. ix. 5. 6. ‡ Eccles. ix. 10. § Isaiah, xxxviii. 11. || Job. xiv. 7.—10.

I now am. Care; go thou to the winds. The king's pleasure shall stand. The garland which crowns Belshazzar cannot wither. My mountain stands strong, and I shall never be moved. Ill fated Prince! more wretched amidst his pomp and his viols than the meanest of his slaves! In the same hour came forth a man's hand that wrote before his eyes the sentence of his terrible downfall; and "in that night was Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans slain."\*

Those numerous determinations and plans which men are so apt to form, without attempting to accomplish them, are broken off by their mortal hour; and they are taught, when it is too late, that purposes, unproductive of deeds, do not qualify the soul for eternal salvation. Chaff driven by the wind is not more light and worthless than these fruitless resolutions. Their only effect is to render men more inexcusable; inasmuch as they made it evident that they knew the will of God, but would not obey it; that they were not ignorant of their obligations, but perseveringly faithless to them.

My brethren: what improvement shall we make of these meditations?

Were there no difference in death between man and the brute creation, it might not be thought very unwise to spend our years as a tale that is told, provided it be an agreeable tale; or as a dream in the visions of the night, provided its images be those of pleasure. But you must consider that death is not more certain than succeeding immortality; you must consider that there is a spirit in man which lives when the animal breath expires, and the pulsations of the heart are still; you must consider that after death cometh the judgment; that we are accountable agents; that our condition hereafter will take its character and complexion from our deportment here; and that as we sow in the field of trial and discipline, we shall undoubtedly reap in the harvest of eternal recompenses.

\* Dan. v. 30.

Considering these facts, you cannot be insensible, in the first place, that all thoughts and purposes should be excluded from the mind which are not decidedly good and rational; all which, however remotely, come into collision with the law of God; or with the obligations of piety, benevolence, and self-control: that remembering the limited powers of our nature, we should not aim at objects whose distance renders them unattainable; whose vastness defies our grasp; or whose properties have no connection with our necessities or our duties. For, surely, it is not for man, the offspring of the dust, the child of a day, to pass his life in a round of schemes and projects, issuing, he knows neither when nor how. It was said by a historian of Cataline, a very profligate and unprincipled Roman, and a man whom, it is presumed, no Christian would wish to imitate, that his capacious genius was perpetually employed about high matters exceeding all bounds of moderation and credibility: an employment worthy of Cataline, but totally unworthy of a good and wise man. It will rather be the endeavour of such a man so to conduct himself that he may be able conscientiously to make the appeal which David once made; "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me."\*

*But, in the second place:*—granting that our thoughts and purposes be, *in themselves*, decidedly good and rational, it is very possible that an unadvised indulgence, or an undue prosecution of them may, in a great measure, alter their nature; may make them, in a degree, not good, and not rational. We may permit certain plans to monopolize our minds; certain ideas inordinately to rule over our imaginations. For example; we may bestow more of our attention on that house of clay, which the spirit inhabits, than on the nobler inhabitant. Now it is perfectly consistent with both reason and religion that we should make provision for the body, since

\* Psalm, cxxxi. 1.

this is a constituent part of our being; but it is not at all consistent with either reason or religion that we should make an idol of the body; that we should allow it to occupy the chief place in our regard; or treat its concerns with a deference which is claimed of right by those of the immortal soul, in exclusion of all rival interests.

*In the third place.*—Since man is mortal—since his days pass quickly by—since his purposes, and the thoughts of his heart are liable to be suddenly broken off—it is evidently wrong to disquiet ourselves in vain respecting the event of our plans. We cannot, by all the anxious cares of which we are capable, produce a change in one feature of that system by which divine providence conducts all things to their destined completion. The events and ultimate issues of things must rest with him. “The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.”\* “Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain; whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that.”† Let not your heart be set so devotedly upon the accomplishment of any particular object in future life, as to be made unhappy by disappointment; for against disappointment you cannot secure yourselves. However sweetly the face of nature may smile upon you now; however cheerily the sun may gild your prospects; the revolution of a moment may unexpectedly reverse the scene. The tempests may gather; the skies may blacken; and the cold floods of death and desolation overwhelm every hope but that which fixes its hold upon the Heavens.

*Once more.*—Our meditations are certainly calculated to warn us against procrastinating the fulfilment of those purposes which it is our bounden duty both to form and to exe-

\* Prov. xvi. 33. † James, iv. 13—15.



cute. Defer not until to-morrow that which can be done to-day; and which because it can be done, ought to be done. "Think on thy ways, O man! and turn thy feet to the testimonies of God. Make haste, and delay not to keep his commandments."\* Talk not of a season more convenient than the present. Such a season exists but in thy dreams. Time is not at thy control. The period is hastening on when thy place shall know thee no more. "This night thy soul may be required of thee."† Then it will be found an unavailable excuse to say, "My days are past, my purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart."

Look forward to the miseries that must unavoidably ensue to all who die without having formed pious resolutions, or who, having formed, never executed them. Evil cannot dwell with God; neither shall the foolish stand in his sight. Dying thus, your portion can only be amongst accursed spirits, "hateful and hating one another."

Turn now to those fair and ever-shining scenes which stretch themselves farther than even the pure vision of the just can see, to the right of the throne of God, and of the Lamb; those cloudless Heavens irradiated by the beams of a glory brighter than the sun; those regions of incorruptible delight, where sin, disease and death are names unknown. Children of mortality! these are the fair and ever-shining scenes—these are the cloudless Heavens—these the regions of unsuffering life, and undying glory, which the son of man hath prepared for your residence, if you will think, and purpose, and act, in obedience to his gospel; if you will think, and purpose, and act, for eternity.

\* Psalm, cxix. 59. 60. † Luke, xii. 20.

## SERMON XVI.

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### THE DISPENSATIONS OF GOD VINDICATED.

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ISAIAH, V. 4.

*“What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?”*

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**T**HIS inquiry may be urged in reply to all the expressions of dissatisfaction with the ways of God, in which mankind are so prone to indulge themselves. The existence of this proneness to be dissatisfied—this spirit of impious complaining, is a fact too obvious to be denied or concealed; nor is it an easy matter to number the grounds which seem to a disordered imagination to justify the permission of it. Strange to tell, the greatest advantages we receive at the hand of Heaven are too frequently made the subjects of inculcation; and God is reproached for his *very goodness*. Some there are, for instance, who would appear to murmur at the liberty with which man is endued as a moral agent. They are displeased that it is left at his option whether to be virtuous or vicious, and consequently happy or miserable; preferring that he should be impelled by resistless necessity into those courses which issue in tranquillity and enjoyment.

Others there are who repine at the superiour advantages enjoyed by the generations of old, for whose guidance, instruction, and confirmation, miraculous deeds were wrought; who require that, as in the days of former years, the sea should be turned into dry land—streams should be made to gush from the rock of the desert—the luminaries of Heaven interrupted in their bright career; the living

struck lifeless by a word; and the dead raised from their graves. Who can discern no propriety or utility in "all things continuing as they were from the beginning of the world,"\* without any of those occasional and auspicious suspensions, revolutions and mutations which excited the wonder, strengthened the faith, quickened the devotion, and sanctified the lives of the men of antiquity. Nothing now occurs, say they, to provoke the conviction and acknowledgment that "this is the finger of God."†

Others are offended because in the present state of things the tares and the wheat grow together indiscriminately; because prosperity and adversity are alike indecisive of man's moral condition; the race not always being to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; success frequently being wanting to the exertion of the upright, while she follows in the train of the most unworthy; because, as they reason, this undistinguishing treatment of the good and the wicked, withdraws encouragement from virtue, and administers it to vice.

And others, again, cavil at the Almighty, because, when iniquity abounds, he sees fit, in certain cases, to abandon things to their natural operation; to permit corruption to engender corruption, vice to feed on vice, misery to become more miserable, and the counsels of folly to eventuate in the perdition of the fool; instead of interposing his irresistible exertions in some preternatural or novel manner, to restore righteousness, order, and peace to their station in the world.

Many of you, doubtless, will perceive at a glance, that these views are entirely erroneous. What is it that can give rise to them? Where are we to look for the causes of this perverse spirit of dissatisfaction? This must be answered *in the first place*; and afterward I will advance a few particulars that may place, in a striking point of light, the great impropriety of such views of the divine procedures.

*In the first place.*—What is it? Self-conceit—an inordi-

\* 2 Peter, iii. 4. † Exodus, viii. 19.

nate estimation of our own understanding—is no inconsiderable source of this vicious propensity. It often happens that men think themselves wiser than their Maker; at least, we can account for their conduct on no other principle. They constitute their judgment the criterion of fitness and unfitness in the dispensations of providence. “Such a method appears to them to be the most eligible for the government of the world; therefore, it is the most eligible. They would have adopted such a particular plan, had things been under their direction; therefore, the Deity ought to have adopted it.” This language may be thought too extravagant to be imputed to any of God’s rational creatures; but if there be such a thing as language in conduct, it certainly is the language of a multitude of inflated mortals, who presume with their measured capacities to embrace infinitude. The human intellect is well fitted to the sphere through which it was designed to range; but let it not aspire to scale the Heaven of Heavens.

While *counterfeit wisdom* is *one* source of this perverse propensity, *real ignorance* is undoubtedly *another*. I do not mean that imperfection which characterizes every finite mind when contrasted with boundless intelligence; nor yet that imbecility which unavoidably adheres to the intellectual faculties of fallen man. I mean the absence of that knowledge which results from the diligent study of divine things, from humble, devout, and assiduous meditation on the ways and works of God. “The works of the Lord are great,” says the Psalmist, “sought out of all them that have pleasure therein;”\* but there are numbers who have no pleasure in them, and will be at no trouble to investigate them. And yet these of all others, are the very men most ready to criticise and censure them.

*Further.*—A certain hastiness or temerity of temper betrays not a few into this sin against God. A hasty decision is very rarely a correct decision. A wise and candid man

\* Psalm, cxi. 2.

will be cautious how he permits himself to pass sentence on the conduct of his neighbour—to charge him with folly—or to ascribe evil motives to his transactions. How much more so when he thinks or speaks of the ways of HIM whose understanding is infinite—whose faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds—whose compassions fail not—whose purity is totally insusceptible of a stain. But, inasmuch as wise and candid men are rare; and inasmuch as no man upon earth is always as wise and always as candid as he ought to be; the dispensations of God's providence and grace are apt to be estimated with a precipitancy of decision which cannot be too pointedly censured. It is with reference to this fault, among others, that the author of Ecclesiastes has given us the following advice: “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in Heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few.”\*

*Again:*—how often does it happen that men murmur because they forget; and call Heaven unkind because their own memories are faithless, or their own perceptions dull? Such is the wretched disingenuousness, or the carnal stupidity of our nature, that those mercies of God, which are new every morning, and repeated every evening, are wont to pass by unobserved, or noticed only for a moment. What one of God's works is it that does not record his tender mercies? What one among the nations of men is it in which he hath left himself “without witness?”† “O how great is his goodness to the children of men?”—too many of whom, in the mean while, unmindful of the rock whence they are hewn; of the shield that protects; and the sun that lights, warms, and nourishes them, ask, “why is not that goodness greater?”

*Once more:*—Vitiating habits and affections dispose men more powerfully, perhaps, than any other cause, to complain of the ways of Heaven. When men become so inured to vice—so perfectly enthralled by the spirit that works and

\* Eccles. v. 2. † See Psalm cxlv.



rules in the children of disobedience, as “to call good evil, and evil good; to put darkness for light, and light for darkness; bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter;”\* it is not to be imagined that they can avoid running into perpetual mistakes in attempting to reason respecting the divine operations; neither is it to be imagined that they will forbear murmuring against an order of things which imposes unwelcome restrictions on the right of sinning. Nothing is more common than to hear persons who have involved themselves in crimes cognizable by the civil tribunals, declaiming against the whole system of the jurisprudence under which they suffer, and reviling those who are appointed to administer it.

I am, in the *next place*, to offer a few particulars that may place in a clear and striking point of light, the great impropriety of indulging in this querulous temper, in relation to the divine works and ways.

AND FIRST; let it never be forgotten that he who made all things, is inconceivably wise. He hath ordained all his works by number, weight, and measure. The Lord is a God of knowledge. His understanding is infinite. He is light; and in him is no darkness at all. The system of the universe argues the perfect intelligence of its Creator. His revelation establishes irrefutably the same truth. We are taught that all things are naked and open to his eye, in all their indefinitely multiplied connections and dependencies; that he cannot be in ignorance; that he is incapable of error; that all his works are done in truth; that whatsoever he doeth, nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it.

SECOND.—It is of equal importance to keep in mind continually, that the Divine *Goodness* is unsearchable; and that its operations are directed by that infinite understanding and perfect knowledge, of which I have just been speaking. It is a provident goodness; a methodized benevolence, if I may venture to say so without irreverence. It proceeds

\* Isaiah, v. 20.

upon a plan. It acts with a design. It is shaped to an end becoming the holiness and majesty of the ineffable nature in which it is found. In virtue of his essential power and uncontrolled dominion, God could do numberless things, no doubt, which he refrains from doing, knowing that it would not be right or fit to do them. Who will deny, for example, that he might, if he should see proper, make all his moral creation holy and happy by one general and instantaneous act? Perhaps this very thing he would do, were he to be actuated by a goodness of no higher or purer character than the mere impulse of natural benignity. But goodness, in the Deity, is, undeniably, something infinitely more noble and refined than this. It is no blind and indiscriminating inclination. It is a worker together with the wisdom that is from everlasting.

THIRD.—Co-eternal wisdom and goodness having concurred in ordering all things, it would be, beyond all apology, unreasonable in any man or angel to expect that the appointed plan should be interrupted, enlarged, abridged, or in any way, how inconsiderable soever, altered, except at the bidding of necessity. But who is to be the judge of this necessity? Shall miracles be repeated to gratify the unbeliever and the doubter until they shall cease to be miracles, and the order of things interrupted by them, become in its turn miraculous? Shall the dead be raised for *their* conviction who have resolved to be convinced by nothing short of a visible resurrection? “Shall the earth be forsaken, and the rock removed out of his place,”\* to accommodate the plans of the restless projector? Shall the good Lord—the only wise God—who has the greatest conceivable objects constantly in view in all his acts and determinations, step aside from the path he has marked out for himself in deference to the murmurs of discontented mortals?

FOURTH.—As the present state is a state of trial or discipline, the divine dispensations are moulded and directed ac-

\* Job, xviii. 4.

cordingly. Who will undertake to affirm that heaven withholds from him what the circumstances of such a state require; or appoints him what they render inexpedient or improper? What duty is assigned to you—what obligation imposed on you—which you are essentially incapacitated to discharge? Ignorance cannot incapacitate you; for, on every indispensable point, ignorance is vincible. Natural corruption cannot incapacitate you; for if you believe on the Son of God, he will make you free from the law of sin and death, and his Spirit will mortify natural corruption. Of all people upon earth, Christians have the least cause to be dissatisfied. If *others* are ungrateful when they murmur and complain, *they* more. Have they not redemption by the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sins? Have they not the unction of the Holy Ghost to heal their moral diseases—to renovate their hearts and their principles—and to make them victorious in the conflicts of temptation? Have they not the lively oracles of truth—and the ministry and sacraments of reconciliation? “What could have been done more to Christ’s vineyard, that he has not done in it?” “O foolish people, and unwise!” O thankless people, and dead to every generous and upright sentiment; who permit themselves to complain of those trials through which their faith, “being much more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, may be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”\*

I hope the few intimations which have been thrown together on this subject may induce us to act an ingenuous, honest, and candid part towards Heaven. Let him who is your Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, have credit for the ample care he has been pleased to take of your present and everlasting interests. Every privilege you enjoy, and many, assuredly you do enjoy, brings in its train, a resulting duty. Your life is *admitted* to be a succession of labours and struggles. But make the expected use of it, and it will

\* 1. Peter, i. 7.

conduct you to an eternity of rest. Cultivate faith and holiness. Fear God, and keep his commandments. For great will be your condemnation, if, at the last great vintage, the Lord of the vineyard shall see cause to make the expostulatory appeal, "what could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"

## SERMON XVII.

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### THE INTERNAL SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.

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MARK, XV. 34.

*“And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi! eloi! lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?”*

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**G**REAT and marvellous is the work of redemption; the God of Heaven manifested in human flesh; “coming to his own, and his own rejecting him;” \* eternal justice, truth, and goodness, apparently sanctioning the iniquity and oppression of wicked men, by abandoning the most excellent of the sons of men, the chiefest among among ten thousand, to the malevolence of triumphant enmity. Never, through thirty-three years of humble suffering, did the man of sorrows experience such anguish of soul as when he uttered the exclamation, “My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?”

This expression, which is contained in the latter clause of the verse that has been read in your hearing, shall form the subject of the present discourse.

Let us consider the import of the expression, “forsaken,” as here used; let us endeavour satisfactorily to ascertain in what sense it might be said that God, whose love of moral goodness is unchangeable, whose compassions are infinite, whose truth and whose faithfulness endure forever, abandoned our guiltless Saviour, his own beloved Son, in the struggles of the expiring hour. This is the more necessary, as many mistaken notions, I am persuaded, are enter-

\* John, i. 11.



tained on this subject, and many unadvised explications given of it. Nor can it be improper that we endeavour to instamp on our minds correct and lasting impressions of every incident and circumstance of our Lord's mediatorial functions; inasmuch as not his death only, but all the events of his publick and official life, have this day been commemorated in the holy Eucharist.

Certainly, then, we are not to infer from this exclamation of Jesus Christ, that he was under the least apprehension that God, his father, was actually displeased with him, or that the thunders of the divine wrath and indignation were, in very deed, directed against him as against a sinner. It is impossible that he should apprehend what, in the nature of things, could not be true. "No man knoweth the Father save the Son;" and he well knew him. He well knew that "the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, and that the eyes of his favour behold the upright." As long as God exists, he cannot cease to delight in piety and virtue; he cannot cease to cherish the pious and virtuous. Whatever some may think of the imputation of our guilt to the Redeemer, there can be no imputation of guilt, except as to its penal consequences. A God of unsearchable wisdom and infinite understanding may see fit to appoint an innocent being to sustain the severest of temporary sufferings, in the place, and for the benefit of a guilty being; but a God of everlasting truth and faithfulness can never so far forget his gracious promises, nor ever so far confound the unchangeable distinctions of right and wrong, as to be displeased with the most perfect obedience that could possibly be rendered to his will, or to recompense the most transcendent virtue with the manifestations of his fierce anger. So that with respect to this doctrine of the imputation of sin, we ought ever to discriminate between God's indignation against sin, and the penal effects of it. He cannot but be indignant against a sinner, although for wise and gracious reasons, the penal effects of his indignation may be trans-

ferred from the sinner to one who knows no sin. It would have ill-befitted the character and office which Jesus was appointed to fill, that guile should be found in his mouth. Spotless perfection was essential to the merit of his atonement. With this perfection he was richly adorned. "He," of a truth, "knew no sin; neither was guile found in his mouth." He was a man after God's own heart. And is it to be imagined that he was, at any period of his sufferings, or in any circumstances of melancholy or desertion, the true and proper object of God's fiery indignation? It is not to be imagined; for it is impossible. It is not to be imagined; for holy scripture asserts the contrary. Holy scripture declares that because "Like a good shepherd, he laid down his life for the sheep of his Father's pasture, *therefore*, did his Father *love* him."\* And is it to be believed that God can both love and be enraged against any being at one time and in the same event? Is it to be believed that God could love his Son because he died for us, and yet that the sufferings experienced by that Son in doing that for which he was beloved, were the visitations of God's anger against him?

Now, as such a transfer of displeasure from sin, that merits it, to the most excellent virtue, which cannot possibly provoke it, is unreasonable, absurd, and by no means to be imagined, I must be allowed to repeat what has already been observed, that our Lord, in making the exclamation in the text, did not, in the most remote degree, apprehend himself to be the object of his Father's displeasure. With such an apprehension, many circumstances of his conduct are irreconcilable. Was the memorable prayer which he offered for his murderers consistent with such an apprehension? "Father forgive them; for they know not what they do!"† Ought we not in reason to conclude from this prayer, that he was secure of possessing his Father's love, which alone could entitle him to intercede in this manner in behalf of others? Was the assurance which he gave the peni-

\* John, x. 17. † Luke, xxiii. 34,

tent malefactor consistent with such an apprehension? "To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise."\* Ought we not in reason to conclude from this assurance, that he was infallibly certain the Heavens were to receive him, till the times of the restitution of all things? That he had power to admit others into an association with him in glory? and, consequently, that he had not lost his Father's love and approbation? Were his dying words consistent with such an apprehension? "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."† Do not these words imply a conviction that his Father was well pleased with him, and disposed to receive him into his bosom? Finally; were those expressions of his to which I have already alluded, consistent with such an apprehension? "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."‡ "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life."§

Thus, we have seen both that our blessed Lord had no reason to suppose himself the object of his Father's displeasure, and that, in fact, he was in no degree apprehensive of it; and consequently, we must account, on some other principle, for his exclamation, "My God! My God! why hast thou forsaken me?"

Our Lord may be said to have been forsaken by his Father, in that those mighty succours were withdrawn which had favoured him in the extremity of former conflicts. He was left to tread the wine-press alone. In his own strength he had to encounter the malice of enmity, and the weaknesses of nature. On a former occasion, in his agony, "there appeared an angel unto him from Heaven, strengthening him."|| "Now, without friend or auxiliary, he contended against "principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickednesses in high places."

*Again:—* Our Lord may be said to have been forsaken by his Father, inasmuch as the light of the divine countenance

\* Luke, xxiii. 43. † Luke, xxiii. 46. ‡ John, x. 11. § John, x. 17.  
|| Luke, xxii. 43.

was obscured to him. It is evident and undeniable that good men enjoy a certain freedom of intercourse with the God of Heaven, to which men of the world, and men of pleasure, that is, the mass of unbelievers, are utter strangers. And it is reasonable to suppose that this intercourse would subsist in a more than common degree of familiarity and suavity between God the Father and his only begotten Son, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person. Long had such intercourse subsisted. But at length there was a time when its freedom was restrained. At length there was a time when Jesus cried with a loud voice, and said, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" Why is it that this darkness that covers the earth is but a faint emblem of the black and comfortless clouds that shrouds my soul? Why must thy Son, in whom thou hast declared thyself well pleased, and whom thou hast permitted to walk in the light of thy countenance, why must he breathe his last sigh in the unpropitious midnight of impervious and joyless gloom?

*Further:—*Our Lord may be said to have been forsaken by his Father, in as far as his extreme sufferings were prolonged. For six hours had he endured the pains of crucifixion, together with the contemptuous insults of a misguided people. At the ninth hour, when the bloody and savage scene was drawing near a close, he uttered the pathetick exclamation, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"

To what has been said, I will only add, it appears to me not improbable that our Lord, at the time he made this appeal to his Father's love, was, more than he commonly had been, exposed to the malevolent attempts of the evil spirit. You cannot forget his own words to the chief priests and captains of the temple, and the elders, who came to take him; words spoken in the near prospect of his extreme and most bitter passions; words of mysterious and frightful import; "This is your hour, and the power of darkness."\* It is

\* Luke, xxii. 52. 53.

in seasons of melancholy and dejection; it is in pains of body and mental agitations; that this formidable angel has us most at his command. To his noxious power I am inclined to ascribe much of that depression of soul which promoted the cry, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" To the same source, indeed, may be referred many of those circumstances of extreme distress that signalized the last moments of his unparalleled life. Hence, "was his soul exceeding sorrowful, even unto death."\* Hence, was "his sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground."† Hence, "he fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O! my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!"‡ The martyrs of Jesus have, without shrinking, encountered death in its most appalling forms; Jesus himself was cast down and disquieted as the last hour of agony drew near. Is there not something preternatural in this? something that leads us to ascribe it immediately to the accursed power of darkness?

But it is time that I endeavour to assign some reasons for that desertion in the hour of needed assistance, concerning which our Lord thus affectionately expostulates with his Father.

FIRST.—Christ was forsaken, in the view that has been taken of the expression, in order to enhance the worth of the sacrifice which he offered for the sins of the world. That he did in reality offer himself up, a sacrifice of propitiation for human guilt, is a truth which cannot be denied. It is an all-important pillar of the divine fabrick of christianity, and that fabrick must stand or fall with it. Verily, "he bare our sins in his own body on the tree."§ Verily, "we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of" the divine "grace."|| Now, it is to be observed that the sentence of condemnation denounced against sinners, by no means terminates in bodily sufferings. Its execution reaches to the very soul; which, sooner or later, it pierces with unutterable anguish.

\* Matth. xxvi. 38. † Luke, xxii. 44. ‡ Matth. xxvi. 39. § 1 Per, ii. 24. || Eph. i. 7.



Hence, it became necessary that our blessed Redeemer, in sustaining for us the penalty of our guilt, should suffer in his spiritual, as well as his material part. But in what way could the soul of innocence itself be made to suffer? Conscience, the worm that never dies, could find no food for his corrosive tooth in the heart that never knew a sin. Fears of futurity could have no place with him who knew that he was shortly to regain the glory which he had enjoyed before the world was. The soul of the great Redeemer could only be made to suffer by that desertion concerning which he uttered the filial and fiducial lament, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" The soul of the great Redeemer could only be made to suffer by the mysterious interruption of that fellowship with the Father of spirits which he had enjoyed to an inconceivable degree, in consequence of the substantial union between the Father and the Son. By this spiritual desertion, superadded to his bodily sufferings, he brought a sacrifice to the altar, whose meritorious perfection hath redeemed a fallen world. This, therefore, we may, without hesitation, admit as one reason why our Lord was "forsaken," in our view of the expression.

SECOND.—We are taught to regard it as a very great recommendation of our blessed Master in the discharge of his intercessory office, that "we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."\* Hunger, thirst, grief, poverty, contempt, oppression, persecution, bodily weakness, anguish of mind; these he knew, intimately and experimentally knew; and at the last was forsaken by the consolations of the paternal presence. The soul of the upright can bear without sinking the pressure of all the evils of this momentary life, if God is pleased to lift up the light of his countenance upon her. But when that Heavenly light is overshadowed; when the sun of her glory is

\* Heb. iv. 15.

shorn of his beams; when Jehovah withdraws the manifestations of his presence, or when melancholy persuades her that he hath forgotten to be gracious; whither shall she direct her flight in quest of peace and happiness? To "him whom it behoved in all things to be made like unto his suffering brethren:"\* to that "merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God," who, "for in that he himself has suffered, being tempted, is able to succour them that are tempted." To him, who, knowing experimentally what it is to be debarred the light of God's countenance, can sympathize with the ingenuous soul when left to walk in darkness; and who at a proper season, will disperse the intervening clouds, and again illuminate her path. Here, then, we are furnished with another reason why Jesus was at this time forsaken by his Father in our view of the expression: it was in order to magnify his priestly and intercessory office.

*Once more.*—Our Lord, being the predicted seed of the woman, was deserted for a season, that, in the event he might triumph more gloriously over the serpent and his seed. Satan had tempted him in the wilderness, and had been repulsed. A contest of superiour magnitude now called for our Redeemer's highest exertions. He was exposed to the infuriate malice of men and devils. Angels, that ministered to him after the temptation in the wilderness, now stood aloof. God, who, at his baptism and transfiguration had proclaimed him his well-beloved Son, withdrew his presence. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me?"† "O blessed Jesus! when thou wert forsaken, then wert thou most beloved." The God who seemed to forsake thee, the God who hid his countenance like the sun that would not behold thy awful struggles, was planning new triumphs for thee. He left it to thine own right arm to work salvation for thee. It was then that satan fell like lightning from Heaven. It was

\* Heb. ii. 17. 18.

† Psalm, xxii. 1.

then that choirs of angels who delighted to minister unto thee, shouted thy victory over the powers of darkness. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness; mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat? I have trodden the wine press alone:"\* "mine own arm and my right hand have gotten me the victory."† Thus was our Lord Jesus Christ for a season deserted, that in the issue he might triumph more gloriously in the redemption of the world.

I might add that another very probable reason for this desertion, was, that our Redeemer might exemplify in his own life and death, the exalted virtues of patience, resignation, and perseverance, together with their sure, though often long-delayed rewards. But I will detain you no longer than simply to remark, how different the present state of the divine Jesus from that in which he uttered the exclamation, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" Then, suspended on the cross, a spectacle to angels and to men; now, exalted at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, in glory everlasting! then, breathing out his soul under the weight and penalty of transgressions not his own; now, seated on the throne of immortality, dispensing life and salvation to the world! then, insulted by the outrages of the most worthless of mankind; now, adored by thousands of thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand ministering spirits of light! then, hunted to death by the denunciations of a savage multitude, "crucify him—crucify him;" now, saluted by the armies of Heaven, "saying with a loud voice, worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing!" then, singly, and without helper or friend, conflicting with earth and hell; now, by his spirit

\* Isaiah, lxiii. 1.—3. † Psalm, xcvi. 1.

most powerfully and effectually interceding for the whole human race; and especially leading the sacramental host of his elect to victory, defending, encouraging, redeeming, and crowning those who swear fidelity to him in the everlasting covenant sealed by his blood; and who testify their love to him, by endeavouring, in the integrity of their hearts, to keep all his commandments!

It is thus, my beloved brethren, that we should testify our love to Christ. It is not enough that we in words acknowledge him to be our only Saviour. It is not enough that we praise him with our lips. Our hearts must adore him. Our lives must do him homage. Remember it was for us that he willingly endured the last possible extremity of wretchedness, the deprivation of God's consoling presence: for us he "cried with a loud voice, saying, My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" And shall we not love him who first loved us? loved us even unto death? Yes, O Lord Jesus, our adorable Saviour! we do love thee; and to prove our sincerity we will endeavour to keep thy commandments. Thy commandments are not grievous. They lead to true felicity here and hereafter. Assist us by the all-powerful influences of thy Holy Spirit to follow thy steps; and in the uprightness of our lives to transmit some features of thy great and bright example to those who shall come after us!

—AMEN.

## SERMON XVIII.

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### ON THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

A SACRAMENTAL DISCOURSE.

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ST. MARK, XV. 37.

*“And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the Ghost.”*

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THESE words, brethren, refer to an event, at the consummation of which the veil that covered the most holy place was rent from the top to the bottom, the graves yielded up their dead, the earth quaked, the Heavens were enwrapped in clouds, and nature was convulsed to her centre. This awful event we are now assembled to commemorate. Lend me your attention, therefore, whilst, waving the ceremony of preamble, I enter upon the immediate consideration of it.

The present exercise shall offer four views of the death of Christ; it is an atonement for the sins of the world; it is the substance of ancient types and the accomplishment of ancient predictions; it is a crime on the part of his murderers, unparalleled in the annals of human guilt; it is a source and spring of perfect morality.

*In the first place.*—We are to view the death of Christ as an atonement for the sins of the world. That such was its nature and tendency; is abundantly evident from the circumstances attending it; and perhaps from nothing more than the otherwise inexplicable terrors which seized our Lord at the prospect of his decease. Never, apparently, was any man more shaken at the approach of death than



was Jesus Christ; and yet certainly never had any man so little cause of alarm at the approach of death.

Never, apparently, was any man more shaken at the approach of death than was Jesus Christ. Witness Gethsemane and witness Calvary. The sacred writers tell us of the sorrow he experienced. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death."\* They tell us of his agony: "and being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."† They tell us of his cries and tears: "in the days of his flesh, he offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death."‡ They tell us that he used such words as these, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me:"§ and in the extremity of his sufferings, when earth and Heaven seemed to keep aloof from the persecuted victim, they describe him as raising the cry of importunate agony to the Almighty Father; "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"|| Such were the terrors of our Lord at the prospect of death.

But certainly never had any man so little cause of alarm on this ground: never man might be expected to meet dissolution with so much firmness: and that for the following reasons.

**FIRST.**—Christ died confessedly in the service of God and man. But when men suffer for those whom they love and revere, their sufferings are ordinarily borne with more patience and tranquillity.

*Further.*—Christ died perfectly assured of the justice of his cause and the guiltlessness of his life. When, in his expiring moments, conscience recalls to the sinner the memory of his crimes, where is the heart that will not feel its lash? But who will name the crime that could excite remorse in the breast of our Redeemer, whose life was a continued exhibition of every virtue and every duty, faith and righteousness, zeal and charity, prayer and meditation?

\* Mat. xxvi. 38. † Luke, xxii. 44. ‡ Heb. v. 7. § Mat. xxvi. 39. || Mat. xxvii. 46.

*Again.*—Christ died fully convinced of the soul's immortality. He who, having lived an infidel, expires in doubt; who, like the emperor of old, asks of his departing spirit, whither, poor flutterer, whither art thou going, and where is thy destination? may well shudder at the black and shoreless gulph of non-existence. But he who knows that when dust returns to dust, the spirit returns to God who gave it; and that beyond these visible Heavens, blissful abodes are prepared for the spirits of the just made perfect; from him less terror might be expected. Jesus Christ knew this. He knew that the soul is immortal and destined to live ever happy in the realms of glory and peace. For by him who now died was life and immortality brought to light.

*Finally.*—Christ died assured of the heavenly recompense. The place of torment; the worm that never dies; the fire that is not quenched; could convey no fears to the divine Saviour, who saw Heaven open to receive him. There were circumstances of more than common splendour to attend his reception. Because he had made himself of no reputation, God was in return to exalt him highly and give him a name above every name. The clouds of Heaven were to form his triumphal car; and angels and archangels and the glorious hosts above were to hail his approach; "Lift up, your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in."\*

I have read of martyrs who have braved all that is severe and terrible in death: I have somewhere read of a Christian woman, who, when persecution was at work and multitudes having fallen beneath its arm, had reddened with their blood her path to suffering, forgetting the timidity of her sex, said with a heavenly smile, "our persecutors are distributing crowns, and I am going to receive one:" but Jesus, in the prospect of death, sweated as it were great drops of blood; and in the pains of death, cried aloud, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"† Inexplicable mystery!

\* Psalm, xxiv. 7. † Mat. xxvii. 46.

And is it, then, really inexplicable? To them who reject the atonement, unquestionably it is. To them who in faith receive this doctrine, the mystery is unfolded. Christ "was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."\* "God spared not his own Son, but freely gave him for us all—he made him sin for us—he made him a curse for us."† And in order more effectually and perfectly to accomplish this great purpose, the prince of darkness, we have reason to believe, was allowed a more than ordinary freedom of access to his soul. Well, therefore, might the Saviour of the world, pressed by the load of its accumulated sins, and encompassed moreover, by the inconceivable horrors of satanic influence, tremble in every limb, agonise at every pore, and raise the loud cry, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"‡

*In the second place:*—We are to view the death of Christ as the substance of ancient types, and the accomplishment of ancient predictions. On whatever period of the church we fix our meditations, we discern some emblem, or some intimation of redemption by the blood of Christ. No sooner had Adam sinned, than the promise was given, "the seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent;"§ and this promise was renewed to Abraham and the patriarchs. If the blood of a lamb was sprinkled on the doors of the Jews, it was typical of "the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot; who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world."|| If the rock stricken in the desert gave water to the tribes of Israel, "that rock," says the apostle, "is Christ."¶ If the brazen serpent, lifted up for them to look to, healed their wounds, even so was the Son of man lifted up on the cross, that all the ends of the earth might look to him and be saved. The sacrifices refer us to him who was "set forth to be a propitiation for sin."\*\* The victims refer us to him "who

\* Isaiah, lii. 5. † Cor. v. 21.—Rom. viii. 2.—Gal. iii. 13. ‡ Mat. xxvii. 46.  
§ Genesis, iii. 15. || 1 Peter, i. 19. 20. ¶ 1 Cor. x. 4. \*\* Romans, iii. 25.

through the eternal spirit, offered himself without spot to God.”\* The animal who went into the wilderness loaded with the curses of Israel, refers us to him “who suffered on Mount Calvary, without the gates of Jerusalem.”† Let us hear what the prophets say of Christ, in allusion to the sacrifice which he was to accomplish for the sins of the people. By Isaiah it is written, “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.”‡ By Daniel it is written, “Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself.”§ By Zechariah it is written, “Awake, O sword! against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts; smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.”|| By David it is written in a psalm, applied by our Lord to himself, “My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God! I cry in the day time, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent. But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me, laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, he trusted in the Lord, that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.”¶

*In the third place:*—We are to view the death of Christ as a crime on the part of his murderers, unparalleled in the annals of human guilt. Here, brethren, language fails; nor can any images be found to approach the horrible reality. Let us bring to our remembrance that mildness of character ever so conspicuous in our blessed Master; the fervour of his piety; the humility and benignity of his intercourse with

\* Hebrews, ix. 14. † Hebrews, xiii. 12. ‡ Isa. liii. 7. 8. § Daniel, ix. 26. || Zechariah, xiii. 7. ¶ Psalm, xxii. 1. 2. 6—8.

the world; the purity of his life; the favours he had conferred on his persecutors; the affectionate exhortations he had addressed to them; the miracles he had wrought for them, in healing their sick, and raising their dead: and after contemplating this picture of consummate excellence, let us call to mind the treatment he experienced; the calumnies levelled against him by his persecutors; their lies; their perjuries; their savage importunity to procure his death, which had merited everlasting infamy and execration, had it been exercised against the vilest criminal. Above all let us advert to the nature of the death to which he was condemned; crucifixion, a fate reserved for slaves, and the refuse of malefactors; in which the unhappy sufferer was fastened to a cross by nails driven through his hands and feet; his body racked; and his blood flowing drop by drop; until death should put an end to his lingering agonies, which often continued so long as to require the interposition of some fresh torment to give nature the concluding shock; as was the case in the instance of the two thieves crucified in company with our Saviour. But let us not stop here. Why should we forget the scarlet robe; the crown of thorns; the mock sceptre; the insolent defiance, "he saved others, himself he cannot save?" Let us combine all these circumstances, and we may form some faint idea of the crime of those who murdered the prince of life. Let nature and the elements accuse them. Let the prodigies that accompanied the crucifixion, convict them. Let the darkness that covered the earth, the sun veiling his face in clouds, that he might not behold the accursed parricide: Let the veil of the Temple rent, to be the habiliment of mourning for the murder of the Temple's Lord; let the earth convulsed as if she trembled at the bloodiest deed that ever stained her bosom; let the rocks split; the graves opened; the dead arising as if the trumpet of eternity called them to judgment; let these—let these substantiate the guilt of our Lord's murderers, and



justify the decree by which their children are at this moment scattered through the world, marked by a portion of that infamy in which they sought to involve him.

*In the fourth place.*—We are to view the death of Christ as a source and spring of perfect morality. If it becomes us to fear the retributive justice of Heaven, where shall we go to learn that salutary fear, with better prospect of success, than to the cross of Jesus? Contemplated from that elevation, how formidable will Heaven's justice appear? Even from the Heaven of Heavens she draws her victim: even from the bosom of God she draws him: she has an altar not made with hands, and on it she binds a divine lamb, without spot and without blemish. Surely then, sinners, who can, in themselves, offer nothing to their judge but what will unavoidably provoke his indignation, shall not escape, if they trample on the gospel, thus rendering themselves the more guilty, in that this very gospel alone furnishes them the means of escape.

If we would learn to see sin, or moral depravity, in its true colours, as a hateful and despicable departure from what is the glory of a reasonable and immortal being, where shall we go with better hopes of success than to the cross of Jesus? They who roll sin, as it were, a sweet morsel under the tongue, and who drink in iniquity like water, to this cross let them repair; let them learn the cause from its effects; and when they devise sin in their thoughts, let them remember the blow which it struck at the heart of God's most blessed Son.

If we would have a model to imitate, where shall we find one more worthy of imitation than on the cross of Jesus?

Ambitious man! come to the cross of my Saviour, and I will shew you meekness and lowliness incarnate; I will shew you him who, although he thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet for the benefit of others, took on him the form of a servant, and died the death of a slave.

Voluptuary! come to the cross of my Saviour, and I will shew you pleasure mortified, and the flesh crucified with its affections and lusts.

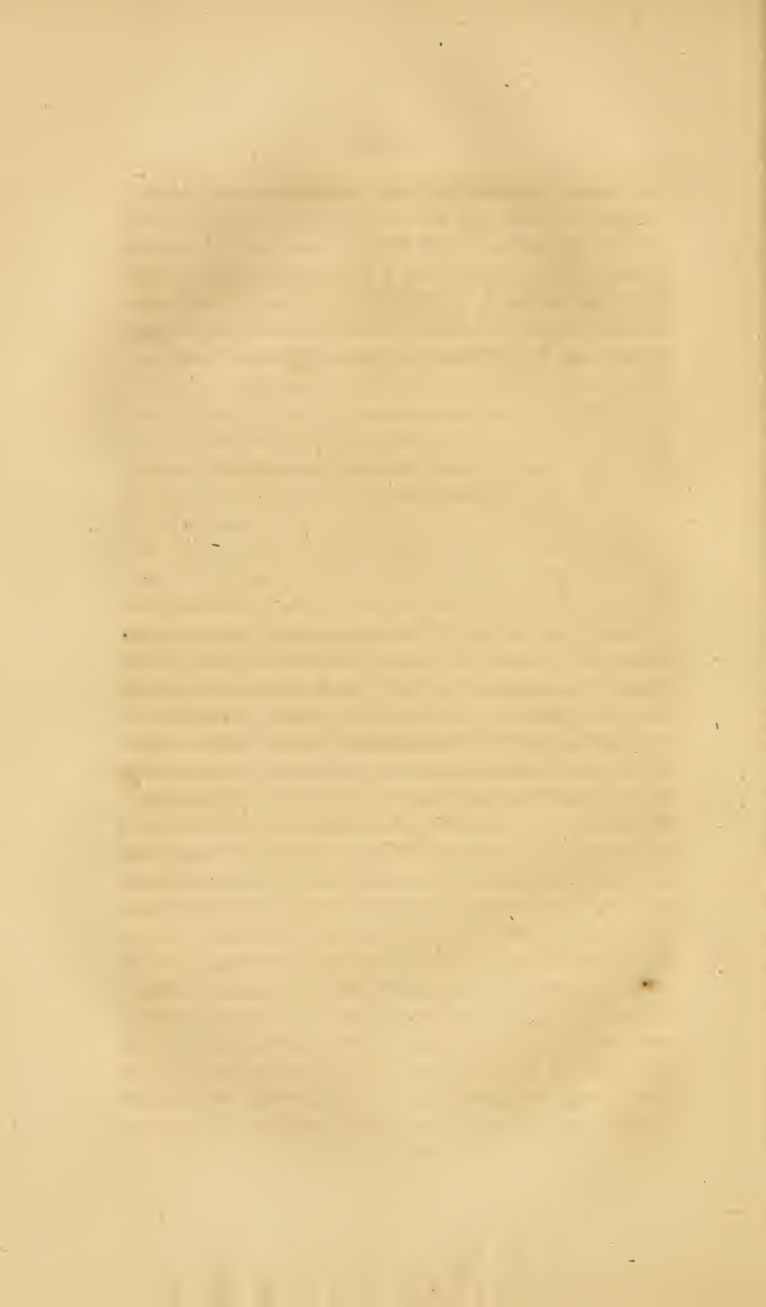
Revengeful spirit! come to the cross of my Saviour, and I will shew you one who prayed for his murderers, and died for his enemies.

*Finally.*—If we would love our Redeemer, whence shall we derive a more powerful motive to that love than from his cross? There we see the evidences of his love who first loved us. We see his hands and feet pierced; his side opened; his wounds bleeding; his body torn by the whips of Almighty justice; and all for our salvation. At a sight so affecting, where is the obstinacy so invincible as not to yield? Where the heart so flinty as not to melt? Where the love so ardent as not to burn with a renewed and brighter flame?

Thus we have taken a fourfold view of the death of Christ; we have considered it as an atonement for the sins of the world; as the substance of ancient types, and the accomplishment of ancient predictions; as a crime on the part of his murderers, unparalleled in the annals of human guilt; and as a source and spring of perfect morality.

This death, brethren, you are now about to commemorate at the holy table. Endeavour, therefore, to affect your hearts with a pious and thankful recollection of it. Recognize in the bread the broken body of your Lord, and in the wine his shed blood; and when you raise to your lips the consecrated symbols of salvation, see that you make the sincere return of love for love, and life for life. Retire not from these heavenly contemplations and performances without growth in grace. Let not your affections, plighted at the very altar to your dying Saviour, be as the early dew-drops which glitter in the morning sun, but disappear as the hours advance. Let the cross ever occupy your minds, your hearts, your lives; and in the chamber where you meet

your fate, let the cross be lifted up to dissipate the terrors of the grave. And may God vouchsafe, by his Holy Spirit, so to strengthen you in that dread moment, as that you may look from Christ crucified, to Christ risen; glorified; interceding; prevailing; and extending his arms to receive your departing spirits; that having passed through things temporal, you may finally attain the things eternal.—AMEN.



## SERMON XIX.

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### THE UNSATISFYING NATURE OF SUBLUNARY ENJOYMENTS.

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ECCLESIASTES, i. 2.

*“Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher; vanity of vanities;  
all is vanity.”*

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**M**Y Brethren, if experience can teach knowledge, the preacher to whom our text alludes was the wisest of men. He was not one of those whom providence deprives of the means of enjoyment. Born of royal parents, his earliest years were passed in a court. Long before he wrote this book he was seated on the throne of Israel. He was possessed of all that could instruct or amuse; all that could delight or persuade; all that could thrill the heart with rapture, or warm it with the glow of ambition. He had traversed the field of human knowledge. Nature had taught him her mysteries. History had made him familiar with the wisdom of past ages. Philosophy and poetry were rivals for his heart. Authority was his. The wealth of an empire lay at his feet. The luxuries of the east supplied his banqueting house. Festivity reigned in his palace. Beauty brought him her tribute, the rose entwined with the lily: and love was the monarch's banner. Princes and queens were emulous of his favour. Distant nations spoke his praise: and even popularity, fickle popularity, was true to the glory of Solomon. Never man, then, so well qualified to pass judgment on this world and its pursuits. Happiness



was the object of his search. He had sought her through every avenue. Like the bee he had roved from flower to flower. The cup of enjoyment stood before him; he came—he tasted—and pronounced it vanity. In this book of Ecclesiastes, which contains the result of his experiments upon human life, he teaches us that the objects which most generally invite the pursuit of mortals are unsubstantial, unprofitable, unsatisfactory, deceitful, and hurtful. All these qualities would have been well expressed by one word, “vain.” But this was not enough to indicate the extreme emptiness and worthlessness of sublunary matters. They are not only vain, but “vanity” itself; “vanity” in the abstract. Nor would this suffice. They are “vanity of vanities;” a phraseology which the Hebrew language employs to express the superlative degree. And, to evince yet more clearly the energy with which this truth struck the mind of the royal preacher, the charge of vanity is reduplicated, “vanity of vanities; vanity of vanities;” and summed up in that pithy conclusion, “all is vanity.” Nor may it be forgotten that the heart which indited, and the hand which wrote this conclusion, were directed by the spirit of God.

Let us, my brethren, by meditating, at present, on some of the many sources of worldly happiness, endeavour to obtain that deeply rooted conviction of their insufficiency, which gave nerve to the instructions of Solomon. For this purpose, may the divine blessing attend us, and the unction of the holy one inspire us with understanding!

There are four principal objects of human pursuit; the wealth of this world; its glory; its pleasures; its wisdom. On each of these is inscribed vanity.

**FIRST.**—The wealth of this world is vanity. The desire of wealth is insatiable. “He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase.”\* The farther he proceeds in the business of amas-

\* Eccles. v. 10.

sing, the more intent he becomes to pursue the glittering object; and when it is attained, new prospects of affluence open to his view. The possession of wealth is unprofitable. "When goods increase, what good is to the owners thereof, save the beholding of them with their eyes?"\* "They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him."† And if their wealth is unprofitable to others in the moment of need, it is equally so to themselves. Wealth cannot purchase peace of mind. Wealth cannot cure a diseased body. Make the experiment. Recline upon a bed of gold. Will the palsied limb regain its strength? Let oppression mark thee for its victim. Let adversity inflict its lightest stroke. Will gold give thee equanimity? And death; will he esteem thy riches? No, "not gold, nor the multitude of thy possessions." Look round, and see the rich man die and leave his wealth to others. His inward thought is, my house shall continue forever, and my dwelling place to all generations. I have goods laid up for many years. My warehouses are replete with the materials of gainful traffick. My granaries are inexhaustible. My vessels waft me the produce of every clime. Soul, take thine ease—eat—drink—and be merry. Ah! fool—this night thy soul may be required of thee—and then whose shall these things be? Or grant that thy life is prolonged; art thou sure of seeing the travail of thy soul? The malice of evil men may pillage thy warehouses. Fire may consume thy granaries. The winds of Heaven may scatter thy proud fleets and leave not a wreck behind. Riches are too uncertain to be made an object of trust. Riches make to themselves wings and flee away as an eagle towards Heaven."‡ Often they prove a snare to their possessor. Judas, the apostate Judas, betrayed his master with a kiss; and with the same treacherous blandishment did wealth betray Judas. My brethren, let us not be unnecessarily anx-

\* Eccles. v. 11. † Psalms, xlix. 6. 7. ‡ Prov. xxiii. 7.

ious to amass these earthly possessions; but let us never be remiss in seeking to lay up treasures in Heaven, which neither moth nor rust will corrupt, and which wicked men can never take from us. Let us make Christ our own. He is himself a treasure. "Riches and honour are with him; even durable riches and righteousness. His fruit is better than gold; and his revenue than choice silver. He will cause them that love him to inherit substance; and he will fill their treasures."\*

Consider, next, *the glory of this world*. This also is vanity; and the pursuit of it, vexation of spirit. How many disappointments—how many mortifications—harass the children of ambition; let their object be civil distinction, or the fame of letters, or of arms! Observe the man emulous of civil distinction. How many days of vanity, and wearisome nights, does he employ to attain his ends! How many artifices, perhaps, to bribe that esteem which he cannot merit! And at all events, how many reproaches! and how much abuse must he sustain from the uncharitable spirit of opposition! Suppose him possessed of his desired object. Place on his head the civic crown. He is restless still. More towering prospects arise. A nobler guerdon challenges his ambition. Some new office—some new distinction—rekindles the flame, and sounds the alarm to a fresh contest. Let this issue favourably to his wishes; joy, indeed, may brighten his countenance; but, when the circumstances which produced it become familiar, this joy will pass, and be forgotten. Let it issue unfavourably; disappointment and disgust are marked on every feature. Tell him not of former objects of pursuit attained. Disappointed in this one matter, past attainments are remembered with little relish.

Observe the chief who seeks honour in the field of danger, and amidst the ranks of death. You may know him by the laurel of victory which he wears. Blood marks his progress over conquered provinces. He spares nor age, nor

\* Prov. viii. 18.—21.

sex, nor office. He raises the temple to the ground, or profanes it to the unhallowed purposes of war. After countless battles and sieges, he gains the empire of a world; and then sits down to weep because more worlds are not within his grasp. Herein is vanity; that he who sows in the prospect of joy, should reap in tears. How often does envy raise her surmises, and malignity seek to obscure the hero's renown! "This battle was prematurely fought," says one: "it was the rashness of the *general* that disgraced our arms." "That retreat, to be sure," says another, "was unavoidable, but it is a pity that so many gallant men should fall a sacrifice to the incapacity of their leader." "After all," adds a third, "I do not see that this man is entitled to so much praise, he had intelligent officers and a brave army; and any other man, under equal circumstances, would have acted an equal part." Such, my brethren, is the portion of all who make worldly glory the object of their confidence. So are they disappointed—so are they mortified.

What is this glory? It is a bubble; a gilded folly; an unsubstantial phantom; a thing of nought. "A breath creates it and a breath destroys." How variable the opinions of men! how different their decisions, as circumstances differ, on the character and conduct of each other! "The Gods are come down to us in the likeness of men,"\* said the Lycaonians, full of admiration at the eloquence and miraculous powers of Paul and Barnabas. "Then," to be sure, "the Priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people."† And yet, not long after, the people were persuaded to stone Paul until they supposed him dead. With what triumphant shouts, did the citizens of Jerusalem welcome the approach of the Redeemer; spreading their garments in his path; "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: hosanna in the highest!"‡ And how did the same stupid and malign-

\* Acts, xiv. 11.

† Acts, xiv. 13.

‡ Mat. xxi. 9.

nant people, afterward, without the gates of the city, rend the air with the cry of "crucify him, crucify him;"\* and imprecate the curse of his blood upon themselves and their children! My brethren, let such views of human glory mortify our desires after it, and engage us in the pursuit of that glory which is spiritual and eternal; that glory which is the meed of holiness and the offspring of grace.

The pleasures of this world form another object of human pursuit. The pleasures of this world are also vanity. "I said in my heart, go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure; and behold, this also is vanity. I said of laughter, it is mad; and of mirth, what doth it?"† "There is a laughter in the midst of which the heart is sorrowful. The end of such mirth is heaviness."‡ The more tumultuous our pleasures, the more indistinct and imperfect; the more intense, the shorter their duration. Do the nightly revels of the voluptuary leave him that placid content which is essential to true enjoyment? Whence, then, that haggard visage? Why that contracted brow? "I have tried," says the voluptuary, "all the delights of the sons of men. Every wish has been consulted. Every joy that crossed my path I have detained for myself. I have culled the sweetest flowrets of spring to weave a chaplet for my head. I have got me men-singers and women-singers. I have spent the day in planning schemes of enjoyment and the night in executing them. I have thrown the reins upon the neck of my lusts, and given scope to my loose desires. But a disordered frame and a sick heart tell me it is all vanity and vexation of spirit. I have found that "there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."§ I have found that "wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; it giveth its colour in the cup; but at the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder."|| I have found that "the house of the strange woman inclineth unto death; her feet go down

\* John, xix. 6. † Eccles. ii. 1. 2. ‡ Prov. xiv. 13. § Prov. xiv. 12.  
 || Prov. xx. 1. xxiii. 31. 32.



to the grave; her steps take hold on hell,"\* Yes; pleasure is vanity: the pursuit of it vanity, and I, who have engaged so eagerly in the pursuit, the greatest of all vanities." And allowing that a diseased body and an impaired mind should not be the consequences of his criminal indulgence; yet even in this case his palled appetites would lead him to the same conclusion. Happiness consists not in the gratification of animal passion, however lawful and moderate. The joy of a moment, however intense, is not happiness, Let this joy pass, and what will it leave us? Its image on the mind. But will the image of what passed in the gay and festive hour delight as did the present reality? Memory, it is true, dwells often upon departed pleasures. We derive satisfaction from retracing the scenes of former joys; but it is a satisfaction mingled with much alloy of melancholy. I speak of gratifications which may be repeated. But there are many which having once tasted, we never taste again; many which disappear to return no more. Of these how painful the remembrance!

Even the more exalted pleasures of friendship and affection are not exempt from the general charge of vanity. Suspicions and jealousies interrupt the closest alliances. Frequently, where you expect integrity, you find deceit, and court the sting of a serpent. "The best of them is as a brier," says the prophet Micah, "the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge: trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide; keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom."† Sincere love is often its own tormentor. Kindness wounds itself; and affection proves the source of misery. Friends must be separated; if not by the duties and avocations of life, yet assuredly by that power who triumphs over the fondest and the proudest hopes of worldly happiness. How often must the tear fall on the urn of friendship? How often must the heart bleed at the stroke of death? How often must tenderness feel the shock of separation? Ah!

\* Prov. ii. 18. v. 5. † Micah, vii. 4. 5.

it is not in the parting moment only; but as often as memory recalls the image of what it once held most dear on earth.

Such, my brethren, are this world's joys. Favour is deceitful; affection short-lived; sensual pleasure destructive; and "all is vanity." Let us, then, direct our views to higher sources of happiness. Let us pray to God that he may give us to partake of that fulness of joy which his presence inspires; and to bathe in that river of pleasures which flows with a pure, a perpetual, and an equal current, at his right hand. Let us seek to be united to his Son by a vital faith. Christ is a friend in need—our own friend—and our father's friend—a friend who will cleave closer than a brother; whose friendship will be more watchful than a father's care, and softer than a mother's love. Death, that cuts all other ties, shall not divide us from HIM, whose alliance with his redeemed shall be eternal as himself.

*Once more:*—The wisdom of this world is vanity; its policy; its arts; its learning. "I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom, concerning all things that are done under Heaven: I have seen all the works that are under the sun: and behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit."\* "And I gave my heart to know wisdom; I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit: for in much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow."† The mind of man, like his body, is susceptible of satiety in its pursuits; a satiety caused, perhaps, by the connexion of soul and body. "Much study is a weariness of the flesh;"‡ and when the flesh is weary, the spirit will lose its ardour. All mental pursuits, therefore, which terminate in any object short of God, from the very constitution of our nature, must be vain. Equally vain, however, are their objects.

Is it the policy of this world which invites the eagerness of pursuit? What is this policy? A system of deception, contemptible in its nature, and, God be thanked, very generally frustrated in its ends. Is it the knowledge of the world, as it is termed, that tempts our acquisition? Alas!

\* Eccles. i. 13. 14.

† Eccles. i. 17. 18.

‡ Eccles. xii. 12.

how dearly is this knowledge purchased! How often at the expense of health—innocence—peace—the immortal soul itself!

Shall we apply to history to make us acquainted with the ages that are gone? But many things recorded in history are unworthy of credit; many others are of dubious authority; and, of those entitled to our belief and dependence, few are calculated to produce that satisfaction which we are wont to connect with the pursuit of knowledge. Benevolence is called at every page to weep over the miseries of man. The heart sickens at the tale of cities sacked—empires overthrown—rapes—assassinations—tyranny—rebellion—crooked politicks—and bloody violence. If some fair spot appears amidst the general waste, even there we cannot repose ourselves with unmingled pleasure. There is in man a disposition to magnify past times at the expense of the present. The excellencies of our own age shine with a lustre almost extinct amidst the blaze of recorded glory. We are prone to fear that virtue died with our forefathers, and lament that their children inherit only their vices. This contrast of past excellence with present inferiority, how little soever it may be warranted by fact in the degree to which it is extended, affects the mind with melancholy impressions. This also is vanity. “He that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow.”\*

Nor do the pretensions of philosophy merit more respect. Observe her motley children. Their bosoms swell with pride, or rankle with envy, as their tenets are admired, or discarded for others more acceptable. Their systems fluctuate with every wind of opinion. The fashionable philosophy of to-day will be in dispute to-morrow. “Self is the spring of human actions;” says one, “all our affections and passions are but different modifications of self-love.” This fashion obtains, until another philosopher arises and teaches a doctrine which absorbs self in the overwhelming ocean of

\* Eccles. i. 18.

universal benevolence. We have no concern in our own conduct, believe this sage, unless it may be incidentally. Our finite minds must grasp the universe of being before their actions or volitions can be determined. Men, tired of old vanities, are ever ready to embrace new ones. This opinion wears the charm of variety. It dureth, therefore, for a while. But, by and by, the novelty ceases, and time banishes the system, with its author, into the regions of absurdity. Thus it fares with the wisdom of this world; it is foolishness; it is vanity.

True wisdom is Heaven-descended. Seek her not in the schools; she dwells not there. Seek her not in the world; she has no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Go to the hallowed retreats of inspiration, and seek her amidst prophets and apostles at the feet of Jesus. Let us pray to God that he may make Christ our wisdom; so shall we possess the wisdom that cometh down from above; the wisdom "which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."\*

This wisdom is, indeed, no vanity; no unreal mockery. It is all substance. It is productive of lasting profit and unmingled bliss. Its dominion is an endless dominion, independent on time, or chance, or the fluctuations of caprice. Its throne rests on the moveless base of everlasting truth.

Now to **GOD**, only wise, be glory in the church, by Christ Jesus—throughout all ages.—**AMEN.**

\* James, iii. 17.

## SERMON XX.

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### THE ETERNITY OF GOD.

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PSALM, XC. ii.

*“From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.”*

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**E**TERNITY, or everlasting duration, in its scriptural use, has three several significations. Sometimes it is expressive of a very prolonged period of time, which, however, is still a period of time; and which, in its nature, must have an end, as it had a beginning. Hence we read of the rite of circumcision being appointed for an everlasting covenant: that is, it was designed to last while the covenant of which it was the seal should last. In the same manner, the promised land was said to be given to Abraham for an everlasting possession; although we well know that the possession of it has long since departed from his children. By the Jewish law, if a servant refused emancipation, and chose to remain with his master, he was ordered to comply with certain ceremonial regulations, after which he became his master's servant, as it was said “forever;”<sup>\*</sup> that is, till the next year of jubilee; the jubilee revolving every fiftieth year. I shall instance but two, particulars more. The meat offering which it was ordained that Aaron and his sons should offer unto the Lord, was denominated a perpetual meat offering; and the ordinance of the passover was to be observed by the church *forever*. But it is very certain that all such rites and observances were superseded by the new dispensation of the evangelical covenant. Perpetuity, then,

\* Deut. xv. 17.



we see, is asserted of all these practices, institutions, and privileges, which had a beginning, and as undeniably have had an end.

*Again.*—Angels, and human souls, and in general, all spiritual substances, except the infinite Creator spirit, by whatsoever name they may be known, have had an introduction into existence, but, we are told, shall never cease to exist. And in this sense, perpetuity of being is ascribed to them. In this sense, they are *eternal*. Although there was a moment in which they were spoken into existence out of nothing, yet the moment shall never arrive when they shall be commanded back from existence into nothing.

But in the strict and literal acceptation of the term, eternity is *duration* without beginning and without end; and it is in this sense that it is always ascribed to the great God.

Lend me your attention, therefore, while I humbly and reverently essay to consider that perpetuity—that eternity—which is essential to the divine existence and character. Here I shall endeavour to remember, that, as God is in Heaven and we on the earth, it is peculiarly proper that our words be few, and our imaginations unassuming.

The text naturally leads me to observe that the Divine Existence never had a beginning: “*from everlasting—thou art God.*” If his being had been derived from any extraneous source, he would not be God. He would be a dependent nature. He would be an inferiour agent, indebted for his powers and perfections to a superiour; and instead of being, what we are taught to believe him, the first cause of all things, would himself be no more than an effect proceeding from a cause. Between time and eternity there is no middle ground. Whatever does not pertain to the one, must be referred to the other. Now, the earliest probable date of time can go no farther back than the first act of creation. But creation supposes a Creator. Before the foundation of this visible universe, before the production of

intelligences to number the periods of successive being, their Maker existed, supremely blessed in his own inconceivable perfections. The Ancient of days dwelt in essential glory when as yet time was not. Millions of millions of years before the creation, his existence was no nearer its commencement than in the moment that ushered in creation's birth. "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, *from everlasting*—thou art God;" and not only from everlasting, but *to everlasting* also; "*to everlasting* thou art God." That is, the Divine Existence, as it is without beginning, so shall it never have an end. Beautiful is that picture in the CII. Psalm, in the colouring of which the divine eternity is so inimitably contrasted with the fleeting and decaying forms of creation. "My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like the grass. But thou, O Lord! shalt endure forever, and thy remembrance unto all generations."\* "I said, O my God! take me not away in the midst of my days: thy years are throughout all generations. Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth, and the Heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end."†

In this perpetuity of the Divine Existence there is strictly speaking, no succession of periods; no distinction of past, present, and future. All things are at all times present to him. Neither is there any change produced in God by the lapse of ages. No diminution, no increase, of parts or perfections, of knowledge or of counsels. Ever constant to himself, he is unaffected by the fluctuations of things. From age to age he has looked down on the revolutions of this world, and he is still the same. The creatures have their rise and fall; their birth and their destruction. The Crea-

\* Psalm, cii. 11. 12.

† Psalm, cii. 24.—27.

tor is now what he ever has been—the Creator ever shall be what he now is. Eternity, immeasurable, incomprehensible eternity, is the crown of all his perfections.

It has been said, and with great justice, that the name by which God was pleased to make himself known to Moses, is expressive of his eternity. “I AM THAT I AM.”\* I, of whom it cannot with propriety be said, either that I was or that I will be; but that *I am*, at all times *am*; the Being underived himself, from whom all other beings spring; the root and source of immortality; the everlasting God; Jehovah: “I AM THAT I AM.”

The eternity of God is evidently asserted in those words of our Saviour; “The Father has life in himself.”† That is, the Father hath life originally, radically, essentially. He may and does communicate, but receives nothing. Accordingly our Lord says, “as the Father hath life in himself, so *hath he given* to the Son to have life in himself.” That is a remarkable expression of St. Paul concerning the immortality of God; “who *only hath* immortality:”‡ who alone is unavoidably and necessarily immortal; to whom alone perpetuity of being is not a gift; from whom alone it is inseparable. “The God of Daniel,” said Darius, “the God of Daniel is the living God, and steadfast forever.”§

I have already observed that eternity, is the crown of all the divine perfections. If God were not to endure “from everlasting to everlasting,” what would become of the infinitude of his attributes? And without infinitude in every excellence both natural and moral, where would be our God?

If God were not eternal, where, for instance, would be his immutability, that firmest pillar of the confidence and the hopes of man? Surely we have reason to think that a being who begins to exist, will be in some way or other affected by the changes that attend its progress in existence. But our God is immutable. “I am the Lord; I change not.”|| Therefore he is eternal.

\* Exod. iii. 14. † John, v. 26. ‡ 1. Tim. vi. 16. § Dan. vi. 26. || Mal. iii. 6

*Again.*—If God were not eternal, where would be his most pure and unalloyed blessedness? Surely, whatever measure of enjoyment he might experience, it would be diminished by the prospect of returning into non-existence, how distant soever the period of that return might be. But our God is ever happy. “He is blessed from everlasting to everlasting.”\* I have only to add, God’s eternity is one of his incommunicable perfections. He can no more impart absolute unbeginning perpetuity of existence to a creature, than he can produce two equal infinities, and make a mere man essentially God.

Let these few remarks suffice for the doctrinal part of the subject, on which, indeed, much cannot be said without presumption. I proceed to the practical application of it.

**AND FIRST.**—The consideration of God’s eternity should effectually deter us from provoking his displeasure. Perpetual duration certainly empowers him to protract the punishment of offences committed against his government. “The Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king; at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation.”† Be-ware, then, of his displeasure, who, when he draws his glittering sword, may never return it to the scabbard; who, when his hand takes hold on judgment, may never loose that hold; who may render perpetual vengeance to his enemies, an endless reward to them that hate him.

**SECOND.**—The consideration of God’s eternity should lead us to take comfort from the perpetuity of his covenant. The fulfilment of his promises is secured by his everlasting duration. Hence the gospel, which is the form and expression of this covenant, and the sum of its promises, is denominated the “everlasting gospel.”‡

In this covenant, God hath pledged himself to be our God. He is, therefore, our chief good, the centre of our felicity, the rest of our souls; and will be so while we exist, that is,

\* Psalm. xli. 13. † Jer. x. 10. ‡ Rev. xiv. 6.

both here and hereafter, if we refuse not to credit his oath. "This God is our God forever and ever; he is a dwelling place in all generations."\* On this rock the church erects the edifice of her hope, as we read in the CII. Psalm, already quoted, "Thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee."† And hence it is that the prophet Habakkuk exclaims, "Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God! mine holy one? we shall not die."‡ Building on the same foundation, Jesus Christ being the chief corner-stone, all who have laid hold on the hope set before them, all who have set to their seals that God is true, all who have subscribed to the terms of the everlasting covenant, which is well ordered in all things, and sure, may say, with reference to the pleasures and blessings of the life to come, "soul, take thine ease, thou hast goods laid up for many years," even for eternity.

In what do these goods, those blessings and pleasures consist? In the vision of God, "whose presence is fulness of joys, and at whose right hand there are pleasures forever more." Now, after ages spent in this beatifick state, its pursuits and gratifications will continue to interest, to occupy, and to charm, with as much life and power as when an entrance is at first administered into it. If God is eternal, the vision and fruition of him shall be eternal also. The bliss of Heaven is unconscious of termination. The flowers of Paradise never wither. The river of delights flows on with an even and unwasting current forever and ever. To the rising dead their light shall come, and the glory of the Lord shall arise upon them. Let ages on ages take their flight to join the years before creation; the sun of glory shall not set. Let millions of millions of ages retire into the same oblivion of departed time, the sun of glory shall still shine, and its light enlighten eternity.

The truth of these things rests on the firm ground-work

\* Psalm, xlviii. 14. † Psalm, cii. 27. 28. ‡ Hab. i. 12.



of the everlasting covenant, established by HIM whose word is unchanging truth; who is the same throughout all generations; whose years fail not; who is the same yesterday, today, and forever; who only hath immortality; who from everlasting to everlasting, is God. Rejoice, then, in the Lord, ye righteous; and triumph in the consolations of his eternity.

THIRD.—The consideration of God's eternity should check the risings of pride. How little do we know, how little *can* we know of this essential perfection of Deity? Our discourse on it resembles the babbling of children, and our conceptions of it are more feeble than the impressions made on the infantine understanding. How should this mental impotence humble us in the presence of God?

This consideration should check the risings of pride in another view. It should repress that presumption which aspires to sit in judgment on the ways of eternal providence. "Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world." But are they known unto us? No more than they are our works, and not his. Is our understanding infinite? Is our wisdom unsearchable? Are we acquainted with the natures, the associations, the tendencies, the sympathies and antipathies, so to speak, of all things? It is unnecessary to answer these questions. We are beings of yesterday, and know nothing.\*

"We are beings of yesterday." It is here that the consideration of God's eternity is most powerful to repress the pride of man. Contrasted with him who liveth forever and ever; who never began to be, and whose existence shall never end; what are we who "are beings of yesterday, whose foundation is in the dust, and who are crushed before the moth?"† Is not our life, at its longest period, compared with the duration of our Maker's existence, of a proportion infinitely less than that of a drop of water to the collected waters of the universe? Infinitely less than that of a grain

\* Job, viii. 9. † Job, iv. 19.

of sand to the collected matter of the universe? What is our life? A vapour—a smoke—a bubble that no sooner floats into view, than it bursts, and is no more. What is our life? A moment—a point of time—what is past of it cannot be recalled; what is future cannot be counted on; we enjoy the present instant, but lose the past; and shall immediately lose the present in the next that is to come. When did we begin to live? After incalculable years of pre-existing eternity had rolled on, while the place that now knows us, knew us not. How long shall we enjoy this life? A few score fleeting years, at most, and then the place that now knows us, shall know us no more.

And should not the brevity and frailty of our lives humble us in the presence of God, “with whom our days are as a hands-breadth, and our age as nothing? The angels, who are coeval with the Heavens and the earth, cover their faces before him, and cast their crowns at his feet. The Heavens melt, and the mountains flow down at his presence. And shall we, who are but of yesterday, lift up aspiring thoughts and vain imaginations towards him? O! Father of eternity! hide pride from our eyes, and clothe us with humility.

FOURTH.—The consideration of God’s eternity should weaken our attachment to the world, and draw our affections from it. “I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say.” Would reason lead you to prefer a temporal and perishing world, to an eternal God? What is this world, admitting that you had the entire possession of it, what is it to the Universe of worlds? An atom to the Andes. And what is the universe of worlds, but a created system that had a beginning and might have an end? But God is from everlasting to everlasting—without beginning and without ending. He hath offered himself to be your God, your portion, and your exceeding joy. Which do you prefer? God who is eternal? or the world that perisheth? “Choose ye this day whom you will serve.”

Six thousand years have not quite elapsed since the foun-

dations of this world were laid. When they will be subverted, we know not. But if our great progenitor had lived to the present day, and had enjoyed as absolute and uncontrolled a sovereignty over his posterity as that which God gave him over the fish of the sea, and the fowl of the air, and every living thing that moveth upon the earth; would all this have sufficed to fill the desires of his soul? Would all this have given rest to his soul? Would he not, even on this supposition, have acted an irrational part, to prefer a created enjoyment of circumscribed duration, to the everlasting Creator of all things?

Marked with the lines of vanity, the fashion of this world passeth away. "A kingdom, with the glory of a throne, may be cut off in a morning."\* And is this departing pageant to be preferred by the rational mind as the supreme object of affection, before the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth?

O! my brethren, let me persuade you to appreciate the sublimity of your vocation, that you may walk worthy of it; that you may live above this perishing world. You are born for immortality. Why should you grovel on the earth? Heirs of the eternal God; joint heirs with his eternal word made flesh; are not the vows of holy baptism on you, and is it not one of these vows that you will renounce the world? Let me prevail on you to withdraw your attachment from objects that will only deceive and disappoint you. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where the moth doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither the moth corrupts, nor thieves break through and steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."† Raise your affections to things above, where your Redeemer sitteth at the right hand of God. Judge ye rightly, that the time past of your lives may suffice to have had your conversation in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of

\* Charnock. † Matt. vi. 19.—21.

the flesh, and of the mind. "Walk by faith, and not by sight."\* "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*."†

Now to the KING *eternal, immortal, invisible*; the only wise God, and our SAVIOUR: to the blessed and only Potentate, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords; who *only hath immortality*, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see; be honour and power everlasting!—AMEN.

\* 2. Cor. v. 7.

† 2. Cor. iv. 18.

## SERMON XXI.

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### THE ATONEMENT.

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I. PETER, iii. 18.

*“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.”*

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**T**HIS verse is in substance, an epitome of the gospel. It establishes irrefutably a doctrine which is the marrow of correct belief; the life and soul of christianity; the originating principle of evangelical morals; the sun of that divine system whose author is the word and wisdom of Jehovah. You must at once perceive that I allude to the doctrine of the atonement. The religion that we preach, tear from it this doctrine, would appear to me to resemble a superstructure resting on no solid ground-work—a beautiful statue devoid of animation; pleasing, in a certain measure, to the eye, but incapable of influencing, affecting, or even reaching the heart. The scheme which omits this capital article, has been aptly denominated the frigid zone of christianity. There is no warmth in it: nothing genial: nothing productive; nothing that moves, expands, or encourages. Tell me that God, who is holy, expects me to be so, if I would be happy in his presence—tell me this, and *no more*—and you only chill desire and deaden exertion; because I cannot be ignorant of the radical defect in my moral condition; I cannot be ignorant of my moral distance from God. But tell me that “Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God;” tell me this, and



hope revives. Immediately I take encouragement to act, to labour, and to *pray*.

Every word of our text has force and meaning. To use a popular style of emphasis, every word *tells*. You have here the annunciation of the fact, that Jesus, anointed of God, and sent, to be a Saviour—a mediating priest—prophet—and king—hath suffered. You have the ground or procuring cause of his suffering. “He hath suffered for sins.” You have the information that his suffering hath accomplished its intended result; that it is not to be repeated or renewed; and that nothing additional in the nature of atonement is necessary or admissible. “He hath *once* suffered.” You have his moral or spiritual excellence expressed; “the just.” You have the demerit of those for whom he suffered declared; “the unjust.” You have the final cause of his suffering; “that he might bring us to God.”

May the spirit which guided the pen of Peter, aid us in our meditations on his words; that our faith may be strengthened to rest with a holier and more unshaken confidence on our Saviour Jesus Christ!—Amen.

FIRST.—Jesus, anointed of God, and sent, to be a Saviour—a mediating priest, prophet, and king—hath suffered. Of this no man can doubt who will not refuse to accredit historical evidence of the most unexceptionable character. The evangelists represent him as participating in the infirmities of our common nature; and what is more in point, as exposed to distresses bodily and mental, of peculiar character and aggravation. And this representation harmonizes, in every particular incident, with the predictions concerning his state of humiliation. The whole tenor of his eventful life, and all the circumstances connected with his unexampled decease, fully justify what is said of him: that “he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” The great enemy whose works he came to destroy stirred up the prejudices of men already disposed to evil, or excited passions and antipathies which might otherwise have had no existence.

He was assailed in his good name; defamed as having a devil; as casting out devils through Beelzebub, the prince of devils; as a wine-bibber, and a friend of publicans and sinners; as a mover of sedition; as an aspiring mal-content; as an enemy of man, and a blasphemer against God. He was outraged in his person; buffeted; scourged; spit upon; made to toil under the weight of the cross on which he was condemned to die. On that cross he was unrighteously and inhumanly put to torture; being placed between two convicts as though he had been a more flagrant sinner than either. Crucifixion, as all know who are acquainted with the history of the countries where it was a customary mode of capital execution, was attended with the utmost imaginable disgrace, being most frequently inflicted on slaves. Hence, says the scripture, "he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."\* "He endured the cross, despising the shame."† On that cross also, a distress of a nature and severity altogether singular, overtook him; a mysterious agony which drew from his lips, until then uncomplaining, that loud cry, "My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" For it was not without "the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God that he was delivered." "It pleased Jehovah to bruise him;"‡ it was "he" who "put him to grief." It was *his* sword, bathed in the Heavens, that smote this Lamb.

To justify this dispensation, note well,

SECONDLY.—Its ground or procuring cause. "He hath suffered for sins." But for whose sins? Certainly, not his own. Notwithstanding the number and acuteness of his griefs and pains; notwithstanding he might, without exaggeration, exclaim from the cross on which he was lifted up, "behold, all ye that pass by, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow;" yet his deportment had been, not perfectly inoffensive only, but perfectly holy; not merely blameless, but unmixedly excellent. "He hath suffered for sins."

\* Phil. ii. 8.

† Heb. xii. 2.

‡ Isaiah, liii. 10.

But for whose sins? Certainly, not theirs who fled from his rebuke on earth, proclaiming him their conqueror and their tormentor; not for the sins of the spirits once excelling in strength before the throne of God, and afterwards banished with everlasting destruction from his presence. "For, verily, he took not on him the nature of angels." "He hath suffered for sins." But, once more, for whose sins? For *ours*, my brethren; for the sins of *believers*. He was the promised "seed of the woman." "In the fulness of time God sent forth his Son made of a woman."\* He is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; and wearing our nature, "his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree."† As we were under a law which we had violated, so was he made under the same law to fulfil it in our behalf; to expiate our offences against it; and to deliver us from its penalty. "He hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."‡ Moral evil is a direct outrage upon the Creator. It is a species of defiance hurled against his providential rule. Divine justice, therefore, will not pass it over with impunity. But instead of exacting from believers a rigid satisfaction for sin in their own proper persons, it has pleased God so to charge it to the account of the propitiating Jesus, that all its penal consequences lie vicariously upon him. "Surely, he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." "For the transgression of God's people was he stricken."§ "All we like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."|| So perfect is the atonement thus effected by the vicarious suffering of our Lord, that it does not require to be repeated or renewed; neither is any other atonement or propitiating oblation, requisite or admissible. Hence, says our text,

THIRDLY.—"Christ hath *once* suffered." The intended result of his bitter passion is accomplished. Sin is remitted. The penitent is dismissed in peace. Why, then, should the

\* Gal. iv. 4. † 1. Pet. ii. 24. ‡ Gal. iii. 13. § Isaiah, liii. 4. 8.

|| Isaiah, liii. 6.

altar of oblation again be dressed? Why should blood still be shed? Why should the victim expire afresh? Why should the Son of man continue to be numbered with the transgressors? In the iteration of the sacrifice, I can discern neither the spirit nor the letter of the covenant. On the contrary, I read that "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many."\* I find a high authority inferring the inadequacy and inefficiency of the sacrifices of the ancient dispensation, from their periodical recurrence; "The law having a shadow of good things to come," says the writer to the Hebrews, "and not the very image of the things, can never, with those sacrifices, which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect. 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."† I find the same high authority demonstrating the value and competency of the one sacrifice of the gospel to take away sin, from that very circumstance, that it is but *one*, and but *once offered*. "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once for all*. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified."‡ Upon whatever specious and plausible pretexts, therefore, men may venture to perpetuate sacrificial institutions in the church of Christ, the practice is no better than superstition. All such observances are unauthorized by Christ himself; and immediately derogate from the dignity of that one great oblation which, through the Eternal Spirit, he made of himself to take away sin. No sophistry can transubstantiate such falshood into truth. God

\* Heb. ix. 28.

† Heb. x. 1.—3.

‡ Heb. x. 10.—14.

speed the time when the dark places of the church which now know it, shall know it no more! For it is one among the brood of pestilent errors which unblushingly oppose themselves to the revealed mind of the spirit.

FOURTHLY.—“Christ hath once suffered for sins,” although himself a “just” and sinless being. I have already incidentally touched upon this point. Himself had no sin, of any description or degree, for which to account. The Saviour of the world was the only perfect character that can be found to adorn its history. He was the eternal word of God assuming flesh in time, and dwelling amongst us. He was miraculously produced; not shapen in iniquity, nor conceived in sin. Totally unspotted by original corruption, his actions, also, were such as to defy reproach. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. He knew no sin, neither was there any guile found in his mouth. This innocence--this uprightness--this purity--this unqualified perfection of heart and life, was required to accomplish him for the sacerdotal charge, and to magnify the worth of the propitiatory offering which he made of his precious life. The same high authority before quoted, reasons, on this matter, with his usual energy. “Such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the Heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s; for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the law maketh men high priests, which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated forever more.”\*

FIFTHLY.—“Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust.” The race of man is carnal, sold under sin. “There is none righteous; no, not one.” “All the world is guilty before God.” Inheriting from Adam a patrimony of corruption, we have improved and extended it with most

\* Heb. vii. 26.—28.



pernicious industry; “drawing iniquity as with cart ropes;” “drinking it in like water;” “rolling it as a sweet morsel under the tongue.” Even where principles of heavenly origin have been wrought into the soul, there is a law in the members warring against these principles, and captivating them to the inferiour powers of appetite and passion. “Who can understand his errors?”\* “For there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth not.”† Such is man. Such are they whom Jesus came from Heaven to save. It is not a flattering picture, for truth seldom flatters. Is there not in the conduct of man, in the aggregate, evidence too unanswerable to impartial observation, of something that cannot properly be called by a softer name than that of hostility against God? Are not justice and equity, benevolence and mercy, while admired in theory, and celebrated by the declaimer and the poet, remote from general practice? Does not the precipitating impulse of fleshly desire too commonly break down the barriers of reason, and defy the controlling power of God’s word and providence? O! how has the gold of man’s early glory become dim! This district of the creation is peopled by a family of sinners; this fair earth, which, with the fulness thereof, is the Lord’s, formed by his hand and designed for his praise; sustains those who are his enemies by wicked works. And such were some of you, men and brethren. But you are washed—but you are sanctified—but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God. What a world, then, was this for God’s blessed Son to visit! But what do I say? Our necessity was his glory. Our deep degeneracy moved his commiseration; and this *just one* died, that the unjust might live.

*Once more.*—He suffered “that he might bring us to God.” This was the final cause of his suffering; “that he might bring us to God.” Not but that there are other important uses of the passions of our Mediator. One of these uses more

\* Psalm, xix. 12. † Eccles. vii. 20.

immediately respects himself; it is, that the captain of salvation might be made perfect. Another of these uses, in which we are deeply concerned, is intimated by our apostle, who points us to the Son of God as a pattern of submission and fortitude in adversity. "For as much, then, as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind."\* Another object of great moment to us promoted by the passions of Christ, is the forming of the Christian's mind to habits of self-denial—the mortifying of the body of sin—the separating of the heart from carnal attachments—the opening of the eyes upon the vanity of all secular anxieties and joys, and upon the futility and perishableness of all human glory. "God forbid," says Paul, "that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."† A fourth consequence of magnitude effected by the passions of Christ, is the superiour qualifications which they wrought in him for the office of our advocate. "Wherefore, in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren; that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."‡ But, my brethren, not one of these uses of the passions of Jesus—not one of these benefits resulting from them—and uses and benefits of essential importance I acknowledge them to be; much concerns that man whom Jesus does not bring to God. Exhibit not Jesus as a pattern of fortitude and submission in adversity, to those who have not been taught of God the sweet and sanctified uses of adversity. Talk not of denying self, and taking up the cross, to those who have not been drawn to that cross on which the Saviour was lifted up. These are duties to which they are disinclined until his spirit work in them to will and to do. And why should you speak of a Redeemer made perfect

\* 1. Peter, iv. 1.

† Gal. vi. 14.

‡ Heb. ii. 17. 18.

through suffering; of a priest and intercessor vested by it with superiour qualifications to advocate a sinner's cause; unless it be to announce him as a Redeemer in fact—a priest, intercessor, and advocate in very deed bringing the penitent to God? This, then, after all, is the final cause why “Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust:” “that he might bring us to God.”

For it is a solemn truth, my brethren, that sin had formed a separating wall between man and his Creator. Our state, irrespectively of a Redeemer, is a state of alienation from God. The Redeemer hath suffered to recover us from this state of alienation—to demolish that separating wall. “In him God is reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing trespasses and sins.” By him peace is effected, “peace for them that are afar off” from God. By him every legal demand was met, and every award of divine justice fulfilled. “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”\* “Without shedding of blood, there is no remission.”† “But now in Christ Jesus, ye, who some times were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is *our peace*.”‡

But our distance from the author of our being implies more than this. It is not merely as criminals, convicted by his law, and exposed to its penalty, that we are restored, and brought to God by his Son. We are estranged also in mind and will, in temper and inclination. The fellowship of our spirits is not with God's spirit. To reclaim us from this perverse bent of the affections, that divine spirit must form us anew. “Except a man be born of water, and of the

\* Rom. iii. 23—26. † Heb. ix. 22. ‡ Ephes. ii. 13. 14.

spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”\* But this reforming and regenerating spirit is the purchase of the blood of Jesus. It is “with his precious blood, as the blood of a lamb without blemish and without spot, that we are redeemed from our vain conversation.”† Hence that prayer of an apostle: “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.—Amen.”‡

Christ, by suffering for sins, “the just for the unjust,” hath made the throne of Almighty God accessible to the penitent. A ceremonial purification was prerequisite in certain cases, by the ancient law, in order to gain for the worshipper an entrance into the Temple. In like manner, in every supposable case under the new dispensation, polluted, as we are, by vice and folly, our approaches to God are sanctioned and consecrated only by the obedience and blood of the suffering Mediator. Hence that reasoning of an inspired author: “If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God?”§ “The blood which cleanses from all sin, gives us boldness to enter into the holiest.”|| Although the God we serve is undoubtedly of purer eyes than to behold evil; although he cannot look upon iniquity but with abhorrence; yet have we a “High Priest over the house of God, who hath consecrated for us a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;”¶ in “whom we have boldness, and access, with confidence, by the faith of him.”\*\*

\* John, iii. 5. † 1 Peter, i. 18. 19. ‡ Heb. xiii. 20. 21. § Heb. ix. 13. 14.  
¶ Heb. x. 19. ¶ Heb. x. 20. \*\* Eph. iii. 12.

Christ, "by his once suffering for sins, the just for the unjust," hath opened the kingdom of Heaven to all believers; "hath purchased a possession" of eternal glory for the myriads whom he has reconciled to God, reclaimed from sin, and consecrated to be holy, upright, exemplary in life, and pure in heart. "Return, O! Lord, how long? When shall I come, and appear before God? O! that I might come even to thy seat! As the heart panteth for the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee. My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. How lovely are thy dwelling places, my King and my God! How desirable the altars of thy Temple, not made with hands! Open to me the gates of Heaven, that I may go into them and praise thee!" Such are the desires of pious men—such the animated breathings of the believer's spirit; and they shall be fulfilled; and according to their hope, it shall be done unto them; because "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God;" because "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water, by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish;"\* because he who *once* suffered for sins, designs to come again without sin unto salvation, when he shall "present you," believers, "faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy."†

Let no one impeach the righteousness of God in ordaining this substitution of an innocent being in the sinner's place. The dispensation was not imposed upon Christ against his consent. It was not more an ordinance of his Father than his own voluntary assumption. "Lo! I come to do thy will, O! God; the body which thou hast prepared for me," I come to offer upon the cross for the sin of the world! At once he presented himself as the victim, and the priest. And the imagined iniquity of the appointment by which he agonized, bled, and expired for trespasses not his

\* Eph. v. 25.--27.

† Jud. i. 24.



own, is lost in the triumphant splendours of that crown which he now wears; in the unrivalled glories of that name, that dignity, that authority, and that power, with which he is now recompensed.

Suffer, now my brethren, a few words of exhortation.

It must be obvious that nothing can be more sacredly incumbent on the Christian than to maintain in his heart a lively impression of the benevolence of the Son of God. Contemplate with fixed eye that splendid representation of moral dignity—of the virtue and perfection of the celestial regions—which the character and transactions of Jesus afforded, when he sojourned on earth. Contemplate the successive griefs through which he passed from his birth to his crucifixion. See him on the fatal tree, cut off, but not for himself; struggling under the pressure of your sins, and bathed in blood by the stripes of mortal execution due to you. It was your offences that planted the cross on the ensanguined hill of Calvary. It was your rebellion that murdered this prince of life. It was to bring *you* nigh to God, who were afar off from him, that this just one suffered for sins. And remember that the sufferer was God's own Son; uniting a nature derived from the eternal Deity, with human flesh, human feelings, and human sympathies. This being recollected, the poet's language will not be thought unsound, "Heaven wept, that man might smile—Heaven bled, that man might never die." Let love to this divine sufferer, then, be a passion in your souls, second only to love to the Father of mercies who gave him for the life of the world. Turn with disgust and abhorrence from sin, as that which occasioned his suffering—that which crucified the Lord of glory—and that which, as often as it is repeated or indulged, crucifies him afresh, and puts him to open shame. Shall I say, let not sin reign in your mortal bodies? I will not say this; for if you be true believers on the name of the Son of God, you have imbibed his spirit; in habit you are holy; in you, sin cannot reign. But I will say, resist temptation:

banish the evil thought; strangle the incipient lust—the infant principle of sin; crush the young serpent’s head before his sting can have strength to dart the moral poison. Forswear the accommodating and supple spirit which is so apt to lure the Christian into worldly compliances. Remember that you are redeemed to be a holy seed. Let not the Redeemer be reproached in the bosom of his own family.

“He hath suffered to bring you to God!” to establish for you a communion with the Father of your spirit here, that you may be trained up for the holy fellowship of Heaven. Draw near, therefore, in full assurance of faith. Lift up pure hearts and holy hands. In private and in publick; in the closet, the dwelling, and the church; let the altar of incense be raised, and pure offerings of praise and thanksgiving ascend. And if it be only through the suffering of Christ that you are brought into peace with God, and receive the privilege of approaching him acceptably, there is no need of many words to prove that you must draw near in his name and in dependence upon his merits. “He is the way, and no man cometh unto the Father, but by him.”\*

One word to unthinking sinners, and I have done. If no man can be brought to God but by a suffering mediator—if no man can appear before God’s face in Heaven, except through the righteousness of that mediator, imputed to him, and received by faith; and on this point you have a full and fair opportunity to satisfy yourselves by collating the different scriptures on this subject, and inferring effects from causes—conclusions from premises; what madness possesses you, that you should renounce your only refuge? I entreat you to pause. Surely you are not aware of the bitterness of God’s eternal displeasure. If sin required such an expiation as was made for it by the unequalled suffering of the Son of God, surely, they whom faith and repentance have not interested in *his* merits, must acknowledge themselves to be in imminent and awful peril. “If such things were done in a green tree, what shall be done in a dry?”†

\* John, xiv. 6. † Luke, xxiii. 31.



## SERMON XXII.

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### THE FEAR OF MAN SUBORDINATE TO THE FEAR OF GOD.

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ST. MATTHEW, X. 28.

*“Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”*

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To know equally the chief good and the chief ill; to have distinct views of what we should most dread and what we should most desire; is a useful, and cannot but be an all-important acquisition. It is attainable at the feet of Jesus Christ. He has told us that the happiness of man consists in the knowledge of God; in divine love; and in the everlasting enjoyment of heavenly communion. He has told us, also, as in our text, that the misery of man consists in the eternal privation of these joys, and the eternal sufferings of a torment infinitely more to be deprecated than the pains of this life, however severe, and the terrors of death however alarming. The holy confessors and martyrs of God have studied this lesson in all ages, and at all times it is a lesson worthy of Christian meditation. Exempt, as we are, for the present, from the lash of persecution, there are few who are not impressed with greater anxiety on the score of temporal evils, than apprehension as to what are eternal; few who do not dread weak men more than the Almighty God; and none who do not need instruction from Heaven as to whom and what they ought, and whom and what they ought

not to fear, in the line of their duty. Let us all, therefore, with meekness, receive the ingrafted word, which, through faith, is able to make us wise unto salvation. Let us hearken to Jesus whilst he teaches us, in the text, to what fear it is that we should never degrade ourselves; the fear of death: and what we should dread far more than death, and them who may have the power of it; the judgment of God. "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

Man, brought into the world with so many principles tending in their nature to unite and bind us to each other; man, whose every breath should emit the fragrance of the heavenly plant of love; has become cruel and ferocious; more cruel than the Lion; more ferocious than the Tyger. These respective species of animals are generally at peace among themselves; but with man, neighbour against neighbour, brother against brother, puts himself in arms. Religion itself, which, unless perverted, entenders and humanizes the heart, is too often made the pretext of cruelty. By pronouncing this hallowed name we would consecrate our furious passions, whilst we seek to appease our hatred by the destruction of its object. How often, since the incarnation of Christ, has his church been defiled by murder, massacre, and devastation? How often has she seen her children led to the wheel, the cross, the scaffold, the gibbet, and the stake? Contemplating this weight of woe, all of which he foresaw in vision, and part of which he personally experienced, St. Paul says, in the words of the XLIV Psalm, "for thy sake are we killed all the day long, we are counted as sheep for the slaughter." Contemplating these events as shortly about to involve his disciples, Jesus Christ thought fit to encourage them with these words; "Fear not them which kill the body."

To men, who, professing the feeling of humanity, are not insensible to pain and misery, this exhortation would seem



unnatural, did not our Saviour ground it on the most substantial reason, that they "are not able to kill the soul."

The soul, freed from material fetters, rests in peace, amidst the bowers of Paradise, and on the bosom of God. There, arrayed in felicity and glory, she is unruffled by passion, and unconscious of pain. Did the wicked forbear their rage; were the sword of enmity sheathed; still, the dissolution of the body is the debt of nature, a debt we all must pay. Let time take its course, and though enmity should spare, disease or decay shall claim you. Let violence and murder do their worst; they only accomplish what the constitutional principle of mortality would in time have effected, with less severity and anguish, it may be, but not with less certainty. Let them rend the garments, let them pull down the abode, of man; the spirit, which is peculiarly the man, and which wears these garments, and inhabits this abode, the bright unsuffering spirit ascends to God. "Fear not them," therefore, "which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

An ancient sect, who combatted all the passions, aimed their principal attacks against Fear. They contended that the wise man should be, not only intrepid in danger, but insensible to it. Passion, however, is necessary in the economy of human life. Jesus Christ, therefore, more wisely and compassionately, does not require us to eradicate fear, but labours to give it a true direction. "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

Nor yet does he absolutely forbid all fear but that which terminates in God; or proscribe that fear of man, that dread of the evils of life, which is natural and reasonable, if confined within due limits. But he teaches that this emotion is infinitely more becoming, infinitely more necessary with regard to God, and the everlasting ills which it is in his power

to inflict, than with regard to men, and the temporary evils of this life, or even death itself, independent of future suffering. And this his doctrine is in perfect conformity with the dictates of nature and common sense. God claims a greater proportion of our reverence than the greatest and most powerful of our fellow creatures, in that his nature and dignity excel theirs. Whenever, therefore, God and man invite us to different and opposite performances; when menaces from each impend over us to effect our compliance; we cannot hesitate whom to fear and how to act. "We ought to obey God rather than men." Surrounded by the sorrows of life, or having the pains of death in prospect, the emotion of fear is natural and unavoidable. But when the soul is in danger; when her interests are at variance with those of the body; we should give ourselves up to the movements of a greater fear lest we be overtaken by the terrible destruction of soul and body in hell forever. In the daily occurrences of life, we cannot but observe that when a man is called to experience a variety of griefs, the more light will not be felt under the pressure of one more severe. Let the fear of poverty, for example, be set off against the fear of death, and a man shall cast the coffer that contains his all into the sea to save himself from shipwreck. Thus, Jesus Christ, who knows our frame, designs that one fear should destroy another and an inferiour; and therefore says, "fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

This hell, my brethren, is not a black abyss of non-existence, swallowing up equally our hopes and our fears, and rendering us as though we had never been. It would not then be an object more terrible than that death which the cruelty of man might inflict on us. The same event would deliver us at once from the enmity of the world and the retribution of God. Were annihilation the issue of all things, we should shrink from the fires of martyrdom and its tor-

turing racks, though every step we retired should awaken the anger of Jehovah. What is this hell, then? It is a place of extreme contempt; it is a state of extreme anguish. The original word, which the translators of the scriptures have thus rendered, signifies "the valley of Hinnom." This was a valley in the vicinity of Jerusalem which the execrable superstition of the Jews has immortalized to infamy. In the times of their idolatry, it was here that they sacrificed their infant children to Moloch; placing them in brazen statues, and consuming them gradually by the application of slow fires. Afterwards, as the Hebrew Doctors inform us, to render yet more profane and abominable a place defiled by the most detestable crimes that ever idolatry perpetrated, or superstition inspired, it was made a receptacle for the bodies of executed malefactors and the refuse of the victims used in sacrifice. Having no idea of any place more odious than this, the Jews, employed its name to designate the state of rejected souls and the place of their torments; and Christ couched his instructions in the language of the day, as most intelligible.

Let us now concentrate these ideas. There is a great and terrible God—the avenger of guilt—the all righteous judge—who hath power to cast into hell both soul and body; that is to say, the entire man, with all his faculties of sensation and reflection. They who have been accomplices in the crime shall be associated in the punishment. The bodies of the wicked shall be raised, and, being reunited to their souls, shall suffer with them. Both soul and body shall be destroyed in hell—in the lake of fire and brimstone—the habitation of the worm that never dies, but corrodes with unabated sharpness—amidst tears, and lamentations, and gnashing of teeth, and the roarings of ever quenchless flames.

My brethren, let us not wrest from the Almighty the majesty of terror which surrounds him. A God disarmed is a God despised. If the infernal world with all its horrors is often insufficient to make us fear and obey him, what would

be the consequence were we no longer influenced by the apprehension of eternal misery? There are persons who affect to be superiour to such motives; to be proof against the impressions of terror in religion; to call the dread of futurity weakness and cowardice. But is it true magnanimity to disregard so great and inevitable an evil? an evil that shall co-exist with eternity? an evil from which we may be separated by a mere point of position or duration? Is it true magnanimity to sleep while sentence is pronounced upon us, or on the brink of the precipice whose foot is lashed by the billows of destruction? Is it true magnanimity to look with indifference on the blackness of everlasting darkness, and to contemplate unmoved an eternity of suffering? Men and brethren, it is self willed obduracy; it is brutish stupidity. "Fear not them," therefore, "which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

This subject, my brethren, is not devoid of utility, although it may not be thought probable that you or I shall ever be precisely in the situation of those to whom the words were originally addressed. I will remind you of a very natural, reasonable, and scriptural inference from it. If we are exhorted to fear not even death in the path of duty, and if, from the manner in which the exhortation is conveyed, we are compelled to believe that fear in such a case is criminal, how much more when it terminates in inferiour evils; when it is excited by the scoffs of the impious and profane, by the contemptuous smile of the worldling, or the insolent pity of the sciolist and the witling; when you relax in piety and virtue, intimidated by every little inconvenience that meets you from the world; when bad company, bad example, complaisance for those around you, the mere request of persons who might be disobliged by a refusal, when either of these circumstances is sufficient to divert you from Christian purity and sanctification? It is in vain that we preach the doctrine of future and eternal punishment; that we rea-

son concerning righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come; if we produce no impression that can stem the torrent of fashionable errors, or mortify the most inconsiderable propension to vice. It is in vain that we preach the spotless sanctity, the severe justice, and the resistless power of God; if the fear of man can prevail to defeat the influence of his laws. O! how many sins of omission and commission take their rise in this base principle!

Heads of families; we tell you to make your houses, houses of prayer; to lead your children and servants to the knowledge and communion of that God who is the author of domestick happiness; but family worship is not the fashion, and you are afraid to be singular.

Young people; we tell you to remember your Creator in the days of your youth; we tell you that peculiarly graceful, in early life, is a religious deportment, and followed by the especial favour of God; that filial piety is the first and noblest of social duties; and that respect for the authority of age is essential to your best interests; but your companions make a mock at all these things, and you are afraid to incur their ridicule.

Professors of our holy religion; we tell you, be not conformed to this world; renounce its vanities; disclaim its principles; abstain from the appearance of evil; avoid modish dresses, modish places, and modish amusements, that minister to sin; walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called; and adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things; but this is being righteous over much, say the men of this world; and ye are afraid that they should entertain a mean opinion either of your understanding or your spirit.

Perhaps in no one instance is this misplaced fear more conspicuous than in the practice of duelling, so frequent in the present day; a practice, in which it is hard to determine what most to admire, its stupid absurdity, or its audacious wickedness. It is absurd; stupidly absurd; because it can



bring no real satisfaction to the injured party. It is wicked; audaciously wicked; because it directly and daringly contravenes the law of God, which, on this point, as on all others that involve moral obligations, is express, unequivocal, and unqualified, and which, although it allows us to repel forcible aggression, does not allow us wantonly to destroy, or even expose our own lives, or the lives of others. Thoughtless of this, how many professing Christians are there whom the fear of the world and of its scoffs and of its frowns sends unbidden into the Eternal Presence! Presumptuous sins are, of all others, most dangerous to the soul; and a sin so presumptuous as this can scarcely be named. He who takes hours, if not days and months, to deliberate, before he commits the crime, if there be truth and justice in God, provokes that God to cut him off before he can repent; and in the records of my faith I learn that *no unrepented sin* shall ever be forgiven. It is not for me to limit divine mercy; it is not for me to decide the destiny of the duellist, or of any other criminal; but this I will say, ten thousand universes should not bribe me to stand with him in judgment.

But, my brethren, were I to pretend to calculate the full effect of this pernicious principle, the fear of the world, its laugh, and its frown; I should not know where to stop. Suffice it to say, that it is not more pernicious than unreasonable. Suppose you were to gain the whole world, all its smiles, and all its caresses, would this be a compensation for the loss of the soul? O! consider those awful words, "whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in Heaven." "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." "Fear not them," therefore, "which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul;" far less be ye afraid of those whose contempt or hatred may be directed against Christian piety and virtue; "but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

Spirit of my God! Vouchsafe to enforce the admonition upon the consciences of this people, that in this their day, they may attend to the things which belong to their peace, before they be hidden from their eyes forever.—AMEN.



## SERMON XXIII.

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### THE CAUSES OF INCONSTANCY IN RELIGION.

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GALATIANS, v. 7.

*“Ye did run well; who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth?”*

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**I**T must be evident to every attentive observer of human nature, as exhibited in real life, that steadfastness, fixedness, and perseverance in the practice of piety and virtue, is an excellence extremely rare. Impressions of truth and goodness too generally become faint, where they are not totally effaced; religious zeal languishes, where it is not extinguished; the purposes of virtue are broken off in the midst; and to multitudes, the apostle's expostulation is not inapplicable, *“Ye did run well; who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth?”* There is a particular reference in these words, it is true, to a mischievous interference with the faith of the Galatians, in consequence of which they had stepped aside from the simplicity of the truth as it is in Jesus; endeavouring to connect it with the obsolete rituals of Judaism. But in the very same style, with the very same earnestness of address, ministers of Christ may remonstrate against every aberration from sound doctrines once received; against every deviation from the course of duty; every intermission of pious activity; every dereliction of good and holy undertakings. *“Ye did run well; who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth?”*

Men are mutable in that which is good; they permit

themselves to be hindered in their upright course, and diverted from it. Assuming this *as a fact*, I propose to trace it to its sources; to expose the springs of an evil so hostile to the peace and salvation of the soul.

These are not to be found either in deficiency of means, or in deficiency of motive.

Not in *deficiency of means*. God demands nothing of his creatures which they are not capacitated to perform. They know him not who imagine him to be "a hard master, reaping where he has not sown, and gathering where he has not strawed." They know him not who discern any likeness between him and that tyrant of Egypt, who exacted more toil of an enslaved people, without removing or alleviating the difficulty which retarded their compliance with his will. The claims of the divine Majesty are at once just and merciful. They are always proportioned to the ability of his subjects, who receive from him strength equal to their day of trial and service. Much is required of him only to whom much is given; much asked of him only to whom much is committed."\* And if you can suppose a moral agent altogether powerless, you may be satisfied that, from him, nothing is expected. If, then, having run well the race of duty, your career be unhappily arrested, say not that it is arrested by *deficiency of means*.

Neither may you ascribe it to *deficiency of motive*. Motives abound. Every thing that can confirm; every thing that can justify; every thing that can inspirit, quicken, and impel, is presented to the soul. What more can be desired for this purpose, than is contained in this noble scripture? "The grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and religiously in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ."† All to whom the gospel is preached, and

\* Luke, xii. 48. † Tit. ii. 11.—13.



they to whom it is entrusted, are commanded, as far as they may find it practicable, to preach it to *every* creature; *all* are taught, not feebly to attempt the restriction of evil propensities, but resolutely, laboriously, manfully, and totally to resist, renounce, and deny the gratification of them; to habituate themselves carefully to self-respect, to justice towards their neighbour, and piety towards God. And as an inducement of ample weight and power, all are directed to anticipate with triumphant certainty the crown of their hopes and struggles in the glorious advent of the Redeemer, which shall be without sin unto eternal salvation.

It is life and immortality that invite you to persevere. The very genius of the evangelical constitutions is, work, for God worketh in you; and if you improve the grace already received, more shall be imparted. That spirit shall descend upon you in seven-fold energy, whose province and whose delight it is to sanctify the depraved heart; purify the troubled conscience; succour the helpless; encourage the diffident; quicken the dull; and establish, strengthen, and settle the unsteady.

Exceedingly great and precious are the promises, both of present favour, and everlasting glory and felicity, held out to allure mankind into patient continuance in well doing; to purify them from the corruption that is in the world through lust; and to elevate them to the dignity of a participation of the divine nature. "Omnipotence hath given unto them all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called them to glory and virtue."\*

If, then, having run well the race of duty for a time, you suffer yourselves to be arrested in your bright career, charge this unfortunate issue upon any thing rather than deficiency either of motive or of means; of ability or of inducement. Be just to Heaven, and criminate yourselves. Accompany me into your own bosoms, and there recognize the sources of

\* 2. Peter, i. 3. 4.

this evil; the veritable springs of this instability. Recognize them in that no more than superficial attention which is too commonly bestowed upon the subject of religious and moral duty; in that indecision of mind which is so apt to be occasioned by the collision of different and opposing views of things; in the incautious tampering with those incentives and provocatives to evil which the world and its ruler, aided by the corruptions of the heart, are so forward to offer; and in the neglect of the instituted means of grace, publick and private.

Recognize them in that no more than superficial attention which is too commonly bestowed upon the subject of religious and moral duty.

This is a radical defect. It may with eminent propriety be styled a fundamental error. Until it be corrected, men cannot be consistent, uniform, and persevering Christians. An insufficient ground-work can promise no stable or durable superstructure. Hence it is, perhaps, more than from any other single cause, that the moral state of most persons is so variable and fluctuating. They do not reflect with adequate depth and seriousness upon the nature and extent of a religious life; or upon the reasons which support their obligations to pursue it; or upon the diligent and laborious exertion necessary in the prosecution of it.

FIRST.—Men do not reflect with adequate depth and seriousness upon the nature and extent of a religious life. They seem to imagine that if they reform in certain particulars, they may freely indulge themselves in others. And even where they profess to reform themselves, they seem to be satisfied with very meagre and imperfect conceptions of the business of reformation. They know not, or remember not, or, at least, appear indisposed to admit, this apostolick truth. “Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.”\* the same insincerity of heart which leads him habitually to violate one of the divine

\* James, ii. 10.

commandments, being calculated to lead him into the violation of the rest. They do not bear in mind that no one worldly lust can be in reality denied where all are not denied; that no real transformation of life can be effected independently of a renewed spirit; and that where the spirit is renewed, there, not one, or two, or any limited number of vicious habits and practices, but *all*, are renounced. They do not bear in mind the intimate connection subsisting between the different branches of duty; or the imperfection of each, contemplated apart. For assuredly, although it is well to cultivate purity, temperance, continence, chastity, and moderation, yet to add to them the social virtues, is still better; while at the same time, the union of both these classes of excellence cannot but be extremely defective, and in a sense, vain and unprofitable, unless crowned, sanctified, refined, and exalted, by piety towards God.

Without meditation on God's law, is it probable that men will uniformly obey it? without investigating the full bearing of his preceptive will in all its parts, is it probable that they will yield it a minute and unlimited compliance? Without clear ideas on moral points, shall we expect from them right conduct? Look not for steady virtue in him who thinks any less of repentance than that it is a total reformation in the habits of acting; not in particular and temporary instances, but in *habits*: who thinks that he has "sufficiently mortified a corrupt affection by now and then refraining from the gratification of it, though he may as often indulge as deny it:" who thinks that he has "acknowledged and discharged his duty as far as necessity requires, by shewing an occasional regard to it." Look not for steady virtue in this man; for you look in vain.

SECONDLY.—Men do not reflect with adequate depth and seriousness upon the reasons which support their obligation to pursue a religious life. When they do what they ought to do, or leave undone what they ought not to do, it is more frequently the result of some peculiar and passing excite-

ment, than of a well-informed and well-directed understanding. If they are stretched upon a sick bed; if they endure some more than common hardness; if some favourite object eludes their grasp, or some untoward event thwarts their views; they are disquieted; they are intimidated; they are affected; they are melted. They become for a season disgusted with themselves—the world—and all things. They tell you, and for a little while it may seem to be so; that they abjure their sins as the procuring cause of their calamities. If they attend upon the ministrations of God's word, something either in the matter which they may hear, or in the mode in which it may be conveyed to them, strikes and effects them; and stirs them up to purposes of amendment. But in the midst of all these trials, these agitations, these workings of the passions, the affections, and the feelings; the genuine, the only solid and time-defying basis, on which to erect the steady purposes of piety and virtue, is unseen or disregarded by them. What I mean is, the essential demerit of moral evil; its intrinsically odious and deleterious nature; its perfect incompatibility, whilst unrepented of and unrenounced, with comfort, tranquillity, and hope, in this world, and with the joys of the Divine Presence in Heaven. What I mean, further, is, the essential beauty and worth of holiness; its intrinsically lovely and beneficial nature; its infallible tendency towards present peace, and future and everlasting glory. He who builds not his religion and his morals on this foundation, cannot be steadfast; cannot be unmoveable; cannot always abound in the work of the Lord, or in the performance of duty. Unless you hate sin with a perfect and unmixed hatred, a hatred growing out of the persuasion of its extreme deformity, loathsomeness, vileness, and malignity, how can you, with fixed purpose, rise above its influence? It has been finely said, that

Vice is a monster of such hideous mien  
As, to be hated, needs but to be seen.

But can you see the true character of this moral monster without viewing it attentively? No—its unqualified ugliness was never yet visible to inconsideration. On the other hand, unless you admire that which is morally beautiful and divinely excellent; unless you are enamoured of it, for its own sake; and love it with an attachment derived from the apprehension of its supereminent loveliness, value, and utility; how can you, with unshaken fidelity, persevere in the cultivation of it? But can you appreciate the excellence of true religion and virtue without the diligent contemplation of this holy object? If your designs and plans, your actions and deportment, be regulated merely by a heart affected, or an imagination excited, while the soul is not exercised to discern between good and evil; your attainments in godliness must be few, and your virtue mutable as the shifting winds.

THIRD.—Men do not reflect with adequate depth and seriousness, upon the diligent and laborious exertion necessary in the prosecution of a religious life. They form good desigus, for which surely they are to be commended; but they form them precipitately and unthinkingly; they form them as though they had nothing to do but to say, and it must be done; to command, and it must stand fast; they form them without being sufficiently aware of the obstacles which they will have to encounter, or of the foes with whom they will have to wage determined conflict. They forget the exhortation of Jesus: “Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”\* They forget these apostolical counsels: “Know ye not that they which run in a race, run all; but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.”† “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore, take unto you the whole

\* Luke, xiii. 24. † 1. Cor. ix. 24.



armour of God, that ye may be able to stand in the evil day, and having done all to stand."\* There was a time, we read, and it is a melancholy piece of information, when many of the earlier disciples of Jesus "went back, and walked no more with him."† Would to Heaven that the incident had continued without a counterpart even to the present day! So far is it, however, from being so, that every successive age of the church has witnessed the like infidelity in innumerable instances; and always from this principle of practical error; *men count not the cost of Christian obedience.* Hear the reprehension of this improvidence from the mouth of Christ himself. "Which of you intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, this man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able, with ten thousand, to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."‡

It fares with numbers in the journey of life, as with the pilgrim, who, when the green summit of the mountain meets his eye, fancies himself near the end of his wanderings and his toils, until a full view of the intervening valley undeceives him. You enter upon the course marked out by religion, imagining no obstacles, anticipating no defeat. Easily, therefore, are your energies repressed. Temptations, perils, inconveniencies, take you off your guard. Thus surprised, you fall an almost unresisting prey. It escaped your notice, that, to insure success and safety, you should

\* Eph. vi. 13.

† John, vi. 66.

‡ Luke, xiv. 27.—33.

have "added to your faith, fortitude;" that you should have armed yourselves for the combat; that you should have been sober and vigilant; ever active, and ever on the alert. You did not take time to think that attainments in the spiritual life are gradual; that virtue consists not in an interrupted and chequered course of individual acts, but in right habits; while these habits, again, are created by successive acts; that the transformation of an habitual sinner into a man of piety and virtue, is rarely *indeed* the exploit of a moment; that every retreat protracts the contest; and that every advantage which you suffer to be wrested from you, renders the ground less tenable, the victory more remote, and the danger more appalling.

I propose, through the blessing of God, to pursue this subject at evening service.



## SERMON XXIV.

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### THE CAUSES OF INCONSTANCY IN RELIGION.

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GALATIANS, v. 7.

*“Ye did run well; who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth?”*

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**MEN** are mutable in that which is good. They permit themselves to be hindered in their upright course, and diverted from it. Assuming this as *a fact*, I proposed, in the discourse of this morning, to trace it to its sources; to expose the springs of an evil so hostile to the peace and salvation of the soul.

It was demonstrated that these are not to be found either in deficiency of means, or in deficiency of motives. Not in deficiency of means; because God demands nothing from his creatures which they are not capacitated to perform. Not in deficiency of motive; because there is in the gospel an abundance of the most cogent motives; and especially because the promised influences of the Holy Ghost, and the promised recompenses of eternal glory and felicity, are inducements than which it is impossible that any should be stronger.

If, having run well the race of duty for a time, you suffer yourselves to be arrested in your bright career, you were cautioned to charge this unfortunate issue upon any thing, rather than deficiency in him who hath called you. You were invited to recognize the sources of this evil, the veritable springs of this instability, in your own bosoms. You were primarily directed to recognize them in that no more than

superficial attention, which is too commonly bestowed upon the subject of religious and moral duty; in that indecision of mind, which is so apt to be occasioned by the collision of different and opposing views of things; in the incautious tampering with those incentives and provocatives to evil, which the world and its ruler, aided by the corruptions of the heart, are so forward to offer; and in the neglect of the instituted means of grace, publick and private.

To the brief consideration of the first of these defects, which I affirmed to be radical, the discourse alluded to was confined. I now proceed to discuss the remaining particulars.

Recognize, then, another source of this evil, another spring of this instability, in that indecision of mind, which is so apt to be occasioned by the collision of different and opposing views of things. To this we are directed by the authority of an apostle. "A double minded man," says St. James; or, as it might better be rendered, to avoid an equivocation which, certainly, he never contemplated, "a man of *a divided mind*; or "a man of *two minds*; is unstable in all his ways."\* A man who "halts between two opinions" cannot be expected to walk undeviatingly in the course marked out for him by that which only is the right opinion. You cannot be uniform in conduct, if you are not fixed in principle. You cannot pursue, with steady and vigorous step, the strait and narrow road which leads to Heaven, if the motives which religion proposes are not suffered to maintain their legitimate ascendancy over all meaner inducements. "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."† Admitting, then, that religion claims, as a matter of unyielding necessity, a thorough conversion of the soul to God; an admission which no serious and reflecting reader of the scriptures can withhold; whence comes it that men

\* James, i. 8. † Matthew, vi. 24.



who do not deny the justice of this claim, or the binding force of this necessity, do, nevertheless, determine feebly and imperfectly upon a religious course? Whence comes it that they set out, and return; resolve, and stop; hesitate, and retrace their steps? It is because their minds are variably applied; now to Heaven, and then to the world; one while to piety, and another to pleasure; to-day to salvation, to-morrow to vanity, folly, idleness, and vice. It is because they too generally permit their attention to be drawn off by sense and passion from those objects which are of everlasting concern. It is because their apprehensions of interest and of happiness vibrate from things animal and secular, to things spiritual and eternal, and back again from these to the others; because the law of the members and the law of the mind maintain an equipoise of influence; and the seductions of present feeling, are allowed to contest the supremacy of power with the invitations of faith.

Recognize a farther source of this evil, an additional spring of this instability, in the incautious tampering with those incentives and provocations to sin, which the world and its ruler, aided by the corruptions of the heart, are so forward to offer. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation;" is the injunction of christianity; and every man trained in the school of Jesus, lifts up this petition, "Lead us not into temptation." Temptation, however, is rarely avoided with that scrupulous care which is alive to the dangers of the soul. If the vicious or the irreligious entice, how few are they that do not consent? How few they who adopt the Psalmist's words, "Depart from me ye evil doers; for I will keep the commandments of my God!"\* How many they "who walk in the counsel of the ungodly; who stand in the way of sinners; who sit in the seat of the scornful!"† But how is it to be expected that men should come forth unstained from such associations? How is it to be expected that intercourse with the wicked should not di-

\* Psalm, cxix. 115. † Psalm, i. 1.

vert even the righteous from their own steadfastness? Will the stream that mingles its waters with impurity, long retain its limpid beauty? Can you take fire into your bosoms and not be burned? Is it impossible for you to inhale disease from the atmosphere of hospitals and lazarettos? Is it impossible for evil communications to corrupt good manners? The society of impious or immoral, of earthly or sensual men, cannot consist with the steady pursuit of holy purposes. The dread of singularity—the dread of reproach and hostility—is too apt to shake the resolution of well-disposed minds; and nothing but a total and decided renunciation of familiar intercourse with those that know not, or regard not God, can save them from falling.

Unfortunately there are too many besetting sins—too many particular and bosom temptations—which draw men away from the onward path, and entice them to evil. Where these are not spiritedly resisted, it is in vain that you expect perseverance and constancy. It is a melancholy consideration, that experience is so seldom permitted to instruct, caution, and fortify. Guilty desires cherished; sensual appetites flattered; have, more than once, prostrated your virtue. You have not been insensible to the dangers which accompanied them. You have deplored your weakness, and a thousand times reproached your folly, and your inconsideration. Where, then, is your resolution? Where the dignity of your rational nature? Where the strength of your faith? that these desires should again be cherished, and these appetites again be flattered? When lust hath conceived, must it not inevitably bring forth sin? When the heart is allowed to wander after forbidden joys, must not the deportment be mutable? Must not the life be a life of fluctuating acts, rather than of steady habits?

Many things, not in themselves sinful, may yet be the causes of sin. These, therefore, it becomes a matter of solemn duty to repudiate. If this be not done; if you do not deny yourselves on points which, although they may not, in them-

selves, be criminal, are so nevertheless, in their issues; points which, how insignificant soever, considered apart from consequences, in their tendencies, for the most part, minister to sin; you may calculate on being frequently and deplorably turned aside from the holy course of piety and virtue.

*Once more.*—Recognize a source of this evil; a spring of this instability, in the neglect of the instituted means of grace, publick and private. These form the armour of the soul. They fortify it against the attacks, and give increased efficacy to its vigilance against the stratagems of temptation. Reading, hearing, meditation, prayer, the devout participation of the holy communion, render opposition to sin less difficult, in proportion as they are cultivated, and obedience more practicable and pleasing. I need not take time to demonstrate this fact. The experience of every individual who has paid the least attention to these things, can sufficiently attest it.

Having traced this evil to its sources; having exposed the springs of this instability; allow me now to demonstrate that an obedience so defective and fluctuating, will not be crowned with the divine acceptance.

The gospel being, in the first instance, addressed to mankind *in their sins*, requires of them conversion and sanctification. The preparatory dispensation of the law had done the same; and had even promised blessings and recompenses to the obedient. “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them, shall find mercy.”\* According to this ancient scripture, it is not enough that men acknowledge their misdeeds with their lips; they must renounce the practice of them. “Wash you; make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment; relieve the oppressed; judge the fatherless; plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the

\* Prov. xxviii. 13.

Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.\* “Trust ye not in lying words; for if ye *thoroughly* amend your ways and your doings; if ye *thoroughly* execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; if ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood, neither walk after other gods; *then* will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, forever and ever.”† “Therefore, now, amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God; and the Lord will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you.”‡ What is the language of these exhortations and counsels, but simply this? Exhibit a radical and entire reformation of manners and of conduct, and it shall be well with you. “Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart. They also *do no iniquity*; they walk in his ways. Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts *diligently*. O! let me not wander from thy commandments! Teach me, O! Lord, the way of thy statutes; and I shall *keep it unto the end*. Then shall I not be ashamed, *when I have respect unto all thy commandments*.”§ Self-reproach—confusion of face—are to be avoided only by a steady, uniform, and universal compliance with the divine instructions. Now, although these are extracts from the Jewish scriptures, yet they turn upon points of moral obligation, and are, consequently, perpetual and immutable. They are the directions of God under every dispensation of the true religion. Under that which now exists, they are more clearly revealed; more forcibly conveyed; and more affectingly authenticated. “To call mankind to repentance,” or reformation, was the purpose of the Redeemer’s coming; and his apostles and heralds were commanded to insist on the necessity of conversion from iniquity to holiness. “Eternal

\* Isaiah, i. 6.—18. † Jer. vii. 4.—7. ‡ Jer. xxvi. 13. § See Psalm cxix.

life is secured to those who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality."\* "The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God."† "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord."‡ The Son of God, being made perfect through sufferings, hath "become the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."§

Conversion and sanctification, therefore, are unequivocally required of all men by the gospel; or, which is the same thing, in the present view, by the books containing the revelation of the mind and will of God.

But, assuredly, the unstable and changeable purposes, the alternation in practice between good and evil, which I have submitted to your consideration, do not amount to this conversion and sanctification. The denial of all ungodliness and every worldly lust, is something more than the mere acknowledgment of transgression. "To break off your sins by repentance," is something more than that self-accusation in which a sincere heart may not participate; something more even than that inward agitation which the sincerity of a moment may produce, (if, indeed, there can be such a principle admitted in the science of religion as the sincerity of a moment,) but which it does not support or perpetuate. There are such things as "fruits meet for repentance." There are such things as "works worthy of repentance." These are only manifested in steadfast purposes—unmoveable deportment—abounding godliness. Does the man who professes to be sensible of his sins, and sorry for them, and who yet returns to the commission of them; who lives sometimes religiously, and at other times negligently; to-day crucifying the flesh, to-morrow giving a loose to desire; does *he* bring forth fruits meet for repentance? Does *he* perform works worthy of repentance? "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," says our apostle; but is that man renewed, in whom ancient impurities remain unmortified? In whom early principles of evil are suffered to maintain so firm a

\* Romans, ii. 7. † 1 Cor. vi. 9. ‡ Hebrews, xii. 14. -§ Hebrews, v. 9.



footing, as from time to time to allure him back into the oblique ways of error? “Ye have not so learned Christ,” my brethren, “if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus; that ye put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness;”\* *righteousness*—not transient resolutions, or occasional acts, but rooted and continued habits; *true holiness*—not intermitted devotion of the heart—not a perpetual vacillation in obedience, but abiding and progressive sanctification. “Whosoever abideth in God, sinneth not,”† writes St. John; that is, hath no habit of sin; “whosoever sinneth,” habitually, “hath not seen him, neither known him. Let no man deceive you; he that doeth righteousness is righteous.” Who else can be righteous but he, the tenour of whose life is upright, virtuous, and pious? In the ordinary commerce of mankind, who is it that you denominate kind and merciful? He whose general demeanour is disobliging; he who only now and then relents from the purposes of severity, cruelty, or revenge; he whose common rule of action is a gloomy spirit, from which forbearance is a rare exception? No—you call him kind, in whose heart and life the soft affections and the benevolent graces predominate. You call him merciful whose character is cast into the mould of tenderness and benignity, clemency and sympathy; who is not accustomed to avenge himself; who, if angry impulses carry him, at times, beyond those limits of long-suffering moderation which he has prescribed to himself, is the first to condemn his fault, and sets a fresh and more rigid guard upon his spirit. Is it possible, then, that you can admit *that man's* claim to the praise of righteousness, whose conformity to the law of God, and the precepts of religion, is no more than temporary or occasional? Whose repentance, like the triumphing

\* Eph. iv. 20.—24. † 1 John, iii. 6. 7.



of the wicked, is but short—like the joy of the hypocrite, but for a moment? Who reforms, again to be vitiated—who is reclaimed, again to be lost?

If conversion and sanctification are unequivocally required of all men; if the unchangeable and unstable purposes, the alternation in practice between good and evil, which I have submitted to your consideration, do not amount to this conversion and sanctification; and if it be an undeniable position, that God will receive none into the joys of his heavenly presence who do not walk with persevering step in the ways of his appointment; then is your condition, O! ye irresolute, wavering, halting, temporizing Christians, enveloped in dangers inexpressible. “God hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained.” “Every secret thing shall be brought to light;” and tried, “whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” The great Judge will “render to every man according to his deeds; unto them that do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; unto every soul of man that doeth evil,” and persists impenitently in iniquity, how often soever he may put on the forms of goodness; “indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish.”\* But unto whom, I pray you, will he “render” the award of “eternal life?” of “glory, honour, and peace?” To the virtuous; you will say; to the upright; to the benevolent; to the charitable; to the penitent sinner; to the sanctified believer. Be it so. But who are these? Not they whose only claim to notice may be a few splendid actions proceeding from equivocal motives. Not they whose repentance leaves them unholy; or whose faith receives no perfection from their works. But they who turn not aside from the holy commandment; they who faint not, neither are wearied; they who endure unto the end; they who run well, with minds undiverted, and an activity not to be hindered, the race set before them; they who “seek immortality by patient continuance in well doing.”

\* Romans, ii. 6.—10.

Banish, my brethren, banish the hope that an extraneous righteousness shall save him whose own soul remains unrighteous. Banish the hope that any unregenerated spirit may find its way into a holy Heaven. The thing is impossible. I am not impairing the merits of the Redeemer. God deliver me from this sin! If I do not misapprehend the doctrine which I preach, I magnify these precious merits. They save—and they save to the uttermost. They save *from* sin; but they do not save *in* sin. It is the glory of the Redeemer, that whom he justifies, he also sanctifies; whom he frees from the penalties of transgression, he also makes holy. If, then, you have any regard for your eternal safety, indulge no hope from the righteousness of Christ, independently of the effects which it produces in your own conversion and spiritual improvement. If it be written, “there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus,” I charge you to remember what follows; “who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.”\* No man, indeed, can be truly in Christ, whose life is carnal, whose character is not spiritualized. If you are truly in Christ, “you are created anew unto good works.” If you are truly in Christ, you are ingrafted into a living and inspiring Saviour; you are become members of a body of which he is the head; and the life that is in him, animates you. This, my brethren, is the root of evangelical holiness. This is the gospel. Receive it; and you will be thoroughly furnished unto every good word and work. Receive it; and you will pursue your course without any formidable molestation, and, through the grace that shall be in you, persevere unto the end—and be saved.—AMEN.

\* Romans, viii. 1.

## SERMON XXV.

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### THE MEANS BY WHICH INCONSTANCY IN RELIGION MAY BE PREVENTED.

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GALATIANS, V. 7.

*“Ye did run well; who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth?”*

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IN addressing you lately from these words, my brethren, I traced the sources of the fault implied in them; and exposed the springs of man’s instability in that which is good:

I have demonstrated that an obedience defective and fluctuating, will not be crowned with the divine acceptance.

My business, at present, is to administer a few words of advice towards the rectification of this evil; and then to conclude the whole of what shall have been said, by a direct and practical address.

*In the first place.*—I am to administer a few words of advice towards the rectifying the dangerous error of an unstable and mutable obedience.

As the principles, elements, and seeds of this error have been ascertained, it is obvious, that if you would avoid it, you must direct your primary endeavours against these; you must shun with scrupulous assiduity every thing that has a tendency to generate this fickle and moveable conduct. Bestow a deeper attention on the subject of religious and moral duty.\* Reflect more profoundly, and with a greater measure of seriousness, upon the nature and extent of a re-

\* See Sermon 23.

religious life. Consider well the reasons which support your obligations to pursue it. Let not the genuine, the only solid, and time-defying basis on which to erect the steady purposes of piety and virtue, remain unseen or disregarded by you. Establish your resolutions to forsake sin, on the essential demerit of sin; its intrinsically odious and deleterious qualities; its perfect incompatibility, whilst unrepented of and unrenounced, with comfort, tranquillity, and hope in this world, as well as with the joys of the Divine Presence in Heaven. Establish your resolutions to follow holiness, on its essential beauty and worth; its intrinsically lovely and beneficial qualities; its infallible tendency towards present peace, and future and everlasting glory. Keep in view the diligent and laborious exertions necessary in the prosecution of a religious life. Form your designs deliberately and providently; and count well the cost of Christian obedience, before you enter upon the profession of a sincere attachment to it.\* Abjure that indecision of mind which is so apt to be occasioned by different and opposing views of things. "No man can serve two masters." No man can walk with a firm and determined step, who "halts between two opinions." "A house divided against itself, cannot stand." It was wisely, as well as prophetically said by the patriarch Jacob of his son Reuben, "unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." Tamper not incautiously with those incentives and provocations to sin, which the world and its ruler, aided by the corruptions of the heart, are so forward to offer. Neglect none of the instituted means of grace, whether publick or private. "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is."† "Take heed how ye hear."‡ "Search the scriptures; for in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which testify"§ of Jesus, of his doctrines, and his great salvation. "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving."|| Seek, in a devout attendance

\* See Sermon 24. † Heb. x. 25. ‡ Luke, viii. 18. § John, v. 39.  
|| Col. iv. 2

on the holy communion, divine grace to “stablish, strengthen, and settle you” in holy habits.

Contemplate the vanity of the world, and its inability to make you happy; the dignity of your immortal spirits; the continued presence and inspection of Almighty God; and the awful importance of that eternity, on the borders of which you stand, and which will be to you happy or miserable, according as you improve or neglect the advantages of the present state. Habituating yourselves to such contemplations, they will, at length, become interwoven with your very springs of action. They will operate as a restraint upon sensual propensities, and a protection against tempting allurements, and discouraging opposition. What is the world to him whose serious thoughts are fixed on Heaven? Where things spiritual are paramount in the mind, how powerless are things temporal! The man who frequently and feelingly asks himself this question, “what would it profit me were I to gain the whole world, and lose my own soul? or what can I give in exchange for my soul” to recover it back into my possession? *this man* will not easily “be hindered, that he should not obey the truth.”

Repeat the dedication of yourselves to God as frequently as possible. Frequently call up to view your solemn covenant to be for him, and for none else. I speak to all baptized persons, for according to the principles of our church, they are in covenant with God. With the return of every day, array yourselves in this divine armour before you enter upon secular occupations. One determination is not sufficient. Another, and another must succeed.

“Lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset you, if you would run with patience the race that is set before you.”\* If you overcome your reigning propensity—your dominant enticement—all others will with ease be defeated. If you direct your aims against minor sins only, which is the too common practice of mankind, while you

\* Heb. xii. 1.



cherish this bosom foe—this more powerful iniquity; if you abstain only where abstinence imposes no heavy cross; you are in danger of being deceived into the persuasion that you have “slain the body of sin,” while in effect, you have merely inflicted on it a slight, though irritating wound; that you have conquered yourselves, while you have not even burst the chains in which selfish affection holds you imprisoned; that you have “entered into the kingdom of Heaven,” while you are at a remote distance from it. Be it your aim therefore, to reduce those passions which are most inordinate; to curb those desires which are most imperious; to refrain from those indulgencies which are most seducingly importunate. Be counselled by the Son of God; “If thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off and cast them from thee; it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands, or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.”\*

Bethink yourselves of the rapid approach of death and eternity. While you are undecided what part to act; while your purposes are unsteady, and your conduct changeable; year follows year in quick succession. Death waits no man’s pleasure; time, no man’s resolutions; eternity, no man’s opinions. Every repetition of sin incurs renewed danger. Know you the moment in which you may be cut off? If not, why suffer a single moment to earn the wages of sin? Why not redeem every instant of precious time, and appropriate it to such designs and pursuits as shall not blacken the account which you may be unexpectedly bidden to render? Everlasting things are suspended on that brittle thread which holds you in existence; and you cannot tell how soon that thread may be broken. Should you not, therefore, my brethren, should you not cultivate with diligence and eagerness, those habits, and that deportment,

\* Matthew, xviii. 8.



which promise most tranquillity, most complacency, most gratification, in the retrospect? Should it not be your continual and assiduous endeavour so to form, regulate, and conduct your life, that you may be warranted to look forward to the close of it without fear?

I hasten to conclude the whole of what has hitherto been discussed from the text, by addressing you in the language of practical application.

My brethren; let me beg you to examine yourselves, your own conduct, your own moral condition, your own spiritual standing, in order that you may ascertain to what extent the discussion has reached you. In general, the ministry of the word can do no more than exhibit religious truth; God, and a man's own conscience, must tell the relation which it bears to individual cases. It is not improbable that on a review of what has been said, the majority of my hearers will be inclined rather to self-condemnation than to self-acquittal. It is not improbable that among those who have admitted religion into their thoughts, the greater number are conscious that although they have entered upon the race set before them, and for a season have seemed to themselves to run well, they have too often, and too soon, suffered themselves to be "hindered that they should not obey the truth;" that they should desist from active duty; that they should swerve from the holy paths of God's commandments; that they should faint and be weary in well-doing. Let me urge upon you, then, the following inducements to a better mind, and a more consistent conduct.

FIRST.—If, having run well, your course be hindered, interrupted, or broken off, you experience much of the painfulness incident to repentance and conversion, with very few of their advantages. Every kind of work, but especially, every work of a moral complexion, is more arduous, and more formidable in its commencement, than at any subsequent period in its progress. When a man, long accustomed to sin, is induced to alter his line of conduct, the first act

of self-denial is like tearing out a right eye. If he proceeds, the severity of the conflict abates. He acquires an accession of strength and ability, while the evil habit loses by degrees its tenacity. How little enviable, then, is the condition of those who are perpetually commencing, and never advancing! perpetually setting out on the course, and never approaching the goal! How much do they resemble the traveller who enters upon a journey, and after going over just so much of the road as is most rough and unpromising, measures back the distance, and has to enter upon it anew; who repeats the same outset and the same return, instead of pursuing his steps through all the unevennesses of the first part of the road, until the green fields, and rich pastures, the gentle acclivities, and smiling prospects in distant view, shall remunerate his early perseverance!

Now, compare the situation of these irresolute and unstable men, who run some little distance on the course of duty, and return again; with the situation of the persevering Christian. At first, they have all the same obstacles to surmount; the same perils to encounter; the same opposition to conquer. But mark the difference. The persevering Christian has once surmounted; once encountered; once overcome. He leaves his foes behind him; looks not back; presses onward to the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus; and gloriously attains it. These irresolute and unstable men have again to surmount; again to encounter; again to overcome; with this additional discouragement, that every instance of recession from the spiritual contest, weakens them, and transfers the power of successful resistance to their enemies. Yes, my brethren; if you think the work of salvation difficult—if you think it painful—you will find it made doubly painful—doubly difficult to you, by broken plans and interrupted purposes. Let a regard to your own ease, therefore; let the prospect of accomplishing with comparative facility, a work the most arduous, and, at the same time, the most necessary; induce

you to maintain a steady course, and persevere unto the end.

SECONDLY.—Instability deprives you of the pleasures of duty and religion. He who conquers himself—he who triumphs over his appetites and passions—he who acquires new attainments in the divine life—he who prepares himself by growing habits of purity and obedience to be a “partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light”—this man possesses an inward peace, a holy and unutterable joy, which approaches nearer to the delights of Heaven than does any other conceivable state of mind. “The fruit of righteousness is peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.” But what peace is there to you, who, if there be truth in the account which I have given of the righteous, can have no pretensions to be classed with them? What quietness is there to you, who are tossed about by every blast of caprice? What assurance to you, who “halt in opinion” between God and the world? who are of two minds, each drawing you away in its own direction, but both alike from the heavenly course? whose purposes are not more durable than the grass that to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven; not more steady than the winds. What kind whisper can conscience minister to you, who, if you forsake a sin, quickly return to it? if you form a pious resolution, are swift to abandon it? if you seize some spoil in an occasional victory over temptation, in the very next onset render it back to a triumphant foe? What contentment, what enjoyment, can you hope for in a state of suspense? Even the avowed contemner of religion has less anxiety than you. He has never been brought under the pains of conviction, or the goadings of awakened conscience; while, at the same time, he is free from the restraints of those principles which connect vice with suffering. But you have neither the tranquillity of this man, nor the consolations of the real Christian. You have too much religion to allow you to sin without dread, and too little to fill you with all joy and peace in believing. Let a regard to your own per-

manent happiness, therefore; let the wish to enjoy in perfection even this present life, induce you to maintain a steady course, and, having entered upon a religious life, “to run, and not be weary, to walk, and not faint.”

**THIRDLY.**—After a succession of resolutions broken, plans interrupted, and promises violated, there is but too much reason to apprehend that the deceitfulness of sin will blind your minds and harden your hearts. My brethren, this is a reflection of more awful moment than I have words to express. What can be expected of a man who treats eternal things with so little deference? who, by the levity and fickleness of his conduct in relation to eternal things, would seem to reduce them to the level of the most unimportant concerns of the present state? Continue yet a little longer to resolve, and counter-resolve—to sin, and to repent—to abjure the world, and return to it—to mortify the deeds of the body, and resume the practice of them—to resist the tempter, and then fall down and worship him—yet a little longer continue this unworthy course; and do you think that your perception of divine things will not be deadened? Do you think that your moral taste will not become less pure? your conscience less tender? your spirit less susceptible of salutary impressions? Ah! my brethren, I tremble for your safety; for I cannot forget that there is such a thing as a “seared conscience;” that there is such a thing as a soul “given up to strong delusions;” such a thing as a “hardened heart,” and a “blinded mind.” Let a regard for your own safety, therefore, a dread lest you be ultimately abandoned to your own infatuations, induce you to withstand whatever may “hinder you in the obedience of the truth;” whatever may essay to divert you from the career of duty.

Finally, my brethren; will the memory of this criminal, this indefensible mutability, contribute to smooth the pillow of death? Not unless reflection upon vanity and folly can console. It is a season when persevering virtue labours its

last stroke for immortality. "I have fought the good fight;" she says; "I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me." I go to receive it. But, my brethren; is this the language of a soul that wavered on through life in the idle business of endeavouring to serve two masters? Are these the last words of the fickle-minded worldling? Altogether the reverse. Every unexecuted purpose; every deserted undertaking; every changed plan; every forgotten promise; every violated vow; is a thorn in the bed of the dying sinner. Jesus have mercy on the spirit when it stands disembodied before him! Saviour! canst thou, in such a case, say, "well done, good and faithful servant! enter thou into the joy of thy Lord?" It is a thought of agony, my brethren; and I leave it.





## SERMON XXVI.

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### THE VARIOUS WAYS IN WHICH MEN GRIEVE THE HOLY SPIRIT.

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EPHESIANS, iv. 30.

*“And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.”*

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THE economy of redemption, by establishing certain relations between God and man, exacts from us the performance of certain duties. These duties are owing to Deity in the threefold existence of Father—Son—and Holy Ghost. By withholding from the third person of the blessed Trinity those acts of affection for which he has a claim on us, we are guilty of the sin against which the Ephesians are admonished in the text, “grieving the Holy Spirit of God.”

It is hardly necessary to observe, with respect to the term “grieve,” that it is not susceptible of a literal interpretation; because the divine nature, infinitely pure and perfect, is not affected by that conflict of passions which agitates the human bosom. “Let not your deportment towards the Creator spirit be such as would excite grief if exhibited towards a creature spirit liable to that emotion.” This is the import of the text.

*First then.*—We grieve the Holy Spirit when we refuse to acknowledge his deity, or to glorify him as God. The true faith teaches us his co-equal and co-essential divinity with that of the Father and the Son. It ascribes to him all the perfections of Godhead as much as to them, and, at the

same time, distinguishes him from them by certain personalities. It reveals him as co-operating with them in the works of creation, providence, and redemption; and prescribes that formula of baptism which has been generally understood by the church to imply the equal deity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. In proportion, therefore, as the corruption of nature, or any other cause, leads us to harbour doubts and suspicions concerning this his divine personal dignity, we are chargeable with grieving him; especially when these doubts and suspicions induce us to withhold divine honours from him; when we refuse or hesitate to offer him religious worship—to adore and reverence his blessed name—to devote ourselves wholly to him—to exalt him in our publick and private services—and to invoke him in our prayers.

*Secondly.*—We grieve the Holy Spirit when we entertain dishonourable notions of his operations in saving men. The true faith teaches us that he formed the humanity of Christ; anointed him to the priestly, prophetic, and royal offices; and was present to yield him propitious aid in his estate of humiliation; that by his energy, communicated to the means of grace, they are made effectual to convince and convert—to enlighten, purify, and renew—to quicken and console—to uphold, strengthen, and establish—to form us for Heaven and preserve us for the enjoyment of it. We grieve him therefore, when we disbelieve or doubt these truths; or when we ascribe these divine operations on the human soul, to the distemper of the brain, or the delusions of the devil. The true faith teaches us that we must be “strengthened with might by the spirit in the inner man;”\* and that “except we be born of the spirit, we cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”† We grieve him, therefore, when we deny or weaken the necessity of his influences to enable us to perform Christian duties, and lead good lives; when we return no gratitude for that infinite condescension which prompts him to apply divine grace to the heart; which prompts him,

\* Eph. iii. 16:

† John, iii. 5.

in the forcible language of scripture, to wait to be gracious to us; which prompts him to continue to strive with us, until he conquers our reluctance to be holy.

Hence, *thirdly*, we may very naturally be supposed to grieve him when we restrain prayer before God for the effusion of this sacred comforter. God has promised to “give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.”\* And when the indispensable necessity of his indwelling influences to our present and eternal felicity is considered, when it is recollected that he is the alone author of holiness here, and happiness hereafter, who is there that to obtain his divine manifestations, would not raise the humble and believing voice of importunity to the throne of the Heavenly grace? Who is there that would not adopt these words, “Awake blessed spirit! upon the garden of thy grace, that the flowers may expand, and the spices spread their fragrance! Awake blessed spirit! and like the wind that bloweth where it listeth, let thy purifying breath blow over my soul, that every corruption withering, every virtue may revive and flourish!” Who is there that would refuse to say with the Psalmist, “Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy holy spirit from me; restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit!”†

When, in opposition to this, we neglect to pray for the “communion of the Holy Ghost;” when we neglect to pray that God would shed the Holy Ghost upon us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour—when we neglect to pray that he would pour his spirit upon all flesh; that he “would put his spirit within us, and cause us to walk in his statutes, to keep his judgments and do them.”‡ concerning which thing he will be inquired of by men, if he ever does it for them; in a word, when we neglect to pray for ourselves, as the apostle did for the Ephesians, that God would give unto us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, the eyes of our understanding being enlightened,

\* Luke, xi. 3.

† Psalm, li. 11, 12.

‡ Ezek. xxxvi. 27.

that we may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe;”\* when we neglect to pray in this wise for divine manifestations, we grieve the Holy Spirit.

*Fourthly.*—We grieve the Holy Spirit when we withdraw or absent ourselves from the means of grace and the institutions of religion. Prayer is not the only means of obtaining the effusions of the Eternal Paraclete. Frequently the pious meditant perceives him in the solitary hour of contemplation; like David whose “heart was hot within him; for whilst he was musing, the fire burned.” Frequently the chosen few, who, though on earth, walk together by holy converse, “high in salvation and the climes of bliss,” are surprised by the sudden appearance of this divine visitant, whose presence animates their faith, hope and charity; as the hearts of the disciples whom our Lord accompanied to Emmaus, burned within them whilst he enlightened their minds to discern the truth. If, then, you shun the silent retreat of meditation; if you industriously avoid all occasions of religious society and pious discourse, you grieve the Holy Spirit. But, if in addition to this, you seldom or never peruse the sacred pages of inspiration; if you allow every pitiful call of business, or every more criminal call of pleasure, to detain you from the publick services of the sanctuary; if you close your ears, when providence invites you to hear that gospel which is expressly styled “the ministration of the spirit,”† because he accompanies it with his energy, and by it effects the salvation of men; if, knowing it to be your sacred duty, in obedience to the dying injunctions of your Redeemer, to commemorate the sacrifice of the cross, by receiving the holy communion, you nevertheless voluntarily absent yourselves from that august sacrament; in which the blessings of the cross are sealed to the souls of the faithful; in a word, if you shun every walk where you

\* Eph. i. 17.—19.

† 2 Cor. iii. 3.



may meet this celestial spirit; every place whence he dispenses his influences to convince, convert, instruct, console, and sanctify; to melt the frozen, to soften the obdurate, to animate the dead, to heal the diseased, to revive the languishing, to confirm the weak, to mortify the corrupt, to dispel doubt, and excite hope, to extinguish fear, and give birth to heavenly joy; think you that all this is not grieving the Holy Spirit?

**FIFTHLY.**—We grieve the Holy Spirit, when we neglect his movements within us. Perhaps I am safe in asserting that, of those who are favoured with the institutions of the gospel, there are none who have not felt, how unregarded soever by them, the motions of this spirit reproving them for sin, and encouraging them to virtue. Wherever we go, or wherever we stay, we are surrounded by this infinite spirit. Abroad—at home—alone—in company—he is still with us. When you devise wickedness upon your beds, he is there to warn you of the consequences, and if you will listen to him, to deter you from executing what you have devised. How often does he seize the moment when awful providences impend over you, to impress conviction on your minds, and salutary terror on your consciences! To represent to you the vanity of this world, and the necessity of Christ's religion, and a life in conformity with its sacred laws, to make you happy! How often does he struggle with you to deprive you of your false refuges; to subvert the treacherous foundation of your hopes; to persuade you to turn to the strong hold of redeeming mercy and unmerited grace! to restrain you from iniquity, and encourage you to obedience! And how often has he to contend with thee, believer; thy doubts—thy fears—thy despondence—that he may inspire thee with those consolations which are only his to give! If, then, the sinner, obstinately deaf to these warnings; blind to these convictions; forgetful of these terrors—these representations—these struggles—and these persuasions—spurning these restraints—rejecting these encour-

agements—persists in his evil courses; if thy doubts—thy fears—thy despondence—believer, still continue; in each, and in all of these cases, the Holy Spirit is grieved.

**FINALLY.**—We grieve the Holy Spirit when we live in a manner which does not correspond with his design in applying redemption to us. The end of redemption is to make us holy. For this cause, the Son of God gave himself for us that he might redeem us unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. And for this cause, may we add, does the spirit of God apply redemption to us that he may sanctify us unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. But, if we live in the spirit; if he is the principle and source of the life of grace, let us also walk in the spirit, says the apostle. What ideas are conveyed by the words walk in the spirit, I cannot so well describe as in his own language. “This I say then, walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts. If we live in the spirit, let us also walk in the spirit.”\* This quotation is from the Epistle to the Galatians. One, equally apposite we will offer from our context. “Ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus; that ye put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new

\* Gal. v. 16. 19.—25.

man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour; for we are members one of another. Be ye angry and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath; neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole, steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."\* In these scriptures, my brethren, you have the duties stated which are incumbent on those who are subject to the law of the spirit of life, and by the omission of which they grieve the Holy Spirit. You have also that conduct marked out by which you offend the Divine Spirit, and the contrary duties prescribed; so that you can be at no loss to decide that you sin against the injunction of the text, whenever you are chargeable with an unholy act, or vicious affection.

It remains that I conclude the subject by a brief improvement. This I shall do no otherwise than simply by exhorting you, my brethren, to the performance of those duties, the omission of which, as you have seen, grieves the Holy Spirit. Acknowledge his deity; and glorify him as God. Entertain the most honourable conceptions of his agency in the economy of grace. Pray fervently to God for the effusion of this sacred comforter. Never unnecessarily deny yourselves the means of grace, or keep aloof from the institutions of religion. Neglect not his movements within you. Lead lives corresponding with his designs in applying redemption to you, and conformable to the principles of that gospel which is the ministration of the spirit. So doing, you shall not grieve him. So doing, you shall meet his approbation. May he guide us into all truth, and pardon our defects for Christ's sake.--AMEN.

\* Eph. iv. 20.--30.



## SERMON XXVII.

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### GRATITUDE PECULIARLY INCUMBENT ON CHRISTIANS.

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ST. LUKE, xvii. 15. 16.

*“And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks; and he was a Samaritan.”*

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“As Jesus,” says the context, “entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off; and they lifted up their voice, and said, Jesus, master, have mercy on us. And, when he saw them, he said unto them, go, shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.” A situation similar to this, was yours, my brethren, this morning. Infected with the leprosy of sin, you met Jesus Christ at the holy communion. You lifted the voice of supplication, saying, “master, have mercy on us.” You besought him to heal you by imparting his sanctifying benediction to his august sacrament. If you were sincere, of which God and your own consciences must judge, your prayers were heard—your sins forgiven—your souls accepted. It remains for you to imitate the pious Samaritan, who, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at the feet of his sacred benefactor, giving him thanks.

These words I intend to make the ground of our evening meditations.

I remark on them, *first*, that but one man returned to thank his deliverer; although ten had experienced his mercy. Men are strangely moulded; ever ready to receive, but seldom to acknowledge; prompt in asking favours, but cold when called to be grateful. Let afflictions, poverty, or sickness befall them; they will not be remiss in crying with the lepers, Jesus, master, have mercy upon us. But let them emerge into prosperity and abundance; let their countenance resume the bloom of health; and you will, with difficulty find one among them who will concern himself to give thanks. In trouble they visit the Lord; they pour out a prayer when his chastening hand is upon them; and are profuse in promises, at all times more easily made than performed. If you believe that sick man, God can do nothing for him that shall surpass his gratitude. What alms—what prayers—will he not give in payment for his cure! If you believe that penitent who this morning deplored at the altar his spiritual leprosy, and sent up his cries to the ear of mercy; the disease, once healed, shall never cover him again; nor shall his heavenly physician ever charge him with an unpaid debt of gratitude. But how treacherous is thy memory, restored penitent! how inconstant thy resolution, privileged communicant! May I not question whether even one in ten of you performs his vows? This solitary instance of piety in the cleansed leper, may remind us of a very melancholy truth. It is, that the number of the good is quite inconsiderable, when compared with that of the wicked. The family of the faithful have ever been a little flock. Noah preached righteousness in the midst of a corrupted world. Elias made an almost solitary profession of the truth, whilst the idols of Israel had their worshippers on every high place. Truth, however, ceases not to be truth; nor does virtue lose its nature because both are embraced by the minority. And gratitude, the more rarely it is seen, becomes, therefore, the more inestimable. Our endeavours must be to enter by the strait gate and the narrow way which lead to life, and which so few are able to find.



On these words I remark, *secondly*, that this noble minded individual was a Samaritan. From the distinction made by the evangelist between him and his company, we may conclude that the remaining nine were Jews. But had we been witnesses of the miracle, my brethren, we should have looked for this conduct from them, rather than from the Samaritan; very reasonably supposing them to be better instructed in true principles than this stranger. The Jews were extremely anxious to distinguish themselves, on all occasions from the Samaritans; whom they effected to regard as a people hostile to God, and exposed to his hatred and contempt. Why, then, did they not aim at surpassing this poor outcast—this alien from the commonwealth of Israel—in praising God, and giving thanks to their beneficent deliverer? Why was the Jew, the beloved of Heaven—why was he deficient in a duty which the Samaritan, the enemy of God, punctually discharged? Ah! how little reliance is to be placed on appearances! how mistaken the decisions of prejudice! how often do men enthrone themselves in our esteem, elevated merely by some circumstances of country or of education! We forget that piety is not the exclusive privilege of any country, nor a patrimony attached to this or the other extraction. We forget that eternal election is free; and in its operations frequently stains the false glory of man by making the first last, and the last first. We forget that “God is no respecter of persons; that in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.”

THIRDLY.—I remark on these words, the action which they attribute to the Samaritan. “When he saw that he was healed, he turned back.” There are many who do not absolutely forget the benefits they receive, although they are tardy in acknowledging them. Most men treat this duty as they do what depends on them in the business of conversion. They procrastinate the performance of it; deferring to the moment of death, what should be the employment of

a whole life. For if not eternity, still less the inconsiderable span of earthly existence, sufficeth to celebrate the praises of God. So thought the pious leper; who, when he saw that he was healed, immediately turned back.

“When he saw that he was healed.” It is not every man that perceives grace imparted. The generality are insensible to heavenly benefits. They are surrounded by them without seeing them; they are pressed by their weight without feeling them. The sick man attributes his cure to the physician and the remedy, but God is not in all his thoughts. True it is, God ordinarily avails himself of the instrumentality of second causes. But the Christian, eyeing the hand of providence in all events, should pay no respect to second causes independently of him who conducts them. At the same time, there certainly are blessings so signal, deliverances so astonishing, that, without judicial blindness, it is impossible to mistake them. Such was the miracle wrought for the Samaritan; and which, perceiving it in its true light, he turns back to acknowledge. In this, his action, then, three things are observable. He separates himself from his thankless associates. He glorifies God publickly. He humbles himself on the reception of mercy.

*In the first place.*—He separates himself from his thankless associates. So let us keep aloof from the ungrateful. Local separation is not required; if it were, I fear we must needs go out of the world. It is a moral separation of which I now speak. One that consists in our refusing to imitate their ingratitude; and in our adopting a line of conduct diametrically opposite to theirs.

*In the second place.*—The Samaritan glorifies God publickly. To glorify God, my brethren, is the occupation of angels, and the spirits of the just made perfect. To glorify God, all creatures may be said, in various ways, to conspire. And shall not man, the creature’s Lord, take the lead in this concert? Of all the employments of the believer, there is not one more noble and exalted than this. It brings him

to Heaven's gate, and approximates him to the beatifick presence. It fills our contemplations with deity; in our lips it places a name, at the mention of which hell and its monarch tremble; and it purifies our souls by the energies of a passion whose object is the glory of the eternal. Prayer is of a nature *more mercenary*, if you will allow me the expression. So are faith and hope. They explore the mines of heavenly treasure to enrich us. There is something selfish in all this. But in glorifying God, Christians, you drown self-interest in concern for his honour. Other virtues mark your indigence. You would not pray; you would not believe; you would not hope; but that you are poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked. But when you glorify God, you, in effect, restore him what is his own. Your gratitude is the production of his grace, implanted in your hearts; and from the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh. Hence the Samaritan is said to have glorified God "with a loud voice."

Gratitude cannot be silent; it will break forth into praises. "Bless the Lord, O! my soul!" says the Psalmist, "and let all that is within me bless his holy name." Let my understanding be convinced of the magnitude of the benefit, and the majesty of the benefactor. Let my heart love him. Let my tongue speak of his glory, and my hand and my pen consecrate his praises, and extend the savour of his name throughout all generations. You who are mute in the holy assemblies; who never, with a loud voice glorify God; accuse me not of uncharitableness, if I call into question your zeal—your love—your gratitude.

*In the third place.*—The Samaritan humbles himself on the reception of mercy. He falls down on his face at the feet of Jesus, giving thanks. The more the believer receives, the more is he impressed with humility; and the more earnestly he endeavours to render back in gratitude what was given him in mercy. All that we can bring to him is his, whether we bring it to him or not; and our

thankfulness itself is an affection implanted and cherished in us by his grace. "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?" "O! my soul! thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord; my goodness extendeth not to thee."

It is a flagrant abuse of the divine benefits to convert them into fuel for our pride; an abuse, however, too common in the world; but an abuse to which the example of the pious Samaritan gives no countenance. Before he was healed he united the voice of importunity with the cry of his associates; "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." Behold him now, prostrate on the earth; cleaving to the feet of his benefactor; and refusing to quit that position till he should be raised from it by the voice which had commanded deliverances for him. It is thus that the pious man devotes himself, and all that he possesses, to the glory of his Redeemer, reserving to himself only his vileness and his nothingness. He returns all to him who hath given him all.

Thus we have imperfectly commented on this very interesting passage of scripture.

After having received the seals of the covenant, Christians; (for this service is especially dedicated to communicants;) after having received the seals of the covenant; after having celebrated your communion with God, with Christ, with the Eternal Spirit, and with the body of the faithful, in the holy supper; your hearts must be harder than the nether mill-stone if they are not inflamed with gratitude; if, surrounded by benefits, and reposing on the bosom of mercy, you forget the benefactor. I hope better things of you, and things that accompany salvation. You are here, I trust, as at all other times, so especially now, to return thanks at the feet of Jesus Christ. Like the grateful Samaritan, then, now and henceforward glorify him with a loud voice. Open your lips, that your mouths may shew forth his honours. Let these holy walls re-echo his praises. "O come! let us sing unto the Lord; let us make a joyful

noise to the rock of our salvation." "Bless the Lord at all times; and let his praise be continually in your mouths." Like the flower that with an ever constant affection turns her bosom to the sun, let your gratitude accompany the sun of righteousness in his course. If such are your dispositions, and such your intentions, I consider them as evidences of grace, and deem myself warranted by Jesus Christ to say, "Arise," my brother, "arise," my sister, "go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole." Pass but the few fleeting hours of thine appointed time, and after glorifying God on earth, thou shalt assist in Heaven the eternal hallelujahs of the blest.

Grant this, O Jesus! thou who takest away the sins of the world, and thine be the praise.—AMEN.





## SERMON XXVIII.

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### THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD.

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EPHESIANS, i. 11.

*“In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”*

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**T**HE writings of Paul may be said to contain the high philosophy of the Christian school; a philosophy making God the originator and the end of all things; his providence a circle, within the impassable boundaries of whose periphery all things revolve.

It is not my design to consider the long debated question of predestination as it regards the future destinies of elect and non-elect, or to intrude upon your present meditations, the conditionality or unconditionality of God's decrees respecting man's eternal state. Confining myself to the latter words of the verse, my single object is briefly to illustrate this general proposition; “all things come to pass in pursuance of a divine predetermination.” God “worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”

It is the perfection of a rational nature to act with design. Consequently the most perfect of all beings must act so; although, certainly, without any of that tedious process of reasoning and inward debate, which necessarily marks the operations of a finite mind. Creature spirits cannot include any great number of objects simultaneously in one volition. The Creator Spirit *can*; and being every where

present at the same point of time, and knowing all things intuitively and intimately, the conviction is unavoidable that *he does*. The occurrences which successively exhibit themselves on the vast theatre of being, constitute one integral system whose termination is immeasurably remote from its commencing point. Surely, then, the infinitely wise author of this system must have it completely arranged, and entirely under his view at the very instant when it first emerges into operation.

God's prescience evidently establishes the fact of his providing for things future, and his pre-ordaining their circumstances and their eventuation. Knowing, for example, the deeds and thoughts of voluntary natures thousands of ages hence, in any supposable state of being; and determining to place them in such state of being, the consequence cannot, in my view, be evaded, that he foreordains the permission of such deeds and thoughts for the wisest and best of purposes. That he foreordains any event, or circumstance, incompatible with the honour of his own benevolence and wisdom, able as he is to prevent it, is an inadmissible surmise. The inference, therefore, is plain; that he so circumscribes, restrains, and otherwise controls, the actions and purposes of all created beings, as to educe general, and even in many cases particular good, from whatever they do.

Thus is this sublime point of doctrine apprehended by sound reason. And what does revelation say? "The counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations."\* "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world."† "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory forever."‡ And to add no more, "he worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." "All things come to pass in pursuance of a divine predetermination."

In treating farther of this doctrine, it will be proper to notice the extent of ground, so to speak, occupied by the divine purposes, and their peculiar characteristics.

\* Psalm, cxxxiii. 11.

† Acts, xv. 18.

‡ Romans, xi. 36.

*In the first place.*—The extent of ground occupied by the Creator in the operations of his predetermining volitions. How far may we trace them? What objects, or what number of objects, do they reach? Obviously, to all things, all occurrences, all persons, all communities, all states and modes of existence, through nature's widest range, from the worm to the angel; from the radiant orb that rolls near its Maker's throne, to the molehill trodden under foot of man; from the pure spirit of the celestial worshipper, to the grass that to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven; from the pebble of the brook, and the grain of sand upon its shore, to the innumerable worlds of matter and of mind. Travel as far as the powers of the most vigorous intellect can transport you; you must rest at length, while undiscovered regions stretch and deepen before you. Hills on hills—and Alps on Alps will rise, whose tops you cannot surmount—whose wonders you cannot fathom—while all around you are the vestiges of Deity, and voices swelling in every wind proclaim that God is here.

But we may undoubtedly contemplate the doctrine to most advantage, by reposing ourselves on a few attainable particulars.

**FIRST.**—God is the maker of all material substances; preserves them in being and in operation, and directs every thing relating to them. From the first, he had full in his view, all the delicate, finely-turned, secretly-intervolved, and reciprocally and harmoniously dependent parts of the complicated system. What he made, he declared to be good; perfect in its sphere; corresponding to its pattern in his own mind; and adequately adapted to the end of its creation. The perpetuation of vegetable and animal life on fixed principles; the unintermitted maintainance and constant transmission of the original and inherent properties of natural productions; the regular successions of the seasons; the equable movements of the planetary worlds; the universal law of gravitation; and innumerable other exemplifications

of wise design, afford a luminous comment on the language of scripture, which speaks of God's "covenant being with day and night," and tells of his having "appointed the ordinances of Heaven and earth:"\* which says "forever O Lord, thy word is settled in Heaven. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations; thou hast established the earth, and it abideth. They continue this day according to thine ordinances; for all are thy servants."†

**SECONDLY.**—Men attach great importance, and not without reason, to the vicissitudes of their social and political condition. There are very few who think these things unworthy the interposition of Deity. And, in fact, so far is he from thinking them so himself, that he rides in the whirlwind which roots up the tyrant's throne, and directs the storm of misrule and popular tumult, until, having purified the corrupted and blasting atmosphere, it settles into a calm. The rise and fall of empires betoken his awful march. The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. "Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south; but God is the judge; he putteth down one and setteth up another. For in the hand of Jehovah there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture, and he poureth out of the same; but the dregs thereof all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them."‡ "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever; for wisdom and might are his; and he changeth the times and the seasons; he removeth kings, and setteth up kings."§ The most remarkable vicissitudes in the political state of mankind, related by the pen of history, have been predicted by some one or more of the prophets of God, and his agency in effecting them described in all the terrible magnificence of inspiration.

**THIRDLY.**—Not confining himself to these more conspicuous and elevated operations, he carries his superintendence to the concerns of every individual of his creatures.

\* Jer. xxxiii. 25. † Psalm, cxix. 89.—91. ‡ Psalm, lxxv. 6.—8, § Dan. ii. 20. 21

“Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without” his privy and permission; and “the very hairs of our heads are all numbered” by him.\* He who “hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, hath also determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.”† All the circumstances under which we enter upon life, pass through it, and go out of it, are of his allotment. Joy ebbs, and the flood of sorrows comes in at his appointed season. With him are the issues of our life. By his order the graves are ready for us. “Our days are determined, the number of our months are with him. He hath appointed our bounds that we cannot pass.”‡

FOURTHLY.—God has a controlling power which he exerts in various degrees and measures, as to him may seem best, over human actions and volitions, collectively and separately. We know, because we feel, that we are free agents. Free agency is an indispensable attribute of our condition as accountable beings. Yet it is equally certain that our freedom is not, and cannot be, unqualified independence. Freedom of this description, among beings vested with social rights, and formed for social purposes, is an idle dream. Set up in opposition to God’s providential control, it is not more idle than wicked; not more absurd than ruinous. No being, how exalted soever, is independent of his Maker. No one action or operation of any being is effected apart from the permission or occurrence of *his* superiour will. Not that the minutest violence is offered to the human will. It is left in the enjoyment of all that freedom, perfect within its sphere of operation, which reason admits to be compatible with a creature’s dependence on his God. And so far is this doctrine from subverting, that did time permit, it could easily be proved to establish the liberty and contingency of second causes.

FIFTHLY.—The beautiful succession of revelations, forming the parts of one glorious and extensive plan, grad-

\* Matth. x. 29. 30. † Acts, xvii. 26. ‡ Job. xiv. 5.

ually developed, and in their development disclosing the mind and purposes, the righteousness and the mercy of God, was arranged by him, and adapted to the progressive wants and capacities of mankind. So wise is this adaptation—so gracious—so beneficial in its bearings on human virtue, civilization, improvement, and happiness—that no brighter illustration need be desired of the propitious agency of him “who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”

I proceed to notice, in the second place, the peculiar characters of this divine predetermination.

**FIRST.**—It is from everlasting in the divine mind. I do not mean from everlasting, as I would use the expression with reference to the duration of God’s existence. I mean simply that it is from everlasting with relation to us; because it is totally out of our ability to fix upon any point of time from which to date its origin. “Before the foundation of the world; before all ages;” these mighty plans were formed; but *when*, what daring tongue shall say? The goings forth of wisdom have been of old, even from everlasting; and the time of the end, far distant as it may be, and veiled in darkness too gross for a creature’s penetration, was known to God from the beginning.

**SECONDLY.**—The divine predetermination is, in the present sense of the expression, the result of freedom of volition. It is the act of an absolute sovereign, governed by no other impulse than his own option, enlightened in its proceedings by the uncreated radiance of his own wisdom, and directed by the essential workings of his own benevolence. There is a very important distinction, not sufficiently noticed in the ardour of controversy, between the proper sovereignty of God, and a species of arbitrary and capricious volition which can have no existence in the all perfect mind, whatever it may enjoy in the fancy of men who will learn nothing from God’s word, until they have asked leave of some favourite system of theology. The sober truth is, that the Divine Sovereignty, with reference to



providential dispensation, is the divine reason, selecting out of various plans and operations, that which, under all circumstances, promises most to the divine glory; and the divine glory, be it remembered, is inseparable from the general good of sentient beings. Far from us be the supposition that any created mind can discern the grounds and reasons of God's dispensations; but equally far from us be the surmise that any of his dispensations are without grounds and reasons amply sufficient to vindicate them in his own view. Far from us be the allegation of arbitrary and capricious rule, against the Almighty fountain of all reason and intelligence.

THIRDLY.—From the intimations already given, we are prepared to admit that God must predetermine all things in infinite wisdom. The wisdom of every moral agent consists in his aiming at the best ends, through the instrumentality of the fittest means. The very best ends must of necessity be open to the view of the supreme agent who is omniscient; and no pious mind can entertain a doubt of his employing the most eligible means for the attainment of them. Every subordinate agent in the worlds of being, holds his faculties at the pleasure of his omnipotent sovereign. No subordinate agent, therefore, can thwart *his* views in prosecuting to completion the universal scheme. Look abroad through nature—look inward upon yourselves—contemplate the face of the moral world—mark the footsteps of God along the luminous track of revelation—and tell me what it is that does not assert the wisdom of his pre-ordaining counsels. I will grant that this is not universally legible. But why? Because the glorious page is not imprinted with its marks? Sound reason, and true faith, will concur in finding another cause. Sound reason, and true faith, with one voice, will say, that the dim vision of a limited intelligence cannot hope to reach the hidden wisdom of God.

FOURTHLY.—God's predetermining counsel is arrayed in all the beauty of holiness; in all the refulgence of purity,

truth, and essential virtue. "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works."\* "All his works are verity and judgment." "His counsels of old are faithfulness and truth."† Sweet waters, surely, flow not from a bitter fountain; neither do grapes come of thorns; or figs of thistles. The effect characterises the cause; and from the excellence of God's works, you will not refuse to collect the integrity, purity, and simplicity of his designs.

*Once more.*—The predeterminations of the divine mind are immutable and irreversible. All God's works from the beginning of the world are known to him." "His counsel is sure to stand, and he doeth all his pleasure." Linked as are his designs with the purposes and thoughts of multitudes of free agents through the numberless departments of being, they, nevertheless, advance to their accomplishment, at an hour which no man knoweth, with steady and infallible progress. The crucifixion of the Lord of glory involved no circumstance of torture to the victim, or atrocious guilt to his murderers, or immediate suffering to his disciples, or consequent advantage to the world, which had not been before determined by the permissive and controlling counsel of God, in full compatibility with his own unspotted holiness, justice, and goodness, and with the moral liberty of those who perpetrated the crime. This instance, adduced from the highest authority, puts doubt at defiance. A sovereign intelligence orders and disposes all events; while, at the same time, the human will is unfettered by it; guilt attaches, in all its awful force, to the criminal; and the obedience of the just is a voluntary oblation, acceptable to the Lord, their righteous judge. "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of Jehovah, *that shall stand*"‡

In what respects is the doctrine which we have been considering profitable? A very few words in reply to this inquiry, shall conclude the discourse.

Is it not evident, then, that *chance*, and *accident*, and *for-*

\* Psalm, cxlv. 17. † Isaiah, xxv. i. ‡ Prov. xix. 21.

*tune*, and *fortuitous*, are words which should be admitted with caution into a Christian's vocabulary? How absurd to indulge in such language, when, in fact, all things are fixed, and all occurrences are parts of a stupendous plan, moving by sure advances to maturity! How impious to withhold the recognition of *his* superintending providence, in whose hands our breath is, and whose are all our ways! How transcendently worthy of veneration does the divine Majesty exhibit himself—thus devising before all ages the general scheme of his counsels—unfolding them by degrees, from the birth of time to its last retiring pulse—prosecuting to their magnificent and awful issues those high purposes of which no mind inferior to his own is conscious. “O! the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him and through him, and to him are all things, to whom be glory forever.—AMEN.

FURTHER.—Since all things come to pass in pursuance of a divine predetermination, nothing can be more obligatory on a Christian, than tranquil acquiescence in that which must of necessity occur, and which he neither has the power, nor ought to have the inclination to contravene or defeat. In every painful circumstance of depression and woe, remember that it is the Lord, and let him do what seemeth to him good. If it be your fate to suffer from the hostility of others, be careful that you suffer as Christians; grave this motto, as with an iron pen, upon the shield of faith, “The will of the Lord be done;”\* and let the indignant purpose of revenge upon the perpetrators of your wrongs, be merged in resignation to *his* will who *said unto Shimei, curse David.*

AGAIN.—How black soever the clouds above; how chilling soever the atmosphere around; how fierce soever the

\* Acts, xxi. 14.

rage of the elements; how languishing soever the hopes of the righteous, and flourishing the horn of the wicked; although truth, virtue, and religion, should lie prostrate in the streets; although error, vice, and blasphemy should possess the popular ear, and the respect of mankind follow in the train of the enemies of God; yet leave the event with him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. He has not seen fit to prevent this disordered state of things. Conclude, therefore, that it enters mysteriously into his views. Wait the issue of the universal plan. In patience possess your souls. The period is hastening to meet you that will rectify this seeming inversion of things, and shew to the house of Israel that God's ways are equal.

*Yet, Again.*—The doctrine which has been laid before you, abounds with encouragement to all godly and virtuous enterprizes. The cause of righteousness is the cause of God. He who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, hath pledged himself for its ultimate success. Let no blandishments, then, withdraw you from its standard. Let no perils drive you from its ranks. The hour of victory is covered by the thick veil of God's decree. But it shall come. Courage; fight on; keep the faith; the hour of victory comes; and patient duty, and struggling virtue, wear the immortal crown.

*Finally.*—The truth on which we have been meditating may be perverted; and it becomes us to set a guard upon the deceitfulness of the heart, that we may not be betrayed into the sin of perverting it. God's predetermining counsel does not exonerate us from the obligation to personal diligence, activity, and obedience. The use of means on our part, enters no less essentially into his eternal schemes, than the ends for which those schemes were devised. No criminal habit or principle can be permitted to derive its sanction or its excuse from the foreordaining will of the Most High. No evil consequence of our own fatuity or inprovidence, is imputable to the Eternal Disposer of events, who has unques-

tionably capacitated us to see our true interests, and pursue successfully our highest happiness. Reason, faith, and conscience, are helps available in every case, and to every person. These, brethren, are given to be the rule of your conduct—your square—and your compass; not the hidden purpose of God. Infinite wisdom has his laws of action within himself. Secret things belong unto him. He has been mercifully pleased to set before you directions too plain to be mistaken. By these you are to be governed. By these you will be tried. Every man's sin will lie at his own door; and no good deed shall go without its just and appropriate recompense. "Give all diligence, therefore, to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do this, ye shall never fall."





## SERMON XXIX.

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### CONFIDENCE IN THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD RECOMMENDED.

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MATTHEW, vi. 34.

*“Take, therefore, no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”*

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**T**Hese are the concluding words of an exhortation of our Saviour when urging upon those to whom it was addressed, the duty of placing an unreserved trust in the providence of God.

The first words of the text are unhappily translated. They are far from expressing the force of the original. The simple thought respecting futurity was not meant to be prohibited; but undue thought; anxious cares; corroding sollicitudes. The same verb is somewhat more accurately rendered in the Epistle to the Philippians, “be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.”\* Even here, the phrase would have been better rendered, “be anxious about nothing;” “for doubtless we ought not to be careless about whatever is worthy to be the subject of a request to God.”† The justly celebrated Dr. Campbell, in his notes critical and explanatory upon Matthew’s gospel, thus introduces his remarks upon our text; “I do not think there is, in the common version, a more palpable deviation than this, from the sense of the original.” No translation

\* Phil. iv. 6.

† See Campbell.

it is presumed, can be found superiour in fidelity and correctness, to that of the great annotator alluded to; which, therefore, I will take leave to submit to you; “be not, then, anxious about the morrow; the morrow will be anxious about itself. Sufficient for every day is its own trouble.”

“To take *no thought* about what concerns our own support, and the support of those who depend upon us, would inevitably prove the source of that improvidence and inaction, which are, in the New Testament, branded as criminal in a very high degree.” What says the apostle of the Gentiles? “This we commanded you, that if any man would not work, neither should he eat.”\* “If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel.”† Thus by the received version of the text there is exhibited a glaring contradiction between the Lord and his apostle, while a true and accurate version would represent them as they invariably and infallibly are, in perfect accordance.

The expressions “the day” and “the morrow,” are not to be limited to that precise measure or mark of time which, in common speech, they are understood to denote. A reference to many passages of scripture, which it is not necessary now to specify, will shew clearly that these expressions are very frequently employed as descriptive of *time present* and *time future*; this *future time*, or *morrow*, however, being understood to be a space brief and transient, when mentioned or contemplated in relation to eternity. What can be more affectingly appropriate than the term “*to-morrow*,” literally designating no longer a period than the revolution of a natural day, to figure to us the short duration of our concern with this world and its occurrences, and the insignificance of all that passes beneath the sun, to man, the inheritor of an immortal existence?

After these preliminary explanations, we are prepared to take a more enlarged view of the divine prohibition published by the text.

\* 2 Thess. iii. 10.

† 1 Tim. v. 8.

“Take, therefore, no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”

“Be not anxious, then, about the morrow; the morrow will be anxious about itself. Sufficient for every day is its own trouble.”

What fault—what erroneous and sinful conduct is here forbidden? From the explanation given of the term, it evidently is by no means fore-thought, simply considered, or the prudent anticipation of what may come to pass; but an undue thoughtfulness—an unnecessary care—a painful anxiety—a perpetually corroding solicitude. “Be not anxious about the morrow.” Let not the multitude of your thoughts be entirely composed of gloomy or disagreeable apprehensions; let not your imaginations be so perverted, that sad forms of evil and adversity shall be perpetually passing and repassing; let not the “soul be ever abroad, transporting itself into distant time, and taken up with the things which are supposed to happen in it; let not your melancholy meditations be pursued with the friendly call of tired nature’s sweet restorer, balmy sleep, and resumed with the returning light.”\*

“Be not anxious about the morrow.” “Walk not in a vain shew; disquiet not yourselves in vain.” Be not dejected—overwhelmed—perplexed—agitated—terrified—by forebodings of what may be to come on earth. “Man, like the benighted traveller, is apt to imagine dangers where there are none, and trembles at every step he takes. “Between the future and the time that now is, a cloud interposes so thick that no eye can pierce it; and persons, influenced by melancholy, will fancy to themselves awful forms of terror and dismay, veiled by this cloud. In vain do you attempt to encourage them. Exhort them to hope that the cloud will distill the dews of gladness, and may, ultimately, cause their hearts to sing for joy. In vain do you tell them that ap-

\* Grove.

pearances are not such as to warrant the apprehension of evils, or to lay a ground-work for fearful forebodings; no ray of light will they admit to cheer their determined gloom; they would seem to have made up their minds to believe every thing that is evil, and nothing that is good. They are desirous of some good which, therefore, they are confident they will never obtain. They deprecate some evil, and therefore infer that it will assuredly occur to them. In conduct and disposition they are the direct opposite of a class of persons, who "boast themselves of tomorrow, not knowing what a day may bring forth." These look forward into futurity, nothing doubting, hoping all things, calculating unhesitatingly upon the accomplishment of whatever their hearts can wish, or their heads devise. Hope, no matter whether well or ill founded, is their master principle. Herein is *their* error. The error of those whose minds are the prey of care and anxiety respecting the future part of their temporal existence, is placed in the contrary extreme. *Fear* is **THEIR** governing principle—**THEIR** mainspring; a depressing fear; a fear that enslaves; that tortures; that cuts the very sinews of comfort; that stabs the very vitals of felicity; that blots the fairest pictures of delight; and casts a sable and unlovely veil over the smiling face of nature.

"Be not anxious about the morrow." It is injurious to the providence of God. It argues mistrust of him whose "kingdom ruleth over all;" who "knoweth the things of which we stand in need;" who "numbereth the very hairs of our heads," so that "not one of them can fall to the ground without his permission." This excessive thoughtfulness concerning the future, is a blot in the faith of the believer. By him, the continual operations of the all-forming, all-sustaining hand, should invariably be traced, in the labyrinth of human occurrences. Future events, therefore, whether felicitous or adverse, he ought cheerfully to commit to the superintending wisdom and goodness of the Almighty; not

permitting the consideration of what *may* happen, to agonize, or, even to depress, his spirit. They, on the other hand, who cherish undue thoughtfulness concerning the future, "are" constantly "afraid of evil tidings;" and why? "because their heart is not fixed, trusting in the Lord."\*

"Be not anxious about the morrow." Anxiety like this, swallows up the recollection of much that should never be forgotten by us; especially the divine goodness, and our personal unworthiness. May I not appeal to reason in justification of this assertion? When the future, with its imaginary occurrences, fills our minds, what room is there for recollecting the real transactions of time past? May I not call upon experience to justify me in the assertion? You who are habitually anticipating what may come to pass, do you remember faithfully the multitude of your sins so provoking to the justice of God? Do you remember the mercies of his throne which, notwithstanding these sins, have been poured upon you with an unsparing hand? the remembrance of both of which is indispensable to lead you to acceptable penitence—to pious gratitude—to holiness—and to Heaven?

"Be not anxious about the morrow." Anxiety like this is not more inimical to the right improvement of the time past of our lives, than it is to the religious and profitable use of the present moment. Indeed the absurdity and criminality of such anxious forethought, are in no point more conspicuous than in this. The present time, humanly speaking, we can command. The past is not to be recalled by us, and the future defies our control. Is it not, then, at once, the height of folly and the height of sin, to submit to that which wrests from us the present? All that remains to us of time for use and for improvement? Let me ask, then, "how should" persons, thus anxiously devoted to the future, "how should they have" any thing like "a due sense of" present "mercies" blessings and advantages? "Like persons who are amusing themselves with something at a

\* Psalm, cxii. 7.

great distance from them, and take no notice of the objects which are nearest; so do they fare. God passeth by them in the tokens of his favour, and they see him not; surrounds them with his presence and protection, and they observe him not; the greatest benefits are received with little or no acknowledgment; and the bounties of providence, and the riches of divine Grace, are, as it were, cast away upon them."

But, let it be observed, not only are present mercies, blessings, and advantages, undervalued; present *duties*, also, are *neglected*, in consequence of this censurable anxiety. Every day—every hour—so to speak, has its duty; and it is impossible that they, whose thoughts are uniformly carried beyond the day and the hour, should perform the *duty*. How often does "the apprehension of future evils and inconveniences discourage and hinder the practice of present duty? But is this allowable? No man who has studied in the school of Christ can suppose that it is. "If the apprehension of future want and sufferings had deterred the apostles from preaching the gospel," would they not have been guilty in the eye of their Lord? Assuredly. And guilty are they whom imaginary fears of future want dissuade from being just and honourable—liberal and charitable.

I might add here, that this culpable anxiety precludes us too generally from making that religious improvement of the griefs and trials which we are called to encounter, that they are intended to produce; and equally incapacitates us for appreciating the many enjoyments with which our merciful God hath strewed our path through life.

FINALLY.—"Be not anxious about the morrow; for they who are so, will be in danger of becoming remiss in their attention to the things which belong to their everlasting peace. When the time to come of this ephemeral existence engrosses the mind, it expels eternity from it. They who labour inordinately for the meat that perisheth, cannot value as they ought that which endures to everlasting life. They



who perpetually disquiet themselves with the dread of temporal want, and bend all the powers of a contriving genius towards the amassing of treasures on earth, where moth and rust corrupt, and where thieves may break through and steal in a moment what the toil of years has accumulated, cannot be intent upon attaining the imperishable treasures of Heaven. It is not persons such as I have described, who, amidst all the diversified objects of human pursuit, will "seek first the kingdom of God." "Be not" then "anxious about the morrow;" unless it be "the morrow" beyond the grave. Let no fearful apprehension of futurity affect you, unless it be the dread of "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power." Give no place to impatience for the attainment of desired and yet untasted pleasures, unless it be the holy impatience to "eat of the fruit of the tree of life" which waves its green and healing foliage in the gardens of the blest—and to "drink freely of the river of the water of life" which rolls its immortal streams by the throne of God.

Having thus endeavoured to illustrate the divine prohibition in the text, it is proper that we pass a few thoughts on the reasons on which it has pleased our Lord to ground it. "Be not anxious about the morrow; the morrow will be anxious about itself. Sufficient for every day is its own trouble."

"The morrow will be anxious about itself;" or "the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." Walk in the path of duty, with an even step, and a tranquil mind, and doubt not that "the Lord will provide." God claims to-morrow as his own. In his almighty hand, and at his all-controlling disposal, is every period of future time. What avails your anxiety? It cannot add one cubit to your stature. Trust in the Lord; commit your way unto him; stay yourselves upon his paternal arm. It is only HE who can prosper the works of your hands. It is only HE who can establish the desires of your hearts. You have the most unequiv-

ocal assurances that he will bring to pass whatever is essential to your real happiness; and more you need not ask, or wish.

“The morrow will be anxious about itself.” Future time will afford enough to employ your attention, and excite your passions, and agitate your souls, when it becomes time present. Wait patiently, therefore, until you discover the events appointed for you, as they approach in their order; consoling yourselves with this reflection that though “the morrow” may, and doubtless, shall have its cares, they will be found such as every devout person is qualified and strengthened to endure.”

“Sufficient for every day is its own trouble.” As every day has its duty, so every day has its trouble—its trial—its grief—its burden. Why, then, augment the sufferings of to-day by apprehensions of to-morrow? Why mix bitter ingredients of your own culling and preparation, in the health-restoring cup administered to you by the great physician of the soul? Why covet misery? Why swell the catalogue of sorrows? Real and pressing evils “God will enable you to bear; and he will so over rule, direct, and sanctify them, as to produce from them your ultimate advantage. But he gives you not the smallest encouragement to hope that he will bestow the same notice on imaginary evils—evils of your own creating.” Take good heed, therefore, how you multiply your sufferings without necessity. Take good heed how you anticipate even unavoidable distresses. But, especially, take good heed how you permit a fear-compelled imagination to create evils. “Sufficient for every day is its own trouble.”

In conclusion, allow me to submit to you some advice for the attainment of that abstinence from anxious and impertinent anticipations of futurity, which the text requires.

**FIRST.**—Turn your desires into their true channel; and restrict them within their reasonable limits. When imagination persuades us that certain things are indispensable to

our felicity, which in reality are not so; and which, whether they are so or not, we cannot possess; what wonder if the sorrows of our hearts are enlarged? Passion begets passion. Inordinate attachment to things temporal, cannot but be followed by excessive dread lest we should not attain to the enjoyment of them.

SECONDLY.—Consult prudence. “There are principles of prudence with which all persons of common capacity are furnished, and as it is not impossible for them to cultivate these, and by frequent reflection and consideration, to acquire an habitual prudence, it is their duty so to do.” Now, assuredly, this prudence will call off a man’s attention from vague and uncertain possibilities, and fix it upon what is probable, and the apprehension of which is reasonable. This prudence will induce him to adopt the most effectual means for the accomplishment of his wishes. This prudence will enable him to make a considerable allowance for the uncertainty of all human events. Will the man of prudence be a projector? Will he form and pursue designs with little or no foundation? Will he meddle with things too high for him, or be deterred by fear, from the prosecution of moderate, rational, and laudable plans?

THIRDLY.—“By humble prayer—by religious trust—commit yourselves, and all your interests, into the hands of Almighty God, your heavenly Father. Intreat him to take charge of you and yours; and so to order and dispose of all your concerns, as shall seem meet to his most wise and gracious providence. “Be careful for nothing; but, in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make your requests known unto God.” Aspire to that habitual state of feeling in which you can say from the very heart, “Thy will be done.” Await the issue of the universal plan; and be convinced that, with respect to the dispensations of providence, “*whatever is, is right.*”

FOURTHLY.—Concentrate all your anxieties *in this one point*: be anxious to obtain God’s approbation and accep-

tance, by finishing the work which he hath given you to do. Let every inferiour anxiety know its place; and it will not torment you. “Be solicitous to acquit yourselves like men, and be strong in the Christian warfare; to redeem the time; to improve the talents entrusted to you; to adorn the evangelical doctrine; to keep yourselves unspotted from the world; to be upright, pious, charitable, disinterested; to live with usefulness, and die in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of peace.

Thus exercised—thus anxious—“O! well are ye, and blessed shall ye be;” for passing thus through things temporal—ye shall finally possess the things eternal in the kingdom of glory and of God.—AMEN.

## SERMON XXX.

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### THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

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LUKE, XXIV. 34.

*“The Lord has risen indeed.”*

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**T**Hese few words contain the affirmation of a fact which establishes upon the most solid pillars the truth and divinity of the Christian religion. It is not of a cunningly devised fable, my brethren, that we declare our belief and support when we approach these altars, and enter these courts with thanksgivings and these gates with praise. God, who is essential and unspotted truth, would not have put an authenticating seal upon the ministry of a deceiver, by restoring him incorruptible from the grave. But God did raise up Jesus of Nazareth, whom men, with wicked hands, had crucified and slain; and who had foretold his own death and resuscitation exactly as they came to pass. Therefore, Jesus of Nazareth is a faithful and true witness, whose words are sacred verity; whose doctrine is from God; and whose religion is worthy of all acceptance. The gospel is accordingly described by an apostle, as “the gospel of God, which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures, concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David, according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by his resurrection from the dead.”\*

\* Rom. i. 2.—4. See McKnight

The evangelical system is the work of a divine person, and must be treated as really coming from Heaven; not as the device of human fancy, but as the truth of God. An instructor divinely appointed, divinely accredited, and divinely produced, cannot communicate the least portion of error. He who was preternaturally recognized in a manner so remarkable, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him;" will impart nothing but what is in perfect accordance with the mind of God, his Father. Consequently, it is incumbent on us to lend him a willing, a submissive, and a respectful ear. It is incumbent on us to believe whatever he is pleased to tell us, and to practise whatever he is pleased to enjoin upon us. Far from us be the infidel spirit which rejects, because it cannot understand. Far from us the sensual heart which revolts against commandments in themselves not grievous, a yoke easy to be borne, a burden too light to authorize a single complaint; and which, by practical opposition to the truth of Christ, dishonours it in the eye of the world, as if it were the workmanship of error and deception.

This most important fact, then; the rising again of Jesus, our master, from the dead, is of the highest utility to establish the verity of his religion, and his imperative claim upon the obedience of mankind. It is useful, also, in a number of other particulars, which it is my purpose, with the divine permission, to consider.

**FIRST.**—The resurrection of the Son of God, obliterates the scandal of his cross; effaces the stains of his humiliation; makes it impossible for any sober mind to remain shocked at his sufferings, obscurity, and unparalleled decrease. Before men bring themselves to consider things as parts of a system, and to view them in their connexions with the other parts of the same system, their conceptions of them are generally imperfect, and, in very many cases, opposite to correct judgment. If you contemplate the personal and official dignity of Jesus Christ; if you regard the



high and honourable distinction claimed for him as the restorer of the hopes, and the deliverer of the souls of mankind; if you contrast with these things the painfulness, and ignominy, and general affliction of his life and death; and if you indulge these contemplations apart from that of the glorious event which you are now particularly engaged in considering; "Christ crucified" may be to you, possibly, as he was to the Jews and Greeks of old, "a stumbling block and foolishness." But Christ risen from the grave presents himself under circumstances materially different. Before, agonizing and dying; now, immortal, beatified, and triumphant. Or, rather, connecting his two situations; contemplating in the same glance, Christ crucified and Christ risen; his antecedent sufferings and death cease to be a reproach; what he endured assumes additional importance in the view of what he obtained; and even the cross of humiliation becomes in your eyes a throne of glory. What though he be sentenced to die as a criminal? and what though he expire in the company of acknowledged malefactors? Are not his innocence and his righteousness set forth in noon-day brightness by Omnipotence raising him from the dead? What though he who brought life and immortality to light—lie buried in the tomb of Joseph? Is not his personal dignity magnified by his "loosing the pains of death, because it was not possible he should be holden of it?" On the cross and in the grave there seems to be an extinguishment of the light of this bright and beautiful sun; but does it not break forth in renewed and ten-fold radiance when Jesus lives again? What an accession of dignity and authority was there not derived to the prophet Daniel, when, having been cast into the den of lions, secured by a stone placed at its mouth and sealed with the king's own signet, and the signet of his lords, that he might not escape; he was brought forth, nevertheless, after a night of awful trial, unhurt and untouched by the ravenous beasts? when he could thus address his prince, who was anxious to have Daniel restored

in safety to his court and service, "O king, live forever! My God hath sent his angel and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me; for as much as before him innocency was found in me; also before thee, O king! have I done no wrong."\* In like manner, what a splendid accession of dignity, authority, and glory did not the great Redeemer derive from the ease and rapidity with which he blasted the attempts of his enemies to detain his person in the prison of the sepulchre; the utter insignificance of the ponderous enclosure at its mouth; the dismay and confusion of Rome's armed bands; the retinue of angels that waited on him, and testified to his reviviscence; and, in a word, from all that magnificent variety of circumstance under which he sprang from the lap of corruption, to glory, honour, and immortality?

SECONDLY.—Christ, rising from the dead, asserts the efficacy and completion of his sacrifice of atonement. It must never be forgotten that the death of Christ is perfectly singular in its kind. It is not merely the attestation of martyrdom to the truth of a doctrine, a system, or a fact. It is a propitiatory offering for sin; and an offering of a sweet savour, infinitely acceptable to God, to whose publick justice as ruler of the world, it was voluntarily made. Jesus is a victim substituted in the place of the real offender. "He gives his life a ransom for many." "Behold," in him, "the lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." He predicts his own death in this view; and his resurrection, which he also predicts, bears ample and unanswerable witness to the propitiatory virtue of his death. Excellent is that argument of his apostle; "who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God; who also maketh intercession for us."† If like the victims under the law, he had been irrecoverably lost in death, the inference, certainly, might have been, that his blood was as incompetent to expi-

\* Dan. vi. 21. 22.

† Rom. viii. 34.

ate guilt, and purify the conscience, as was theirs. But, the moment you advert to the fact of his resurrection, you behold, in luminous evidence, the merit of his obedience, the perfection of his righteousness, and the power of his mediation; you behold him “justified through the spirit” from the charge of blasphemy of old brought against him for claiming to be the Son of God and a co-worker with his Father, and from the suspicion of incompetency to save mankind from the guilt, the dominion, and the penalty of sin.

THIRD.—Since “the Lord is risen indeed,” it follows beyond all controversy that he must be engaged in transactions comporting with the nature, the design, and the grandeur of his mission. Here, then, your contemplations will spontaneously lift themselves to the Son of God as your advocate, your ruler, and your judge. To such views of the Redeemer you are immediately and unavoidably led by his resurrection. For surely he could not leave the grave to remain in a “world that was not worthy of him;” surely having resumed life, he must now be where suitable recompenses are awarded to his previous obedience unto blood, and where he can prosecute unto accomplishment, that course of action which best befits himself; his name, his dignity, his office, and his benevolent and compassionate nature. And such is the fact. Having continued with his disciples for a short period after his return from the grave, that he might teach, counsel, and comfort them; he ascended into Heaven, and was arrayed in “that glory which he had with the Father before the world was.” Having “abolished death, and conquered him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;” having “led captivity captive,” and spoiled opposing principalities and powers, making a shew of them openly; the gates of burning glory are thrown open for him; and the everlasting doors receive him as God’s victorious leader, and man’s triumphant Saviour.

He went, as our high priest, into the holy place, of the temple not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens; per-

petually to appear for us in the presence of God; to plead in our behalf the virtue of his blood, the merit of his sacrifice, and the divine promise to receive, for his sake, the believer and the penitent. "If any man sin, we have" *now and always* "an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; the propitiation for the sins of the whole world."\* If any man supplicate the throne of the heavenly grace, we have a medium of intercession, Jesus Christ the merciful; who stands continually before the altar, having in his hand a golden censor, from which he offers the pure incense of the prayers of all saints. If any man aspire to a beatific immortality at God's right hand, we have a forerunner, Jesus Christ the faithful, who hath gone to prepare places for us in some of the numerous mansions of his Father's house; and who hath assured us that he will come again and take us to himself, that where he is, there we may be also. Hence it becomes our duty, (and if there be gratitude in the human heart, the duty will be pleasant,) to honour this glorious mediator, by cultivating a vigorous faith in him, in his power and his promises; by placing the most unlimited affiance on the merit of his atonement as the exclusive medium of our acceptance with God; and by asking no favour at the hand of Heaven, offering no thanksgiving, and celebrating no religious act, but in his name, and with reference to his mediation; either expressly mentioned, or implied in the tenour of the particular service, whatever it may be. For it is a solemn truth, my brethren, that there is not *that* act of duty, how pure soever, or *that* office of religion, how holy and spiritual soever, which does not require a baptism with the blood of sprinkling, to propitiate its acceptance. So profound and extensive is the disorder of our moral nature! So imperfect are the best feelings of the human heart, and the best habits of human life! And, at the same time, so inexpressibly good is God, who lays our help on the prevalent arm of his own most blessed Son!

\* 1 John, ii. 1.

To Jesus risen from the dead, all things are brought into subjection. The worlds of nature, of providence, and of grace, are under his control. When he relinquished the tomb, then was he set "God's king upon the holy hill of Zion." Then was that "decree declared," to which an ancient prophet refers, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the Heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."\* Then was he clothed with the ensigns of royalty, and assumed the helm of universal empire. The angels of God were commanded to do him homage, and all power, in Heaven and on earth, was given unto him. The circumstances attending his first manifestation in the flesh, had been, in the common language of men, below mediocrity. The whole complexion of his life before the great event which we are considering, had been obscure and distressful. But then he was born to a name which is above every name. It is in a two-fold allusion; an allusion as well to his resurrection from the grave, as to his nativity in Bethlehem; that the sacred books denominate him, in his humanity, the Son of God. At his incarnation, indeed, he was, in the words of the wise men who came from the East, to Jerusalem, "born king of the Jews;" but it was not until his second birth from the tomb, that his distinguished authority went into operation; for then he was crowned, not king of the Jews only, but king of nations; not sovereign of men only, but Lord of the hosts of Heaven.

"The birth-days of the Roman emperors," it has been observed, "signified not only their natural, but likewise their civil birth-days; or the time of their inauguration to the empire. The day of our Saviour's resurrection was his civil birth-day, on which he received his investiture into that sovereignty which he merited by his sufferings and death." Because, "being in the form of God," he thought it not robbery to be like unto God; but made himself of no

\* Compare Psalm ii. 6.—8. with Heb. i. 5.



reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;" "therefore, "God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."\*

The dominion of the Redeemer involves authority over his subjects, and property in them. To both of these particulars the apostle alludes in writing to the Romans: "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living."†

In the discharge of his high office, my brethren, the divine mediator is conducting all things towards their proper consummation in the eternal recompenses of piety and virtue, and the awful retribution of misery to the wicked. He has erected a church; constructed a system of discipline and polity for its government, subject to the modifications of religious prudence in its less important features; endowed it, according to the necessities of successive periods, with the gifts of the spirit, and the talents of useful men; and instituted, and uninterruptedly maintained, a ministry of reconciliation to reclaim lost sinners to their God. It is in obedience to his commission, and in execution of his undoubted command, that the sinner is so often disturbed with exhortations from this sacred ground, to break off his sins by repentance; that we beseech you, whose souls we know to be in danger, to flee for refuge to the only hope set before you, and to cease from provoking Omnipotent justice by your

\* Phil. ii. 6.—11.

† Romans, xiv. 7.—9. See Grove.



follies and your crimes. Submit cordially, therefore, to this glorious Son of the most high God; this Lord who is risen indeed; this prince enthroned in glory; this king, anointed of his Father, to sustain the empire of the world. Acknowledge his rightful sway. Obey his holy statutes. Consign yourselves to his service with a perfect heart, and a willing mind. Aspire to be his through life and in death. Should his just wrath be kindled but a little, ye perish from the way. "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

For it is not more certain that the grave no longer holds the Son of God, than it is that he is to be the judge of the world. "God hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."\* Yes, my brethren, your own eyes shall behold your Redeemer living. Not many were permitted to view him as he emerged from the silent mansions of the dead. But when he shall approach to judgment, every eye shall see him. O! advent of majesty and glory! dawn of eternal consolation to the righteous! appalling prelude to the horrors of the damned! Poor unrepenting sinner, where will be thy pride and thy pleasures, thy voluptuousness, thy luxury, thy heaps of gold and silver, thy ambition, and the renown of thy name, when the seventh trumpet sounds the note of preparation? And where, O! wretched infidel, thy jibes and thy sneers, thy quibbles and thy sophistry, thy self-conceit and presumption, and all that mockery which it may be, thou pourest, like the Athenian scoffers of old, upon the glorious doctrine of a resurrection from the dead, when the Son of Jehovah shall come in the glory of the Father, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not his gospel; to inflict the awful weight of that sentence, "He that believeth not shall be damned?"

Since we must all stand before the judgment-seat of

\* Acts, xvii. 31.

Christ, my brethren, it surely concerns us to live with much circumspection; that we may be able to render in our account with joy, and not with grief; that the actions of our lives, the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts, may be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the coming of the Lord. Let his gospel have its legitimate influence in forming your characters, and directing your steps; for it is by this standard that you will be tried, and by this righteous and perfect measure that retribution will be meted out to you. Taught by this gospel of the grace of God, “deny ungodliness and every worldly lust; and live soberly, righteously, and piously in this present world.” “Do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God; for what more does he require at your hands?” “The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;” but “with the righteous” it shall not fail to be well,” when their immortal leader approaches to be “glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.”

In one word, “what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for, and hastening unto, *the coming of the day of Christ?*”—AMEN.

## SERMON XXXI.

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### THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

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LUKE, XXIV. 34.

*“The Lord is risen indeed.”*

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IN a late exercise upon these words, it was observed that the important fact which they assert, the rising again from the dead of Jesus, our master, is of the highest utility to establish the verity of his religion, and his imperative claim upon the obedience of mankind. It is useful, also, in a number of other particulars, some of which were offered to your meditations.

The resurrection of the Son of God obliterates the scandal of his cross. It asserts the efficacy and completion of his sacrifice of atonement. It exhibits him to the contemplation of faith, as engaged, now and continually, in transactions comporting with the nature, the design, and the grandeur of his mission; as the advocate, the ruler, and the judge of men.

I proceed now to observe, that the resurrection of the Lord is of the utmost consequence as an argument by which to establish the general resurrection of the dead. It is an argument employed with great force of reasoning by the apostle of the gentiles, in his First Epistle to the Corinthians; “if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen. And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we

are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ; whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised; and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ, are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.”\*

There is an undoubted and a very intimate connexion between the restoration of the great Deliverer from the power of the grave, and that of the universal race in whose nature he both died and revived. And this connection is particularly close as it respects true believers.

All true believers, all virtuous and godly persons, are related to their Redeemer by the strongest ties. Not only are they one with him in their nature according to the flesh. This honour they share with the sinners who crucified him. They are, also, “made partakers with him of a divine nature.” From him they receive the deep and abiding impress of God’s glorious image upon their humanity. Like him, although in a comparative sense, they are “the sons of God, blameless, and harmless;” “born again;” begotten from above; formed anew to a holy and heavenly life. They are the brethren of the Lord, and co-heirs with him. They are members of that body of which he is the head, and which is actuated in all its parts by the same Divine Spirit. “In *his incarnation*,” says one, “he partook of their *flesh*, by means of which he becomes related to all the sons of men; in *their regeneration* he makes them to partake of *his spirit*, by virtue whereof the relation, before common, comes to be appropriate; and Christ is so theirs as to be theirs *only*.”† “And they are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.”‡ When the voice of their Redeemer shall resound through the caverns of the dead, these, “having done good, shall come forth to

\* 1 Cor. xv. 12.—20. † See Grove. ‡ 1 Cor. iii. 23.

the resurrection of life." Concerning their recovery from the grave it is that the apostle utters his consolatory oracle, "it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body."\* "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality. So 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. "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ!"†

So few are disposed to controvert the fact of the reviviscence of the righteous in their changed and glorified forms in consequence of the resurrection of their immortal chief, that it is unnecessary to enter into a detail of proofs evincing the connection of the two points of doctrine; otherwise, it were easy to trace this connection, and to follow the operation of the cause to its magnificent effect.

Much reason, surely, have we to "bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath" thus "begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for us." To this article of our creed, it is confessed, many of the ancient sophists objected loudly. They deemed it not desirable, even if it were pos-

\* 1 Cor. xv. 42.—44.      † 1 Cor. xv. 50.—57.



sible, that the body should be raised from its silent and gloomy abode. One of them speaks in this way; "the true awakening of the soul is an awakening from the body, and not a resurrection with the body, for that change which is together with the body, is but passing from sleep to sleep, as it were from one bed to another; but the true awakening is from all bodies, which are contrary to the soul, because the nature of one is opposite to the other." Opinions, of this description, originated, for the most part, in an apprehension of some pre-existing and separate state of the human soul, in which having contracted guilt, it was, in retribution, doomed to be the tenant of this material and mortal body. Here, as in divers other particulars, we have evidence satisfactory that the humblest and most illiterate believer is better informed in the concerns of true wisdom than the proudest aspirer after philosophick glory in the schools of ancient science. For he is told by his Bible, that the body was first formed, and then, the soul inspired into it, having no consciousness of any thing antierior to its occupation of the new formed tenement of clay.

The ancient objectors against this doctrine of scripture, misconceived, also, the character assigned to the body in its reproduced state. They imagined it to retain the same properties of grossness and opposition to the free movements of mind, which belong to its state before death. They could not have adverted to the brilliant account given of its superiour qualities by the inspired authors. Or, probably, they were incredulous as to the capacity of any organization of matter to be the subject of such noble influences and impressions as are implied in the denomination of a spiritual body; an incredulity that shews how little knowledge they possessed of material substances, and how much less of the infinite attributes of God.

Men who have been taught of Christ will, of course, think very differently from these vain praters in things too high for them. The Christian will view, with holy plea-



sure, the resurrection of his master, to confirm himself in the faith and hope of his own; and he will make the faith and hope of his own resurrection the stable groundwork of patience, fortitude, and resignation, in passing through life, and in meeting the stroke of death.

Anticipate, my brethren, the event of your re-animation in immortal bodies, until you learn to endure all hardness in the flesh; until you are strengthened to sustain, without shrinking, the pains and infelicities which it may please Heaven to impose on you in your mortal bodies. Whatever indeed, may be your distress, you have no right to murmur; because it cannot equal in magnitude the demerit of your offences against the law of God. But when you consider that the utmost duration of that distress can exist no longer than the life of this fast decaying body; and, especially, when you look forward to that undying form of health, of strength, of beauty, and of honour, in which you are to be raised from the tomb, do you not, *then*, feel it to be your duty to "rejoice in tribulation?" The present is a vile body, akin to the dust. The present is a body of sin, exciting and ministering to impure and unhallowed passions. By this corporeal form, we are leagued with a system of objects and events unfriendly to virtue; and subjected to many painful and afflicting sympathies; to much violence, much oppression, much severe and triumphant hostility. In this feeble structure, crushed before the moth, man sickens and declines; and when time has scattered his mould over its walls, gives up his breath. What consideration so effectual to resist the depressing weight of these corporeal infelicities, these evils reaching to the very seat of feeling through the union of the soul with the natural body, as that of the nobler life, which awaits you in the spiritual body? How little have the woes of nature in them to merit the regard or the dread of that man who can look down in prospect into the recesses of his own grave with

the sure and certain hope of a resurrection from it to eternal life?

Anticipate, therefore, my brethren, the event of your re-animation in immortal bodies, that you may learn to meet the stroke of death without reluctance; to step forward cheerfully, and offer yourselves to his embrace. With all the inconveniencies of this frail and exposed tenement, the spirit often lingers about its door, and would willingly prolong her dwelling in it. That you may be persuaded that to depart is far better than to continue within these crumbling walls, what better can you possibly do, than accustom yourselves to look upward, and survey those nobler mansions, which the Lord, who is risen indeed, has gone before to prepare for you? "The earthly house of this tabernacle shall be dissolved;" but, have you not "a building with God; a house not made with hands; eternal in the Heavens?" You must die; but are you not to live again? "The dust shall return to the earth, as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it;" but shall not the separated spirit recognize, and re-enter its ancient habitation, repaired, adorned, created anew in Jesus Christ, and glorified? How felicitous soever your condition in the present state, still it is an uncertain and most precarious condition; how tranquil soever the tenour of your journey, it cannot be totally exempt from painful interruptions; how pleasant soever the sunbeams that dance upon the grates of your prison, hours of cheerless darkness will succeed. And should you attain the most elevated ground of worldly enjoyment and happiness, the contrast which, nevertheless, you could not fail to recognize between this disciplinary and that resurrection state, ought not to leave you room for a moment's hesitation in preferring the last. Let the tempests blow; let the waves rise mountains high; why should you scruple to commit yourselves to the ocean that rolls between you and the port of eternal rest, assured, as you may be, of a safe and successful voyage? Arise, O Christian spirit! arise; trample on the

world! wing thy aspiring flight to immortality! It is the voice of the Master that calls thee! Why shouldst thou delay? Why cling to the earthly house fast mouldering into ashes? Forsake it for a period, that, in God's time, thou mayest enter it again when rebuilt, for an eternal duration, and decorated with every beauty, and every splendour befitting the heir of an immortal crown.

But, after all, the resuscitation of mankind, in consequence of the Lord's rising from the dead, is not to be restricted to his faithful people. It is a universal resuscitation; an event in which every individual of the species, without exception, bears a part; because every individual of the species, without exception, has a deep concern in the resurrection of the common Lord and mediator of all. "For" thus argues an authority which no Christian will dispute, however he may interpret him: "Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection from the dead. For, as in Adam all die, even so in Christ, shall all be made alive."\* They who "never sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression," die. Infants, on whom no actual or personal offence can be charged, die. Idiots, incapable of moral action, insusceptible to praise or blame, die. Pagans, on whom the saving light of revelation never dawned, die. All derive from Adam a mortal nature; and all, like their common progenitor, descend into the tomb. But what becomes of the contrast instituted by the apostle, between the Father of the human race and their Redeemer, if the universality of the evil inherited from Adam be not opposed by a remedy equally universal? The sentiment is one which he appears to take delight in presenting and illustrating in all the peculiar cogency of his reasoning. "Therefore," in his epistle to the Romans you hear him say, "as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."† Justification of life, in this

\* 1 Cor. xv. 21. 22. † Romans, v. 18

connection, can signify nothing so properly or reasonably as the deliverance of mankind from natural death, which Adam's offence had brought upon them. That the two grand descriptions of men, the righteous and the wicked, shall alike be re-animated by our Lord Jesus Christ, is a doctrine which, with our Bibles in our hands, we are not at liberty to doubt. For, thus it is written, "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."\* It is his part; a part allotted him as Messiah, the Son of man, the word of God, and mediator between God and man; to bid all men live again; and, in holy retribution, to adjudge all men to the destinies in eternity, corresponding with their works in time.

It is acknowledged that the situation of bad men posterior to their resurrection, is one awfully infelicitous. It is, however, the consequence of their own personal and voluntary transgression. The Son of God is not to be charged with it, who both died, and rose again, that he might restore to all mankind the means and capacity of happiness. The supposition is very far from being unreasonable, that the sad issues of Adam's crime would not have been permitted to extend themselves through all his progeny, had it not been, at the same time, designed to invest them all with, at least, the possibility of attaining to a higher felicity through the Lord from Heaven, than they forfeited in their first federal head and representative. The misery of bad men, therefore, after they are raised from the grave, is imputable to themselves; to their own folly and iniquity, and to no other cause. Surely the restoration of life is, in its own nature, an invaluable favour; and we cannot doubt but that it was designed to be viewed in this light. On any other principle, as far as I am aware, we could not avoid the objection, that the mission and atonement of the Son of God, were calcula-

ted not more for the benefit of some, than for augmenting the wretchedness of others; a misconception most dishonorable to the character of Deity.

It is of importance, then, that every individual of my audience should be impressed with the recollection that the great event on which we are meditating, as the result of our Lord's rising from the dead, and which is, in itself, a favor from heaven, may prove in the issue a curse; and that there is too painful an evidence that it will prove a curse to many, if impenitency in sin can make it so. O sinner! let the apprehension of a doom like this, cause thy flesh and thy heart to tremble. Why wilt thou not mortify thy members which are upon the earth? Dedicate them henceforward as instruments of righteousness unto God, that they may not become instruments of torture to thyself in the regions of hopeless desolation.

As "the Lord is risen indeed," let us all aspire, "to know him, and the power of his resurrection."\* We must be risen with Christ; with him we must "pass from death unto life;" if we would be enrolled with his faithful people. They who are dead in trespasses and sins; they in whom vicious habits rule; they whose good resolutions and purposes of obedience expire in the conflicts of temptation; must experience a resurrection to true religion and virtue, before they flatter themselves with the hope of attaining that glorious resurrection which is unto life eternal.

"Follow after holiness," therefore, "without which no man shall see the Lord." "Put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness."† "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism, into death; that, like as Christ was raised up from

\* Phil. iii. 10. † Eph. iv. 22.—24.



the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." "For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

If you would give satisfactory evidence that the resurrection of the Lord has had its moral and spiritualizing efficacy upon you, you must be, in habit, "heavenly minded." "If ye, then, be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."\*—AMEN.

\* Col. iii. 1.—3.



## SERMON XXXII.

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### THE CHARACTER AND OPERATIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

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JOHN, xiv. 16. 17.

*“I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of Truth.”*

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FROM these words it is designed to discourse to you on what we conceive to be the true scriptural doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit.

On this subject several important matters might be offered for our consideration; but we shall confine ourselves to three particulars. Is the Holy Spirit God himself, or is he a subordinate agent? What is the ground and meaning of his appropriate name and title, “Holy Spirit?” What are his works, generally, and what his special operations with regard to man?

Of each of these matters in their order; and let it be remembered that we presume not to trespass beyond the limits of Revelation, on a subject in which Revelation alone can instruct us. If we do not confine ourselves, on all occasions to the very letter of scripture, it is only when necessary and unavoidable inference impels us farther.

*In the first place.*—The Holy Spirit being revealed as an agent of the highest importance in the natural and moral worlds, is he a creature? or is he God himself? We might ask, is he a divine person? but, obviously, if he be a divine person, he must be God; the supreme, eternal, infinite God;

the true religion forbidding us to acknowledge more Gods than one. That the Holy Spirit, therefore, is a divine person, or God himself, we shall now prove; and, we trust, easily prove.

There are many convincing arguments which might be adduced; but we will merely select a few of them.

**FIRST.**—By consulting the V. chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, you will find St. Peter speaking of the Holy Ghost under the very name of God. The falsehood of which Ananias and Sapphira had been guilty, and for which the divine apostle inflicted on them a just and most exemplary punishment, he, in the third verse, calls a lie unto the Holy Ghost, and in the fourth verse, a lie unto God. Consequently, the Holy Ghost is God.

**SECONDLY.**—The attentive reader of the divine word, cannot but perceive that it refers, in a multitude of instances, the attributes of the Divinity to the Holy Spirit. The universal presence of God is that perfection of his nature by which he frequently distinguishes himself from all the idols of the nations—all pretenders to deity. But is not this perfection ascribed by the inspired Psalmist to the being whom our Lord denominates the Comforter—the Spirit of Truth? “Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?”\* And is he not represented by a great apostle as dwelling in the bodies of all the faithful, as in so many temples consecrated to him wherever the faithful are scattered?

Universal knowledge; an intimate acquaintance with the most hidden purposes and the deepest recesses of the human heart; is unquestionably a property of Deity, and peculiar to Deity; “for thou, even thou only,” says Solomon, in his sublime dedication service. “thou only knowest the hearts of the children of men.”† But, observe, knowledge higher than this, as to its object, is ascribed to the Holy Spirit. For what says the first Epistle to the Corinthians? “The

\* Psalm, cxxxix. 7.

† 1 Kings, viii. 39.

Spirit searcheth all things; yea, the deep things of God.”\* And the illustration of this truth, which immediately follows its assertion, in itself, and at once, establishes the divinity of the Spirit; “for what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?” asks the apostle; and continues, “even so, the things of God knoweth no man; but the Spirit of God.”† Why is it that the spirit of man knoweth the things of a man? Certainly because the spirit of the man is the man himself. To justify the illustration, therefore, it must follow that the Spirit of God is God himself.

The foresight and the foretelling of future events is peculiar to Deity; and yet they are undeniably asserted of the Holy Ghost. “The Spirit speaketh expressly that, in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith;”‡ writes the apostle to Timothy.

Other divine perfections are referred by scripture to the same glorious person. But I go on to remark,

**THIRDLY.**—That the same high and undisputed authority makes him the operator of divine works—of works proper to Deity.

Surely, he who made all things, is God. “I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the Heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself.”§ But what then? Was any thing made without that mysterious Word who in the beginning was with God, and was God? On the contrary, by him was not every thing made that was made? Assuredly. And it is equally sure that the Holy Spirit concurred and co-operated in what was done. “Did not the Spirit of God move upon the face of the waters?”|| “By his Spirit did he not garnish the Heavens?”¶ But the various operations of this mighty agent will be adverted to in the sequel.

**FOURTH.**—The formula of baptism vindicates the Spirit’s Deity. The ministers of the New Testament are instruct-

\* 1 Cor. ii. 10. † 1 Cor. ii. 11. ‡ 1 Tim. iv. 1. § Isaiah, xlv. 24.  
|| Gen. i. 2. ¶ Job. xxvi. 13.

ed by the great head of the church to baptize in, or more properly, perhaps, into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Now, if there be here an acknowledgment of God under two personal distinctions of the Father and the Son, by parity of reason, the third name must be meant for a divine personal distinction also; otherwise, the harmony and analogy of the baptismal form are destroyed; a form dictated by the lips of the blessed Redeemer himself.

**FIFTH.**—We derive a very clear demonstration of this truth from the comparison of many parts of the Old Testament, with other parts of the new. From this, it will appear, that the Holy Ghost—the Comforter—the Spirit of truth—is the most high God; whom the ancient church adored under the incommunicable name “**JEHOVAH,**” translated in our version “the Lord;” whom they recognized and honoured as the maker and upholder of all things. No man who believes the scriptures will doubt that it was the great God who appeared unto the prophet Isaiah in that vision which he has so magnificently recorded in the sixth chapter of his book. And yet it is not more certain that St. John, in the XII. chapter of his gospel, represents the prophet as speaking of Jesus Christ and his glory as the object of his vision, than it is that St. Paul, in the XXVIII. chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, represents the voice of the Lord, which the prophet heard at that time, to be the voice of the Holy Ghost. To compare these three remarkable scriptures with reference to the very important doctrine to which they point, and which the superficial wisdom of this age affects to despise, (we mean the doctrine of the Supreme God, under three personal distinctions) will be no unprofitable item in your moments devoted to religious retirement. Time will not allow us to enlarge on the subject at present.

*Again.*—No man who believes the scriptures will doubt that it was the great God who commissioned, instructed,

and inspired the prophets of the former dispensation. And yet we learn from St. Peter that the Spirit did all this. "The prophecy" he writes "came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."\*

In the book of Leviticus it is thus written, "The Lord said unto Moses, speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place;"† but we are told by the writer to the Hebrews, that it was "the Holy Ghost who signified this."‡

In the prophecies of Jeremiah it is written; "After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts;"§ but by the same writer to the Hebrews we are told that it was the Holy Ghost who said this.||

By the same inspired authority, also, those words quoted from the XCIV. Psalm, are represented as spoken by the Holy Ghost: "To day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the days of temptation in the wilderness; when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, they do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest."¶

The Holy Spirit, therefore, is undeniably not a creature, how exalted soever; but God most high, Jehovah himself; and our first point is established.

*In the second place.*—What is the ground and meaning of the appropriate name and title, "Holy Spirit?"

The word *Spirit* cannot here be employed simply to designate immateriality; in as much as immateriality of nature is common to Godhead, speak of him by what name you will. Perhaps, for we intimate it as a probability, perhaps the true reason for the use of the denomination, must be sought for in the character under which the Spirit is

\* 2 Peter, i. 21. † Lev. xvi. 2. ‡ Heb. ix. 8. § Jer. xxxi. 33.

¶ Heb. x. 15. 16. ¶ Heb. iii. 7.—11.



sometimes spoken of in the scripture, as “the power of the Highest;” that Eternal Power by whom the purposes of co-eternal wisdom and love, are carried into execution. With the notion of Spirit, there is ordinarily, and it should seem, reasonably associated, the notion of *power*; of power, as it respects created spirits, far superiour; and as it respects the Creator Spirit, infinitely superiour to the utmost force of the noblest, most refined, and most subtle combinations of matter.

*Again.*—Whence does the Spirit of God derive the distinctive and appropriate appellation of “Holy?” It cannot be from any more essential sanctity or purity; for this is equally affirmable of God as the Father and the Son. “Holy,” or sacred, is an epithet frequently attached to Majesty; as the power of the Roman Tribunate of old was denominated sacred, or holy, because it represented the majesty of the Roman people; and this is one of the reasons why the royal character is, to this day, graced in transatlantic language with the same high and honourable epithet. But it cannot be on account of his divine majesty alone that the Spirit of God is peculiarly styled “Holy;” since he is as far from possessing majesty, as he is from possessing sanctity or purity, to the exclusion of the paternal and filial distinction of Deity. He is expressively called “the Holy Spirit;” it would appear, from his specifick province and prerogative of originating and conferring all grace and holiness, all righteousness and purity, all virtue and goodness throughout the moral or the spiritual world. The end of man’s redemption is his sanctification, or the making of him holy, which is the proper office of the Spirit of God; and than which there can be no better reason discovered or desired for designating him by the appropriate and distinctive title of “Holy Spirit,” or Holy Ghost.

The observations just made very naturally lead us to the discussion of the last particular of our plan, which was, as you will recollect, the *operations* of the Holy Spirit.



This divine agent is ever active in the kingdoms of nature, of providence, and of grace. In the original formation of all things, he acted, as we have seen; and in the uninterrupted conservation, protection, superintendence, and government of all things he still acts, and will continue to act, as long as all things subsist. When “the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep;”\* then “the *Spirit of God* moved upon the face of the waters.”† “By his Spirit” the Almighty “garnished the Heavens.” “Oh! Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches; so is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. There go the ships; there is that Leviathan whom thou hast made to play therein. These wait all upon thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them they gather; thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good; thou hidest thy face, they are troubled; thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust; thou sendest forth *thy Spirit*, they are created; and thou renewest the face of the earth.”‡

In the XXXV. chapter of the book of Exodus is the following record; “Moses said unto the children of Israel, see, the Lord hath called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; and he hath filled him with the *Spirit of God*, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship;” &c. From this passage, in connection with others scattered over the inspired volume, we may collect, that for our acquisitions in art and science we are indebted, not only to God, as the fountain of being generally, but specifically and distinctively to God, “as the *Spirit of Truth*,” whose “inspiration it is that giveth understanding.” And we may learn from the words of God himself, which he spake to his servant Moses on the original institution of the great council of seventy.

\* Gen. i. 2.    † Job. xxvi. 13.    ‡ Psahn, civ. 24.—30.  
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that political prudence, foresight, and skill, are gifts from the same donor, even his own all-wise and all-powerful Spirit.\*

It is not to be doubted that the celebrated actions of the more virtuous part of Paganism; those remains of benevolence, righteousness, and temperance, which were observable among the idolatrous nations of the ancient world, as well as those which at this day sparingly adorn the regions that know not Christ; it is not to be doubted that these are the works of the "Spirit of truth," in concurrence with traditionary knowledge preserved to mankind by the kindness of an overruling providence.

The *Holy Spirit* is the author of whatever light, and whatever purity the church has enjoyed through all the successive periods of her existence. He led the venerable patriarchs of old to pursue and practice those exalted virtues which have secured to them the admiration of every succeeding age. He inspired the prophets and apostles of the Lord. Those miraculous powers which were conferred on the first Christians after the Redeemer's ascension, were the result of *his* extraordinary effusion.

To his ordinary workings it is that mankind are under obligation for that common and universal grace which leaves such without excuse as finally come short of Heaven. He forms in the hearts of true believers the dispositions necessary to qualify them for deriving advantage from the ordinances of the gospel. He enlightens the eyes of their understandings, "that they may behold wondrous things out of the law of the Lord."† "That they may know the things that are freely given to them of God.‡" "That they may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power towards us who believe."§

It is this divine spirit who sheds abroad in the heart the

\* Numbers, xi. 16. 17. † Psalm, cxix. 18. ‡ 1 Corinthians, ii. 12.  
§ Eph. i. 18. 19.

love of God in Christ, and fills it with that peace which passeth understanding.

It is the Comforter—the Spirit of truth—who elevates the drooping soul of affliction, and expands the disconsolate bosom with a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory; who “strengthens with his might the inner man;”\* “who stablisheth and anointeth,”† and “sealeth unto the day of redemption.”‡

This is the spirit of prayer and supplication, “who maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”§ This “the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”|| “This is the spirit whose gracious fruit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.”¶ Through this spirit only are we able to mortify the deeds of the body that our souls may live; and by him it is that our mortal bodies themselves are quickened never more to taste or to see death.

Many are the similitudes under which this all-powerful agent, with his inestimable benefits, are represented to us in holy scripture; and they are all justified and illustrated by the account which has now been given of his offices and operations.

Thus, as he is the great principle and source of our spiritual regeneration, and the author of our spiritual growth; as he cleanseth from all unrighteousness and impurity; as he extinguishes the fires of lust, and refreshes with the dews of consolation; he is figured to us under the emblem of *pure water*.

As he enlightens what is dark in us, refines what is gross, consumes what is offensive, and enkindles and cherishes the heaven-ascending fervor of devotion, he is aptly described to us under the figure of *fire*.

As he affords us strength and activity for our Christian warfare, he is beautifully and strikingly represented under the comparison of an unction or anointing, in allusion to the

\* Eph. iii. 16. † 2 Cor. i. 21. ‡ Eph. iv. 30. § Rom. viii. 26.

|| Rom. viii. 15. ¶ Gal. v. 22. 23.

usage of combatants in the ancient games, who employed an abundance of oil in preparing their bodies for the labours of the field.

We will conclude with a very few practical remarks.

**FIRST.**—The gospel is expressly denominated “the ministration of the spirit.”\* Attentively to read and hear the gospel, therefore, and seriously to meditate upon it, must be a direct means to obtain the grace of the Holy Spirit; for those who honor him, we have every reason to conclude, independently of his own repeated declarations, that he will delight to honor. To reading, hearing, and meditating, however, must be added *prayer*; fervent and importunate prayer. To this there is the highest encouragement that a mortal can require; the sure promise of his God. “Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him; and he from within shall answer, and say, trouble me not; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet, because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, *how much more* shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”† This is reasoning that none shall refute. It is reasoning brought from the bosom of the Father; and delivered to men by him

\* 2 Cor. lii. 8.

† Luke, xi. 5.—13.

who is as far from deceiving them, as he is from being deceived himself.

SECOND.—It is obvious that the Holy Spirit of Truth, the Comforter, with his grace and his benefits, is to be preserved to us, in part, by the very same means in the use of which we at first obtained him; by reading and hearing; meditation and prayer. We say *in part*; for something farther is necessary for this purpose. It is necessary that we cultivate familiar intercourse with religious and pious people, and be diligent in the practice of good works. Concerning the Holy Ghost it is eminently true, that where two or three are met together in his name, or with a view to spiritual establishment and improvement, there he is in the midst of them. And certain it is, that in the ordinary course of events, none are so frequently or so uninterruptedly favored with the visits of this celestial guest, as those who habitually order their conversation aright, and perseveringly follow after godliness.

THIRD.—As the Holy Spirit is near to every one of us; as he is ever ready and willing to guide, instruct, comfort, and fortify us; ever active to supply our spiritual need; it follows, that to oppose the free course of his operations, or, speaking after the manner of men, to throw obstructions or impediments in his way, whether in deed, in word, or in thought, must be a most inexcusable and presumptuous crime. This is what the scriptures denominate “resisting the spirit,” and “grieving the spirit.” It is a crime of which all are guilty who are remiss in reading, and hearing, and meditating on the divine word; who restrain prayer before God; who watch not against temptation; who prefer evil or light communications to religious intercourse; who are negligent of good works; and who love pleasure more than God. O! that men would suffer this consideration to make an impression on their hearts, before the days come when God shall be wearied with their iniquities; and his spirit shall no longer strive with them.



FOURTH.—It is a fact, how unwelcome soever to the pride of infidelity, that unless the Holy Spirit prosecute a work of grace in the heart of man in this life, his expectation of Heaven in the next is the vainest of all vain expectations. And since, independently of this encouraging and exalting prospect, no progress can be made in moral goodness, in true Christian virtue; much does it concern us to ascertain to our own satisfaction, and on scriptural grounds, whether or not this divine and ever blessed agent has wrought savingly upon our hearts and minds, giving us the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ; renewing us in our spirit and temper; and transforming us into the divine image from one degree of glorious similitude to another. No where are the rules of sound philosophy more applicable than here. Reason from the effect to the cause, and you cannot go astray. If, like the divine Being, you cannot look upon moral evil but with disgust; if, like him, your supreme affection is fixed on moral goodness; if you hate every false way, and love his law; if you delight in his service more than in the riches, the honours, and the pleasures of this world; if you stay yourselves upon his arm, resigned and peaceful amidst the most gloomy and adverse dispensations of his providence; if you are proof against the allurements of prosperity, more to be deprecated than sorrow's deepest and sorest wounds; if your conversation be habitually in Heaven, where you look for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, even Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto himself, and make us zealous of good works; if faith, hope, and charity animate your bosoms, form your manners, breathe in your actions, and consecrate your lives; then are you born of the spirit; then do you live in the spirit; then do you walk in the spirit; then is your Heaven begun upon earth; and grace is conducting you to glory. It only remains for you humbly to acknowledge, and thankfully to adore the



Comforter—the Spirit of truth—as the source of virtue—the author and principle of every thing morally good and excellent—the light of the spiritual life—and to implore his continual grace and aid to further and assist you in your progress to perfection.

O! that there were this mind and this heart in all of you! O! that I could hope these things of you all; these things which accompany salvation! But, forgive me, you who cannot but be conscious that the remark, how seemingly harsh soever, is applicable to yourselves; forgive me if I say that, at present, this hope would be absurd. Let your own candid judgments, if candour can be looked for in such a case, answer this simple inquiry: How dwelleth the Holy Ghost in the man who seldom, if ever, reads; who rarely and irregularly hears; and who never meditates on the word of God; who bows not his knees before the throne of the heavenly grace; who sets no guard upon his affections, his appetites, his passions; who, careless and disobedient, instead of doing the acknowledged will of God, habitually devotes himself to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, making fame, wealth, concupiscence, his gods; *how dwelleth the Holy Ghost in such a man?* Few questions are of more awful importance than this; for, be assured, if the divinity dwells not in you; if the Comforter—the Spirit of truth, of glory, and of God, is banished from your hearts; if you have no fellowship with the Holy Ghost; your fairest prospects terminate in this world, and all beyond is darkness impenetrable, clouds which no morning's dawn shall ever be commissioned to dispel.

“Come, then, O Holy Ghost! Creator Spirit, descend from the highest Heavens, and comfort those who piously await thy consolations! Sanctify our bodies to be thy temples, and vouchsafe to dwell in them! Cause those who aspire to fellowship with thee, to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; and awaken the secure and the impenitent from their soul-chilling sleep, that, convinced of their need

of thee, they may earnestly seek thy grace, and thankfully improve it!

“Come, then, O Holy Ghost! descend, Creator spirit!”  
and we will praise, and bless, and adore thee in union with  
the Father and the Son forever—world without end—AMEN.

## SERMON XXXIII.

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### DEVOTION.

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JAMES, iv. 8.

*“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.”*

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**T**O “draw nigh to God” is a phrase, eminently descriptive of that most exalted of all moral excellencies, devotion.

Devotion is, at once, the chief duty, and highest honour of man.

Various particulars are included under the general term “devotion.”

The most important of these, because that which is the basis of all others, is knowledge—the knowledge of the true God.

Defective and unworthy conceptions of this greatest and best of Beings, are necessarily opposed to all rational intercourse with him, and all acceptable and profitable obedience to him. To yield this obedience, and to hold that intercourse, it is indispensable that we receive and meditate upon that assemblage of perfections with which the holy scriptures have surrounded the Divinity; that record which God hath given of himself. We must learn and believe that “the Lord, the Lord God, is merciful and gracious, long suffering, slow to anger, abundant in goodness and in truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; and that he will by no means clear the guilty.” We must learn and believe that this great and ever-blessed God, to testify that, while he is infinitely just,

he can be the justifier of the ungodly, and that his delights are with the sons of men notwithstanding their rebellion, hath sent his only begotten Son into the world, that the world through him might have life. We must learn and believe that, if there is but one God, in like manner, there is but one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus; that his is, in very deed, the only name given among men whereby they can in any sense of the word, *be saved*. Such is the knowledge of God, and of the relations between him and us, which is indispensable to the devotion he requires, and alone will accept.

The affection of love is equally indispensable to devotion. In proportion as we become acquainted with the character and attributes of the great Being who made us and all things, and who redeemed a world of helpless sinners which numbers ourselves amongst its wretched inhabitants, in that proportion we cannot fail to love him. Indeed, devotion without love, is an absurdity in terms. For what is love, but such an affection of the soul towards a particular object as excites a desire to possess that object? And how can we possess that from which we remain separated by distance? And how is devotion, or, in other words, the disposition to "draw nigh unto God," reconcilable, I will not say with enmity, but even with *indifference* towards him?

A consciousness of the presence and inspection of the Divine Being, is, farther, and eminently, characteristic of true devotion. It is true that God is every where present with his creatures, whether they are conscious of it, or not. But it is only the impression of his presence upon their minds, that can produce any moral influence upon them; the impression that he pervades every portion of their frame; every department, faculty, and attribute of their existence; that he is intimately acquainted with the operations of their souls; observes them in all their ways; walks with them in all their paths; and reads their inmost thoughts, devices, and resolutions. For in the Deity, the perfection of

Ubiquity, or universal presence, can never be divorced from that of Omniscience, or universal knowledge. Aware of this, and sensible that the eye of him, who is thus every where present and thus informed of all things, is especially fixed upon those who profess to worship him, the man really devout, in his approaches to the throne of grace, will endeavour to banish from his mind all earthly thoughts, and from his heart all carnal desires; to exclude the world, and still more deeply to imprint upon his soul the conviction that God is with him.

Men, governed by the genuine spirit of devotion, will make the Divine Glory their aim in the performance of every duty. "This is it that the Lord spake," on a certain memorable occasion, "saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified."\* And certainly, if, "whether we eat, or drink, or whatsoever we do,"† in our temporal and civil concerns, we are instructed by the great apostle to "do all to the glory of God;" much more is it incumbent on us to consecrate our spiritual acts and exercises by the same exalted ends, the same ennobling motives.

The predominating desire of the man of devotion, as it respects himself, is to obtain "the favour of God, which is life, and the loving kindness of God, which is better than life."‡ His resolution is, "this one thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after;"§ And his perpetual prayer, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me!"||

A fixed determination that our general conduct shall comport with our views, sentiments, experience, and exercises, during the happy hours of divine communion, is not the least important feature of true devotion. The condescension of God in permitting us to draw nigh unto him and hold intercourse with him, confers such a distinguished honour upon us, as binds us with the utmost diligence to pursue

\* Levit. x. 3. † 1 Cor. x. 31. ‡ Psalm, xxx. 5. § Psalm, xxvii. 4.

|| Psalm, iv. 6.



and practise whatever is praiseworthy in life and conversation. And it is perfectly incompatible with the spirit and temper in which all religious services should be rendered, to harbour hesitation or irresolution on this subject. In fact, the very reason why we are invited into God's presence, and exhorted to draw nigh unto him in devotion, is, that we may be prepared and enabled to keep close to him in the commerce of ordinary life; in our subsequent deportment to walk worthy of him; to think—to speak—to act—with such consistency and uniformity of character as shall be evidential that "our fellowship has been with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."\* With hearts thus honourably and graciously predisposed, the men of real devotion will draw nigh to God in the customary exercises of the sanctuary. With hearts thus honourably and graciously predisposed, many of you, I trust, brethren, lately encompassed the altar. An indevout communicant! there is an impious incongruity in the character. But indevout—awfully indevout—is every communicant, who, when he takes in his hands, and presses to his lips, the holy emblems of the sacrifice, does not resolve that, by God's help, he will renounce those sins for which the sacrifice was offered—for which the victim bled; that not at the table only, loaded with the memorials of the bread of life, but also, and principally, by the faith and patience, the piety and obedience, the uprightness and usefulness of a following walk and conversation, he will shew forth the death of that great Redeemer, "through whom alone we all have access by one spirit unto the Father."†

This Devotion—this approximation of the spirit of man to the Almighty Father of Spirits—commends itself to your diligent pursuit by the qualities that accompany it, and the happy consequences that result from it. It is the oil of gladness that heals the wounded heart. It is the wisdom

\* 1 John, i. 3.

† Eph. ii. 18.



of the just that ennobles the name of man. It is the true philosophy that schools the soul for Heaven.

“How charming” this “divine philosophy!  
Not harsh, and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,  
But musical as is an Angel’s harp,  
And a perpetual feast of nectar’d sweets,  
Where no crude surfeit reigns.”—MILTON.

Let me call your attention to a few of the principal advantages of devotion.

*In the first place.*—It gives a dignifying employment to the most elevated faculties of man; the mind and the heart. The mind occupies the first and highest place in the human economy. All the other faculties are subjected to its control, receive its laws, and execute its behests. Various are its operations, and the points in which they terminate are equally diversified. It is its distinguishing and most illustrious honour that in its contemplations overleaping the boundaries of created things, it can ascend to the Mighty Maker—the Father of Lights—the Infinite Mind. What object of the workings of the thinking power can vie in magnitude with this? What pursuit of the understanding so splendid—so great—so exalted, and at the same time, so exalting—as this? What man is there, in whose eyes the world does not become little even unto contempt, and its most dazzling glories fading even unto extinction; who does not, in the midst of his self-abasement, feel a degree of self-reverence; when he, as it were, sees himself placed at the foot of the Majesty of Heaven—and hears himself converse with the Most High? The serious believer will more easily apprehend than I can express, how elevated the pleasure derived from a consciousness that the soul is employed in contemplations so worthy of her—so worthy the most refined intelligences that minister before the everlasting throne.

Devotion, again, gives an employment equally dignifying to the heart, the source of activity; the seat of moral vital-

ity. With the eye of the sanctified mind we see God, but it is only with the heart's embrace that we can possess him. The heart of him who "draws nigh to God," surrenders to God its best affections, and would willingly have all its inclinations and propensities swallowed up in this ocean of unalloyed felicity. Exertion—exercise—activity—engagedness of heart—zealous affection—are essential to any high degree of happiness. This is the nature of man; he, therefore, who made man, and knows what is in him, encourages the expectation that he will be found of those who "seek him with the whole heart;" and they, and no others, need hope to find him. And where, I pray you, shall *they* find happiness who find not God?

*In the second place.*—Habits of true devotion are perfective of the soul that maintains them. It is too evident to require demonstration, that use and exercise contribute effectively to the improvement of all the powers and propertier of our nature, whether corporeal, intellectual, or moral. Indolence, idleness, or frequently interrupted exertion, weakens the bodily frame, unnerves the mind, relaxes what little virtue we may have, and introduces much disorder into the heart and dispositions. The untutored Indian may be endued with the same capacities as the polished man of science, while, from the defect of that discipline which alone can unfold and cultivate those capacities, he seems lifted scarce a degree above the wild beasts of his native forests. But even the polished man of science, however exalted by intellectual discipline above the untutored Indian, is far inferiour to the man of devotion; inasmuch as moral habits are incalculably more needful to the perfection of the human character than habits merely intellectual. There can be no such thing as pleasure independently of taste or relish; nor can he "rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of his salvation," who has not acquired a taste or relish for divine things. But this taste or relish for divine things, so desirable, so indispensable, can, ordinarily, be formed and maintained only

by habitual devotion—by perseveringly drawing nigh to God. This it is, and this alone, which enlarges the mind—invigorates the heart—quickens the affections—advances the divine life in the soul—renders the ways of wisdom pleasant ways; and all her paths peace—enables us to surmount obstacles, to endure hardness, to conquer temptations, to “run in the way of God’s commandments, to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint.” This is it, and this alone, that “makes us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light;” that qualifies us to be the recipients of that crown of glory which fadeth not away, and which God, the righteous judge, shall bestow on all those who love his appearing. Think you that Heaven can have delights for the indevout? For those to whom God’s sabbaths are a weariness—his service a disgust—his sacraments, ceremonies to be gazed on at a distance, and neglected with impunity? No—it cannot be. They who acquire not in the present life a disposition to take delight in God, in his service, and in all his ways and institutions, and yet hope to live and rejoice before him in the kingdom of Heaven, indulge a vain hope—a hope that shall cover them with shame—a hope that shall perish, and lead them to perdition along with it.

*In the third place.*—“Draw nigh to God, and *he will draw nigh to you.*” Verily this is “an exceeding great and precious promise.” Spirit of our God—assist us to bind it to our hearts! “Draw nigh to God, and *he will draw nigh to you.*”

He will pour the light of truth and wisdom into your understandings.

“He will “strengthen you with all might by his spirit in the inner man.”

He will extend over you the protecting “shadow of his wings.”

He will cause you to abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost, and fill you with joy and peace in believing.”

FIRST.—“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you,” to pour the light of truth and wisdom into your understandings. “The wisdom that is profitable to direct”—the prudence that is necessary to conduct us through the perplexities of this temporal life—to screen us from the malice of enmity—to defend us against the wiles of the deceiver—these invaluable qualities are wrought in us by the power of God. They are among those “good and perfect gifts which come down from the Father of lights.” “If any of you lack wisdom,” writes our apostle, “let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”\* Inestimable recompense of devotion! Amidst the conflicts of human interests and human passions—amidst the gloomy and involved mazes, to extricate them from which the children of this generation frequently find all their craft and all their policy but ineffectual helps—to the upright a light ariseth to make plain their way before them—and the most high God is condescendingly near to guide them in every doubtful case by his unerring counsel.

But if this light, communicated for our safe conduct through temporal perplexities and embarrassments, be an inestimable recompense of devotion, what shall we say of that superiour light which scatters the shades of spiritual ignorance and doubt, and gilds with its radiance the path that leads to Heaven? which, (while we “search the scriptures with all diligence) opens our eyes to behold wondrous things out of the divine law?” What shall we say of this? Shall we not say that devotion, thus blessed in its recompense, is more precious than rubies, and more to be desired than fine gold? But,

SECONDLY.—“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you,” to “strengthen you with all might by his spirit in the inner man.” He renews—refreshes—fortifies—invigorates—sustains the decaying, trembling, retreating spirits

\* James, i. 5.

of good men, ready to sink under their severe and long-protracted trials. He "giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength." "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord renew their strength."\* They "can do all things—they can bear all things—they can endure all things—through Christ strengthening them."†

**THIRDLY.**—"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you," to extend over you the protecting "shadow of his wings." No buckler of defence so sure as that of the God of Heaven. He is the perpetual "shield" of the devout and pious—their "rock"—their "tower"—their "bulwark"—their "very present help in all time of trouble." His "eyes are ever open upon the righteous"—he "preserves their going out and coming in, and gives his angels charge over them, to keep them in all their ways." "Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper; the Lord is thy shade on thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil; he shall preserve thy soul."‡ No arm so strong as to resist omnipotence. No wisdom so crafty as to baffle the infinite understanding.

**FINALLY.**—"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you," to cause you to abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost, and to fill you with all joy and peace in believing." There is a "hope that maketh not ashamed;" there is a "faith which is the victory that overcometh the world;" there are "consolations of the Holy Ghost, which are neither few nor small;" there is "a peace which passeth understanding;" there is "a joy which is unspeakable and full of glory." Whither will you go to seek these lovely plants of Paradise? Allow me to direct your search. Go not to the courts of despots; go not to the schools of unbelieving science; go not to the houses of prosperous worldlings, where fastidi-

\* Isaiah, xl. 30. 31. † Phil. iv. 13. ‡ Psalm, cxxi. 4.—7.



ous luxury invents unreal wants; go not to the counting rooms of avarice, where the indevout calculator erects an altar to his god Mammon during the very hours consecrated to the true God; go not to the worshippers of pleasure at the gaming table, the theatre, the revel, or the horse race; neither go to the crowd of half-way professors who make God's sabbath a convenience, affecting to sanctify its morning hours, while they devote its subsequent periods to their own ease and gratification, or who pour contempt upon God's sacramental institutions. These are not they to whom you must go; if you seek among them for faith, or hope, or the consolations of the spirit, or peace, or joy, you seek in vain. But go to the retreats of pious indigence; go to the prisons from which not even godliness can redeem its votary; go to the hospitals where the righteous suffer; to the scaffold where the saint is murderously executed; to the bed where the good man sickens unto death; where the husband beholds the light of his eyes deserting him; where the weeping children demand to hear that dear voice whose soft accents shall never more be heard. Here stop. Your search is successful. Here is faith; here hope; here consolation; here peace; here joy. They had drawn nigh to God; now, in the black hour of dismay, behold God drawing nigh unto them; their Saviour God; their life; and the lifter up of their head; the strength of their fainting heart; and their portion forever.

Ministers of the Cross—Servants of the Living God—commissioned to carry to the expiring saint the annunciation of a glory that shall shortly be his—you come to teach him—how often do you learn of him—to *die*. From his weakness, you derive strength—from his mortality, life. You instruct—you exhort—you pray for him—you endeavour to guide his devotions—but ere long you confess yourselves his pupils. In his soul, is the earnest of immortality; the radiance of salvation beams from his eye; and his tongue, eloquent in the agonies of nature, and touched by the fire



that blazes on the altars of Heaven, proclaims; live the life of the righteous—and your death shall be like his! Be my soul with thine, expiring believer! I had rather be that dying saint than any living sinner on the throne of empire! Be mine that requiem with which they chaunt their own blessed spirits into eternity; “Jehovah is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” “I know that my Redeemer liveth—and that he shall stand at the latter day upon this earth—and, though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God—whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold—therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoiceth; for thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer me to perish in corruption—thou wilt shew me the path of life—in thy presence is fulness of joy—at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore.”

Hallelujah—blessing and honour and glory and power to HIM that sitteth on the throne—and to the Lamb forever and ever.—AMEN.



## SERMON XXXIV.

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### UNIVERSAL PRAISE.

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PSALM, cl.

*“Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in the firmament of his power; praise him for his mighty acts; praise him according to his excellent greatness; praise him with the sound of the trumpet; praise him with the psaltery and harp; praise him with the timbrel and dance; praise him with stringed instruments and organs; praise him upon the loud cymbals; praise him upon the high-sounding cymbals. Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord.”*

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**I**F there be any such things as self evident principles in theology, *this* undoubtedly is one; that praise is a tribute due from the whole creation to Almighty God, its maker and upholder; and *this* as obviously is another; that no good and upright being can exist in a protracted state of indisposition towards so holy, and reasonable, and delightful a duty. Very appropriately do these reiterated and importunate exhortations to the performance of it present themselves at the close of the book of Psalms, as if to epitomize the mass of its sacred contents.

It has been thought that this little effusion of animated piety was intended to produce an excitement of zeal and fervour in the ministers of the temple when engaged in their holy employments. At present, it undeniably concerns all Christians; because Christ has made all his people “priests

unto God, even his Father;" because he requires a temple in every family; an altar in every bosom; a sacrifice from every believer.

Let us follow the Psalmist, then, in the steps of his devout and glowing appeal.

"Praise ye Jehovah." But where? Where is the anthem to begin? From what chosen spot are the choral symphonies to extend themselves around? "Praise God in his sanctuary;" his own peculiar residence on earth; the hallowed receptacle of the regalia of the Divine Majesty; the chamber of audience where the suppliant makes known his wants and gains a prompt relief; the theatre where the acts of infinite perfection are displayed; the place where "every one speaketh of the glory" of the Eternal, and every one is made a partaker "of the riches of his forbearance and long suffering" benevolence. What place, indeed, can be more proper for the commencement of the general work of praise than the sanctuary, the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth, where the oracles of peace and salvation are announced; where creature minds are impressed with their Creator's likeness; where intelligent natures debased by sin, are renewed in spirit, trained to virtue, and prepared for immortal bliss? These very blessings, these very advantages, there, in a peculiar manner experienced, string to rapture the lyre of praise, and elevate the tones of adoring gratitude. It can scarcely be necessary to inform you that in these observations we would be understood to refer not to your buildings consecrated to publick religion, but to the social body of believers, the whole company of faithful persons throughout the world, the flock of disciples constituting that mystical house inhabited by the Holy Spirit of God. At the same time it is acknowledged that the Psalmist's exhortation may with propriety be employed as an incentive to engagedness and ardour in celebrating the offices of social devotion in an ecclesiastical assembly. Nor do we avoid the confession that the term *sanctuary*, as

here used, is often interpreted to mean the Heaven of Heavens; which, no man doubts, is emphatically God's holy place, where cherubim and seraphim adore him, although in strains infinitely beneath the altitude of his essential glories.

It is a question, however, whether this interpretation may not create an unnecessary interference with the words immediately following; "praise him in the firmament of his power." Understand this of the natural expanse. Recognize the greatness of HIM who spread that expanse abroad. Admire the evidences with which it abounds of his omnipotence; its majesty; its variety; the brilliancy of its decorations; and its intimate, though inexorable, connections with the physical circumstances of the globe which we inhabit. Understand, recognize, admire all this, and glorify God accordingly; but especially, let the inhabitants of the superior regions—the celestial expanse—those angels that excel in strength; that obey his word, hearkening unto the voice of his commandment; those ministers of his that do his pleasure—let these celebrate the honours of the Eternal Name. "Praise ye Jehovah. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in the firmament of his power. Praise him for his mighty acts; praise him according to his excellent greatness."

Can any created mind, but, more particularly, can man, so far forget the relations of things, as to permit himself to ask, why praise him? Wherefore celebrate the honours of the Eternal Name? The answer to such an inquiry, could we suppose any rational being inclined to propose such an inquiry, would be found embosomed in this very exhortation; "praise him for his mighty acts;" acts not to be counted; acts transcending in goodness and in glory all the ability of an angel's tongue to utter; all the capacities of an angel's mind to conceive. The stars that strew with light the milky way; the suns that mingle their golden radiance to adorn the Heavens; may be numbered with far greater ease than you can number their Creator's deeds. Take



them, then, as a mass of wonders, and praise him for them all. See him calling existence out of nothing. See him forming order and beauty out of chaos. Hear him command the light to shine; the gentle dews to fall; the grass to grow; the mellow fruit to drop; for the sustenance and comfort of animated nature. Hear the decree, as it goes forth, that gives birth to angels and archangels; thrones and dominions; principalities and powers; and descending in its operations to this fair earth and its sweet fields of living verdure, bids Adam and his children exult in conscious being. Contemplate the divine procedures in the government of the world; the reduction of the proud and persecuting; the elevation of the depressed; the emancipation of the enslaved offspring of Israel; their safe conduct, through opposing and suspicious kingdoms, to the land of promise; their conquests, and their consequent establishment; other, and similar manifestations of Almighty justice, in the downfall of iniquity, and the triumph of virtue; the defeat of the strong, and the success of the weak; the discomfiture and dismay of the presumptuous, and the aggrandizement and confirmed superiority of the humble and lowly-minded. But, above all, look up to this Almighty, all-holy, and all-just Being, as the fountain of redemption. Consider him as too pure to behold unrighteousness, and yet loving the unrighteous. This is a point, however, on which language and conception *alike* fail. Suffice it to remind you, that "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him may not perish, but have everlasting life."\* Suffice it to remind you that the author of this Psalm foreknew the gospel state, and triumphed in the prospect of its great salvation.

The standard by which we are to regulate the degree of our gratitude, the expression of our homage, is nothing lower than the infinite excellence of HIM whom we adore. "Praise him according to his excellent greatness." But is

\* John, iii. 16.



it possible, then, that our thanksgivings and our benedictions should run parallel with his bounties, or keep in near pursuit of his perfections? Can any offering of praise be a meet return for the mercies of his throne, or a commensurate acknowledgment of his illimitable glories? There is absurdity in the supposition; there would be impiety in the affirmation. This standard, however, is fixed; and fixed, alike, by revelation and by reason; that its immeasurable elevation may remind us of the duty of devoting our whole being to the work of praise; of collecting and consecrating all the diversified powers of our compound nature in the adoration of the infinite Jehovah, who made and who upholds them all. Here, there is, there can be, no exaggeration of panegyrick; there may be; there uniformly is; deep deficiency. Conscious of this deficiency, therefore, implore the assistance of the heavenly grace that your adoring homage may ascend nearer and yet nearer to the sublimity of its object. In Heaven, the distance will be diminished. In Heaven, your praises will be more correspondent to the "excellent greatness" of Almighty God; although they can never hope to climb to the height above all heights on which he sits enthroned.

Having informed us why God should be praised, the Psalmist directs our attention to the mode in which this important service should be rendered. "Praise him with the sound of the trumpet; praise him with the psaltery and harp. Praise him with the timbrel and dance; praise him with stringed instruments and organs. Praise him upon the loud cymbals; praise him upon the high sounding cymbals." Every one knows that instrumental musick entered largely into the religious rites of the Hebrews, and that by divine appointment. The New Testament contains no injunction on the subject. But neither does it contain a prohibition. If the use of it be abrogated in Christian societies, it is by the circumstances of the church, not by the express authority of its head. The true difference on this article between

the ancient dispensation and that which superseded it and now exists, appears to be simply this; in the former, instrumental musick was an affair of positive institution, and consequently, necessary; in the present, it is a matter of option. No reasonable advocate for the introduction of instruments into the church pretends to consider them as essential to the due celebration of publick worship, although they assert the lawfulness, expediency, and advantage of the chaste and sober use of them. And to this doctrine, he who, under favour of divine providence, sustains the pastoral charge of this congregation, unequivocally assents.

Indulge me, brethren, with this opportunity of expressing my astonishment at the influence which a certain objection urged against the usage under consideration has maintained over sensible and well disposed minds. The objection is, that the employment of this species of musick is at war with that worshipping of God in spirit and in truth which the genius of the gospel requires. Now to this there is an answer immediately at hand, which, to me, seems conclusive. Whatever militates against the spirituality of worship at present, must of necessity do so under every dispensation of religion. There must be in it something radically destructive of the principle of pure devotion. But is any man prepared to say that the pious Israelites of old could not adore Jehovah in spirit and in truth amidst the pomp and magnificence of their temple service—the noble varieties of their temple musick? Is any man prepared to say that the Almighty would have enacted institutions by which his worshippers were to approach him, and which, notwithstanding, would make it impossible, or extremely difficult for them to approach him with the heart, and in acceptable faith?

But the fact is, the objection, if it prove any thing, proves more than some who urge it would wish. It silences the vocal choir whose musick is in any degree select, or too artificial for general and promiscuous use. And if even this be

thought no disparagement to the objection, I must observe that it ranges far more extensively; that it strikes far more deeply and fatally at the root of all vocal expression of public religious praise. Virtually, at least, it confines all exertion of the voice in adoring the living God, I do not say to the truly regenerate, but still more narrowly, to those who are conscious of being truly regenerate. For it is obvious that in accuracy of language, none but the truly regenerate, none but the inwardly pure and sincere, none but the habitually devout in temper and conduct, can be said to worship God in spirit and in truth, in whatever outward expressions their worship may be embodied. And it is an undoubted fact, on the contrary, that they whose hearts are right with God, will worship him in spirit and in truth, whether they employ vocal musick, or instrumental, or both, or none at all. The truth is, these modes of lauding the Eternal God do not appertain to the essence of devotion; but many a pious and candid believer has acknowledged that he has found them to be devotion's very powerful and enlivening auxiliaries.

But, waving any farther remarks on a point concerning which, after all, good and sensible men will probably continue to differ in opinion, as they do on more important affairs; let us apply the Psalmist's words, allusively, and figuratively, and, in a sense which all such men will concur in esteeming to be "profitable for instruction, for reproof, for correction in righteousness." "Praise God with trumpet, psaltery, and harp; with timbrel and dance; with stringed instruments, with organ, and with loud and high sounding cymbal." Call up all the dormant energies of your nature. Summon to their aid all the graces of the Holy Ghost. Enlist all the powers of body, soul, and spirit. Consecrate unsparingly the goods of this life. Loud let the swelling anthem ascend to HIM who liveth forever and ever. Say, worthy is the Lamb who hath saved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to receive honour and glory and

power. Adore understandingly. Adore cordially. Adore believingly. Adore continually. Worship on bended knee. Worship with elevated sensibilities. Bless with flaming gratitude, with exulting voice; with aspiring hope; with all the melodies of peace, piety, and virtue; with the harmonious attuning of a renewed soul to a life of growing and brightening sanctity. "With one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."\*

Now from this may I not infer a severe reproof to that apathy, that torpid inertion, that criminal indifference, with which the many can allow themselves to abandon to the few every thing like an audible celebration of their Creator's praises?

From this may I not also infer instruction to those who abound in temporal possessions? Children of prosperity! deeds of charity, deeds of mercy, deeds of humanity and sympathy, these, I acknowledge, claim the first rank among the duties peculiarly incumbent on you; these are required by Heaven as the most precious sacrifice you can deposite on its altars. But, mark me, next in dignity to these is the deed of piety by which you facilitate the worship of the Most High; by which you furnish his house with appropriate accommodations; beautify it with the decent, but graceful ornament of grave import and solemn memorial; and provide for the celebration of God's high praises in the way best calculated to impress, affect, improve, and elevate; in the extended and united employment of tones and numbers which might awake the harp of Israel, and to which the choirs of seraphim might rapturously respond. Children of prosperity! be ever ready to acknowledge your obligations to him who made you to be what you are. Let such deeds of piety receive their full portion of that abundance which you are too prone to lavish on less worthy ends; of those riches that might otherwise make to themselves wings and fly away.

\* Romans, xv. 6.

Observe, next, the extent of the Psalmist's appeal. "Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord." An appeal this that might well be affixed to the gates of every house of worship, and glitter in golden capitals on every altar. An appeal that goes forth through universal nature, and addresses itself most eloquently and irresistibly to every animated being "from the wrapt seraph that adores and burns," down to the "warbling tenant of the leafy grove." An appeal that says, inhabitants of ocean, earth, and skies, mingle your exulting numbers in one full harmony of song; and let this be its burden, "glory to God in the highest." "Let every creature which is in Heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea,"\* be heard in loud and united acclaim saying, "blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever."

It may be, however, that this appeal should be considered as operating in no wider sphere than the population of this globe; the universal race of Adam; "formed of the dust of the ground" by Jehovah God; who "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, so that man became a living soul."†

Assuming this to be the intention of the appellant, behold him stretching his holy and benevolent zeal far beyond the limits of his own nation. Hear him crying aloud to the general ear and general heart of man. It is not now to the sanctuary; it is not now to the consecrated mount; it is not now to the city of David; it is not now to the priests, the ministers of the Lord; the Levites, assisting at the solemnities of the temple; the Nethinim attending at its gates; the prophets anointed to reveal the divine purposes; the prince and the people of God's special election; it is not, in a word, to the circumscribed peculiarity of Israel; that the Psalmist limits his exhor-

\* Rev. v. 13.

† Gen. ii. 7.



tation. He extends it all around him; to Egypt, to Ethiopia, and the Isles; to Arabia, to Persia, to Greece, and to Rome. Its sound travels through all the earth, and its words even unto the ends of the world. It looks into future time. It sees the worshipper in every place where a son or a daughter of Adam dwells. "From the rising of the sun to where he hath his going down," it sees "incense offered to" the Eternal Name, "and a pure offering."\* It carries its purport forward to the periods in succession when the glad tidings of Messiah's salvation shall be proclaimed to every creature, to every human being; and anticipates a claim of grateful adoration and exulting praise on all, which none ought to resist. "Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord."

The closing words of this Psalm, and of the entire collection of these sacred odes, are worthy of their place, and form a noble termination to the series.

"Praise ye the Lord." "Praise ye Jehovah." The original word is of too sweet and too lofty an emphasis, however, to be relinquished. Let us substitute it for its translation, and say, "*Hallelujah*," and let Heaven and earth exchange the shout, "*Hallelujah!*" Thou church, bought with the blood of the Lamb, and journeying upwards to his seat, be this thy song upon the road. Thou church triumphant, catch the sound and send it from vault to vault of the empyreal temple. Ye radiant orbs that roll near your Maker's throne, carry it through all your revolutions. Ye angels and archangels that excel in strength, through all your glorious ranks pass the rapturous acclaim, *Hallelujah!* Raise it every voice—sound it every harp—*Hallelujah!* From the last bounds of being—*Hallelujah!* From world to world—from Heaven to Heaven—re-echo—*Hallelujah!* Souls slain for the testimony of Jesus—Spirits of the mighty—Spirits of the just—wherever be your dwelling-place—all beings—all na-

\* Malachi, i. xi.

tures—lift—lift the bold strain loud as the sound of many waters and of mighty thunders; till it fill the innumerable systems of existence, and shake the columns that support creation!—*Hallelujah!*--*Hallelujah!*--*AMEN.*

# FORMS OF PRAYER.

AT THE OPENING OF DIVINE SERVICE.

## PRAYER 1.

ALMIGHTY God! vouchsafe, we beseech thee, deeply to convince us of thine infinite excellence and our own unworthiness, that we may appear in thy presence with lowly, contrite, and devout hearts. Grant us the assistance of the Holy Spirit in offering up our united worship before the throne of the heavenly grace; mercifully hear us in every part of our accustomed services, for Jesus Christ's sake; and let the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord! our strength and our Redeemer.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven; give us day by day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever.—AMEN.

2.

Almighty and most gracious God! who dwellest in light inaccessible and full of glory; regard not, we beseech thee, the multitude of our sins, nor let our unworthiness separate between thee and us. Deal mercifully with us, and bless us, and lift upon us the light of thy countenance. Enable us to come into thy courts with thanksgiving, and in fear to worship before thee. Enlighten our minds with the know-

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ledge of thy truth. Inspire our hearts with thy love. Open thou our lips and our mouths shall shew forth thy praise; and vouchsafe to accept every part of our holy services, through the merits and intercession of thy well-beloved Son our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.—*Our Father, &c.*

## 3.

Almighty and most merciful Father, who hast commanded us to offer unto thee thanksgivings, and to pay our vows unto thee; and who hast never said to thy children, seek ye my face in vain: give ear this day, we beseech thee, to the confessions, the supplications, the adorations and thanksgivings, which shall ascend to thy throne from all parts of thy universal church, and more especially from this place, where we are assembled to speak of thy glory. Assist us to pray. Enable us to praise thee with understanding. Let thy grace accompany the reading and preaching of thy word. And cause that every part of the sacred services may be performed to our edification, and to the glory of thy great name in Jesus Christ.—*Our Father, &c.*

## 4.

Praise waiteth for thee, O God! in Zion, and unto thee shall the vow be performed. O thou that hearest prayer! unto thee shall all flesh come. Our waiting eyes are to thee, God of our salvation, from whom cometh our help. Bow the Heavens, and come down, and fill this temple with thy glory, and our hearts with thy grace. Give ear to the confession of our sins, the cry of our necessities, and the voice of our thanksgivings. Dispose us to receive with meekness and teachableness the grafted word. And vouchsafe both now and evermore to regard us in mercy through

the intercession of our only mediator and advocate, Jesus Christ thy Son.—*Our Father, &c.*



Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel! thou that ledest Joseph like a flock, thou who of old didst dwell between the Cherubim, shine forth. Shine into the souls of all here assembled, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we may shew forth thy praises. Pour down upon us the auspicious influences of thy Holy Spirit, that we may be enabled to lift up to thy throne pure hearts and holy hands; and to hear thy word with pious, faithful, and charitable dispositions. Open thou our hearts that we may receive the truth in the love of it. Sanctify our affections, and assist us to devote all our faculties of soul and body to thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord.—*Our Father, &c.*



Almighty and everlasting God; who by thy holy apostle hath commanded us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, and by thy Son Jesus Christ hath promised that where two or three are met together in thy name there thou wilt be in the midst of them; meet with us, we beseech thee, and let thy heavenly benediction rest upon us, that our prayer may be set forth before thee as incense, and the lifting up of our hands, as the morning or the evening sacrifice. Send down thy Holy Spirit to banish all wandering thoughts and carnal desires, and to inspire us with faith, repentance, and all Christian graces. Enlighten our minds, that we may know the truth. Persuade our wills, that we may obey it. The Lord bless us, and keep us. The Lord make his face to shine upon us, and be gracious unto us. The Lord lift up his countenance upon us, and give us peace.—*Our Father, &c.*



# GENERAL PRAYERS.

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## PRAYER 1.

ALMIGHTY GOD! and most merciful Father! Holy, blessed, and glorious majesty! who alone art worthy to be feared and to be had in reverence; we adore thy perfections as they are made known to us by thy works of creation, by thine all-governing providence, and by the clear and full revelation which thou hast given of thyself in thy written word. We render thee unfeigned thanks for all thy mercies of every kind; general and particular; spiritual and temporal; common and special; and above all, for Jesus Christ, thine unspeakable gift, and the hope of eternal life through him. We make humble and penitent confession of our sins, lamenting that deep corruption and perverse disposition of heart from which proceed sins against God, our neighbour, and ourselves—sins in thought, word, and deed; sins secret and presumptuous; sins accidental and habitual; and we acknowledge the aggravation of our manifold offences, in that they have been committed against better knowledge, in the face of thy most merciful condescension and forbearance, and in despite of the holy vows by which we are devoted to thee. But thou, O Lord! have mercy upon us miserable offenders. Spare thou those, O God! who confess their faults; restore thou those who are penitent, according to thy promises declared unto mankind, in Christ Jesus our Lord. And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of thy holy name.

In the name of this, our most worthy and compassionate Redeemer, we beseech thee that it may please thee by thy Holy Spirit, to renew us in the spirit of our minds; to strengthen us for the performance of duty; to support and comfort us under all the trials to which we are liable as sin-

ful and mortal creatures; and to bestow on us all temporal goods that may be necessary in our passage through this vain world; and we do most earnestly pray that whatever mercies may attend our earthly probation, may be so overruled, directed, and sanctified, as to advance the life of religion in our souls; to the end that when we shall depart this life, and be absent from this body, we may be present with thee in thine everlasting kingdom.

By all our wants; by all thy compassions; by the grace of the covenant; and by the merits and atonement of our Saviour, we sinners do beseech thee to hear us in these our prayers. And further, that it may please thee to visit all men with thy salvation; sending forth thy light to lead the ignorant into truth; refreshing thy church universal with the dews of thy reviving grace; converting sinners, and building up thine own true and pious children in their most holy faith. That it may please thee to clothe the naked; to feed the famished; to heal the sick; to relieve the oppressed; to visit the widows and fatherless children, and them that are in prison; to protect all who travel with lawful views by land or water; and to succour, with thine ever present and ready help, all who are in any circumstances of need, peril, or distress. That it may please thee to bless and defend all of tender age, and to make of the children of thy people a seed to serve thee when their fathers shall sleep in peace. That it may please thee to pour thy benedictions on the ministers of the everlasting gospel, giving them grace to be honest, faithful, impartial, and undaunted, in the instruction and government of the church, and to commend themselves and their doctrine by the testimony of a godly, blameless, and Christian life. And, finally, that it may please thee to bless the president of the United States of America, and all subordinate constituted authorities, directing them so to administer the government, as shall be most for thy honour, and the peace, freedom, and security of the republick.

These, our unworthy services, we offer thee through the intercession of Jesus Christ, our only mediator and advocate.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and shall be, world without end.—AMEN.

## 2.

O God! our gracious and merciful Father! most wise and powerful; most holy, just, and good! whose favour is life! and whose loving-kindness is better than life; with whom there is mercy and plenteous redemption! We give thee thanks that thou hast liberally provided for all who truly repent, and believe the gospel, that the guilt of their sins may be removed through the merit of thy Son's death, and the power of them broken by thy Holy Spirit. We steadfastly believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Saviour of all men, but especially of them that come unto thee through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. Therefore, through this most holy mediator we come to thee, humbly beseeching thy grace, that by repentance and faith, we may turn from our sins unto thee, our God and Father, in Jesus Christ. Convince us that we have offended thee; make us ashamed of our unthankful and treacherous carriage towards thee; and let thy mercy cover and protect us through thy well-beloved Son, on the merit of whose bitter passions and bloody death, we place our everlasting hopes. Vouchsafe, for his sake, graciously to receive us. Cure the diseases of our souls, and let not our sins overwhelm us. Assist us to crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts. Let the love of the world be rooted out of us, and let the love of God, in Christ, be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. Mortify in us all envy and hatred, all malice and uncharitableness. Persuade us to love one another with a pure heart fervently, as becomes the disciples of our holy and blessed Saviour, who hath given us this new commandment. And do thou, who art the very God of peace, sanctify us wholly. Enlighten our darkness. Where we are

right, let thy grace preserve, and thy power uphold us. Where we are wrong, discover to us our error, and let the spirit of truth lead us into all truth. Convinced of the vanity of the world, and its inability to make us happy; of the odiousness of sin, and its tendency to make us miserable; of the dignity of our immortal spirits, and the awfulness of that everlasting state on the borders of which we stand; may we be serious and diligent in preparing for death. Henceforth, may that faith govern us which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen; that we may hereafter receive the end of our faith in the salvation of our souls.

O God! who knowest all our errors and our vices, and art acquainted with all our ways, overshadow us, we beseech thee, with the wings of thy mercy. Forgive us all our trespasses, as we desire unfeignedly to forgive others who have trespassed against us; and let the blood of Jesus Christ, thy Son, cleanse us from all sin. In our going out and coming in; in our rising up and lying down; in our basket and our store; in the business of time, and in all our preparations for eternity, may the blessing of the Lord our God be upon us; that the lawful works of our hands, and the guiltless desires of our hearts may prosper and be established. May we dwell in the secret place of the Most High; and abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

May it please thee to prepare us for whatever is destined to be our lot in life. May it please thee to improve us by all thy providences; that they may draw us nearer to thee, and fit us for the communion of thy heavenly kingdom. May it please thee to compassionate a miserable world. May it please thee to establish the throne of Christ on the ruins of Satan's kingdom; and to give thy word free course, that it may be glorified. May it please thee to own thy ministers in their work; granting them grace, that they may be found faithful to him who hath called them unto the holy office. May it please thee to protect the young; to support

the aged; to relieve the poor; to heal the sick; to visit the widow, and fatherless children; and to comfort the disconsolate; those especially who mourn thy providential bereavements. May it please thee to create thy defence around our country's glory, that in the peace thereof we may have peace. May it please thee to bless the president of the United States of America; and all our judges and magistrates; giving them grace uprightly to administer justice, and execute the laws. And, finally, may it please thee to overrule the deliberations of the National Legislature, that they may issue in such measures as may advance the honour, and maintain the peace, liberty, and safety of the republick.

Vouchsafe now, O Lord! to hear and accept us in these our prayers, through the mediation of Jesus Christ, in whom we desire at all times to be found ascribing glory to the Father—to the Son—and to the Holy Ghost—as it was in the beginning, now is, and shall be forever.—  
AMEN!

### 3.

THE Heavens declare thy glory, O Lord! and the firmament sheweth thy handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. Angels and Archangels—Thrones and dominions—Principalities and powers—Cherubim and Seraphim—Patriarchs—Prophets—Apostles—Martyrs—the countless multitude of the just made perfect—praise thee—bless thee—acknowledge thee to be the source of being and of blessedness—the Lord, their Creator and Redeemer. Help us to come into thy courts with thanksgivings, and in fear to worship before thy holy temple. To thy goodness we owe our existence, and the continuance of it to thine Almighty and most gracious providence. We praise thee that



thou hast called us out of darkness into the light of thy heavenly wisdom—out of ignorance into the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. We adore the divine grace manifested in the redemption of the world by the life and death of the only begotten Son of God. 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 Jesus Christ from the dead; to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

Verily we are not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which God hath shewed unto his servants. Verily we have sinned, and come short of our duty, and are not worthy to be called his children. But, O Lord! where our sin hath abounded, let thy grace much more abound—for with thee there is mercy, and with thee plentiful redemption. Assist us, O Lord! to break off our sins by repentance. Forgive us our sins, O Lord; and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Strengthen us for the performance of duty. Fortify us against temptation. May we take unto us the whole armour of God, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day; and having done all to stand. May we have our loins girt about with truth; and the breast plate of righteousness upon our breasts; and our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Above all may we take the shield of faith, wherewith we shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked—and 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.—And after a life, whether long or short, devoted to thy service, O God! forsake us not in the hour of death; but when our flesh and our heart shall faint, be thou the strength of our heart and our portion forever.

Graciously hear us, we beseech thee, Father of mercies!

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and answer these our prayers for Jesus Christ's sake. And to the only wise God our Saviour be glory both now and ever.—AMEN.

## 40

O LORD our God! thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty; who coverest thyself with light as with a garment—who stretchest out the Heavens like a curtain—who layest the beams of thy chambers in the waters—who makest the clouds thy chariot—who walkest upon the wings of the wind—who makest thine angels spirits; thy ministers a flaming fire—who laidst the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed forever—thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment—the waters stood above the mountains—at thy rebuke they fled—at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away.—The glory of the Lord shall endure forever—the Lord shall rejoice in his works.—He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth—he toucheth the hills, and they smoke. Vouchsafe, O Lord! to accept the thanksgivings of thy servants to whom thou hast given grace at this time with one accord to worship thee in the faith of thy holy gospel.—We bless thee, O Lord! we praise thee; we exalt and magnify thy holy name; who hast not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities—who hast healed our diseases, and satisfied us with good things—who hast redeemed our lives from destruction, and crowned us with loving-kindness and tender mercies—who hast cast our lot in pleasant places and given us a goodly heritage, not making the wilderness our habitation, nor the barren land our dwelling.

We approach thee, O Lord! as that Being who made all things, and who upholdeth all things by the arm of his might; from whom we derive life, motion and existence. We approach thee as a Judge who is of purer eyes than to

behold evil; the great and terrible avenger of guilt. We approach thee as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom thou art a God of grace, mercy and peace. We implore the forgiveness of our manifold iniquities. Forgive the sins of our infancy, and the transgressions of our riper years. Forgive the blindness of our minds—the hardness of our hearts—the sensuality of our affections—the stubbornness of our wills. We have stifled the convictions of judgment—we have slighted the remonstrances of friendship—we have shut our ears to the admonitions of conscience—we have quenched the spirit of grace—we have sacrificed to idols—we have abused thy mercies—we have betrayed thy cause—we have crucified the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame. Wherewithal shall we come before thee, O Lord! and bow ourselves before the most High? We have sinned, and what shall we do unto thee? O thou preserver of men! Behold, we are vile, what shall we answer thee? We will declare our iniquity—we will be sorry for our sin—we will cry mightily unto God, if it may be that he will have mercy upon us. O Lord God! remember we beseech thee, the grace thy covenant. Remember the blood of the sacrifice sprinkled on thy mercy seat. O Holy Father! have mercy upon us. O Saviour Christ! have mercy upon us. O! Divine Spirit, our sanctifier and comforter! have mercy upon us. O! Lamb of God that takest away the sin of the world, grant us thy peace!

Almighty God! the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and every perfect gift, we intreat thee to work the work of faith in us with power. What is dark in us, do thou illumine—what is corrupt, do thou purify—what is carnal, do thou spiritualize—what is disobedient and refractory, do thou subdue. Being dead to the world, may we be alive to Christ—Having been buried with him in baptism, may we arise to newness of life. May we experience in our souls the power of his resurrection raising us from the death of sin to the life of righteousness; and from the

dust of this world, to a holy, spiritual, divine, and heavenly life. Raise our affections to those seats of eternal repose whither Christ hath gone as the fore-runner of all the faithful. O! that time, and the concerns of time may be as nothing to us when compared with eternity and its awful realities. Give us grace to look up to Heaven with so realizing and triumphant a faith that we may look down upon earth with indifference. Discerning the vanity and uncertainty of all temporal things, may we hold ourselves in readiness to depart; that when earthly supports fail, we may be received into everlasting habitations.

Almighty and most gracious Father! who hast created all men, and hast commanded that for all men supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made by the church—mercifully hear us in the behalf of our brethren. We pray for the sick and afflicted—the poor and needy—the tempted and disconsolate—the prisoner and stranger—the widow and fatherless. Be thou a present help to such in all time of trouble. We pray for our friends—make them the objects of thy providential care, and enrich them with the blessings of thy heavenly grace. Forgive our enemies—turn their hearts—and command a blessing for them, even life forever more. Let thy kind providence protect our country. Preserve the publick peace. Be gracious to the President and all other constituted authorities. Guide and govern the deliberations of the great national legislature to the advancement of thy glory, and the true interests of the people. Propagate the gospel in all parts of these United States. We fervently beseech thee, O Father! to hasten the accomplishment of thy promises to the church. Fill the earth with thy glory. Bring in the fulness of the nations. Redeem Israel. May the commotions of the world issue in the peace of the church, and the revolutions of earthly kingdoms in the advancement of that spiritual empire which shall never be moved.

We implore thee, O Lord! to bless all whom thou hast

vested with the office of the holy ministry—granting them grace faithfully to preach the truth as it is in Jesus—and zealously to labour for the salvation of souls.

We beseech thee to hear us, gracious Lord! in these our requests—to pardon our sins—to accept our services—and answer us in peace; for Jesus Christ's sake.

And now let endless glory be ascribed to God the Father—to his only begotten Son—and to the Eternal Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son.—AMEN.



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