

SERMONS

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

BY

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WITH

A MEMOIR

OF

THE LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.

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SERMONS.

SERMON CXIII.



LECTURES ON THE APOCALYPSE.

No. I.

2 PETER i. 21.

Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man ; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

HAVING reviewed with you, my brethren, the lives of some of the principal men, whose history is recorded in the holy volume ; I have been thinking by what other course of lectures your scriptural knowledge will be best promoted, and your devotional feelings excited. I have thought, that these effects may, by the divine blessing, be produced by a regular illustration of that sublime and instructive book which closes the canon of scripture. I know that much study, and thought, and judgment, and humility, and prayer, are requisite for a proper explanation of the Apocalypse or Revelation to St. John ; but I know also that, if we are not wanting to ourselves, the highest benefits may result from such a

course of lectures. Favour me then with your attention: let me also have your prayers, that I may have spiritual wisdom to preserve me from important error; and that I may be enabled to exhibit with force those lessons, and warnings, and instructions, that are contained in this book.

The present lecture will be merely introductory, and will be devoted to the examination of some preliminary points, a consideration of which will aid us in the remainder of the course.

A considerable part of the word of God consists of prophecies. From the earliest period God gave the most clear and definite predictions of the great events that should occur to the church, and of the history of the world, as connected with the church; the various fortunes and characters of the different nations that should respectively spring from the sons of Noah, of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob; the events that should occur to the Jewish nation; the time and manner of the destruction of Nineveh, and Babylon, and Tyre, and Egypt; the history of the four successive universal monarchies; and especially every thing relating to Messiah, the time, the place, the circumstances of his incarnation, the events of his life, the mode of his death: these were all proclaimed by the Old Testament prophets, in the most marked and definite manner long before their accomplishment.

In the New Testament we have many predictions in the gospels and epistles, which could have proceeded only from Him to whom the future is as naked as the present; and the sacred canon is closed by a book, the greater part of which is prophetic, and which contains the history of the church, and of the

kingdoms of earth, as they affect the church, from the time that John wrote till the end of the world.

It is certain, that these prophetic writings are too much neglected, even by many Christians who diligently study other parts of the scriptures. It is certain that they were not given to us to be treated with indifference and disregard; and I know not what excuse we can render at the day of judgment, for refusing, according to the command of God, diligently to study them.

There are many motives thus to study them.

1. They afford an undeniable proof that there is a wise and powerful providence presiding over all the changes of the world, and arranging, combining, and modifying all events. This is a proof, depending not upon subtle and metaphysical reasonings, level to the capacities of few, and scarcely felt by those who do comprehend them, but upon facts which are exhibited to our senses. When in so many thousand instances things are predicted which are so unusual, so peculiar, so dependent upon the free and unconstrained motions of the will, and upon numberless circumstances not yet in being; that none but a madman, or a fanatic in the worst of causes, can fail to see in them the evidences of Omniscience; can we doubt of the secret and powerful providence of the Most High?

2. They afford an irrefragable argument for the inspiration and divinity of the scriptures; an argument that courts examination, and appears more firm in proportion to the strictness of our scrutiny and the profoundness of our examination; an argument continually brightening and becoming more striking in each successive generation. We must indeed renounce all the rules of evidence, if we do not believe

in the miracles wrought for the confirmation of Christianity; but still we do not see these miracles; but by the study of prophecy we are placed in a more favourable situation than were even the first believers; for we see the whole history of the world coming and giving its testimony to the truth of Christianity; we see Him, who is the Adorable Principle of all things, and the Eternal Truth, predicting by his Spirit what he will accomplish by his providence; and then behold his providence explaining the events that he had foretold by his Spirit. Viewing so admirable an accordance between the divine paraphrase and the sacred text, the event and the prediction, that there is not a word in the one, nor a fact nor circumstance in the other, that does not display this wonderful agreement; we can no more doubt of the truth of our religion, than we can of the reality of our existence.

3. The prophecies cherish religion in the heart, by giving us a practical illustration of the perfections of God; inspiring profound veneration for that amazing wisdom from which nothing can be hidden, which beholds the future thoughts and actions of those that are not yet in being; and reverence for that power whose decisions cannot be frustrated, and whose counsel shall stand; and love for that great Being who thus proves, that he is careful of his creatures and interested in their concerns; and the most exalted sentiments of that Redeemer, who is the great subject of prophecy.

They cheer the believer, by showing whither the purposes of God are tending, and what shall certainly be the ultimate state of the church, notwithstanding its trials and the opposition with which it may have to contend. When the termination of the cap-

tivity in Babylon was prophetically announced to the Jews, they took their harps from the willows, and raised the song of triumph in anticipating the approaching deliverance. And when the darkness with which the church is now enveloped, is dispelled by the light of prophecy; when the bright visions of millennial glory burst upon the enraptured Christian, he forgets the pains which afflicted him, while he participates in the approaching triumph of his Saviour, and of that cause which is so dear to him.

And this joy, instead of relaxing, impels him to vigorous exertions. While he delights in the thought that the cause of Jesus, with which his eternal interests are inseparably linked, is not precarious; but strong as Omnipotence, holds on its course, and will bear down all opposition, he rejoices, by every means in his power, to concur in the promotion of such glorious objects. It is not from the attentive observer of the purposes in God, as they are declared in prophecy, and as they are unfolding in providence, that we hear those pitiful and despicable excuses made, when we apply to them in behalf of Bible or Missionary Societies; excuses which make us blush for them that they still retain the name of Christians.

This study cements the ties which unite real believers of all denominations, and produces common affection in that great common cause which is the subject of prophecy. "We are thus made to feel an interest in the lot of the righteous; our religion assumes more of the social, and less of the selfish character; we become identified with the whole family of God, not only in fact, but also in our own uninterrupted apprehension."*

* M'Leod, p. 18.

Humility, from the sense of our limited powers; resignation in the hour of trial; trust in God under the most frowning aspect of his providence; a serious inquiry whether we indeed belong to that kingdom, the management of which is under the direction and care of the Redeemer; pity for the forlorn condition of the enemies of Jesus, who, continuing in their rebellion, must perish; and the faithful and tender use of every means calculated to enlighten and to touch their hearts: These are other effects, which, it would be easy to show, result from the study of prophecy.

Why then, do not Christians more attend to the prophecies of the holy scripture? Principally from the obscurity that is found in them when we commence the examination of them. There is a partial obscurity that is perhaps essential to prophecies that have not been fulfilled, and that depend for their accomplishment upon the conduct of free agents. But the great cause of difficulty to the superficial reader is the symbolic language of the prophets. Let us explain this.

There were two principal modes in which the prophets were taught the things of futurity. Sometimes the Spirit directed them to use those plain and express words by which events to come were predicted: here their language differed little except in its glow and animation from the other sacred writers. But very often emblematic pictures were presented to their minds, and the description of these pictures was substituted in the place of express declarations. These pictures were of two kinds: *symbols* and *hieroglyphics*. By a symbol is understood one thing, which by some apparent affinity represents another, as a *star* denotes a minister of Christ, and a *candlestick*,

a Christian church. By a hieroglyphic is meant a group of symbols united in one object ; as in the description given of our Lord. (Rev. i. 12—17.) These symbols are derived from all *the objects of nature*, the visible heavens with their luminaries, the earth with its productions ; from the *arts and manners of nations*, particularly those of Judea and Egypt ; from the *tabernacle and temple*, and their ordinances ; and from *history*, especially that of the creation, the flood, the destruction of the cities of the plain, and the exodus.

From the variety of these symbols, we at first find a difficulty in the prophetic writings ; a little attention removes, however, much of this difficulty : every symbol has one precise and definite meaning throughout the whole book of God ; and when this prophetic alphabet, if I may call it so, is acquired, the language thus formed by symbols becomes perfectly intelligible. It is with this only as it is with all arts and sciences, which have their elementary principles and progressive intricacies, the knowledge of which prepares for rapid future proficiency. And when these first principles are acquired, the writings of the prophets become not only clear, but *attractive* ; their predictions interest us, not merely for their magnificent subject, the purposes and conduct of Jehovah, and the gracious reign of the Saviour, but also for the *mode* in which they are conveyed. Their sublime instructions break upon us through the blaze of metaphor, adapted to the subject with unerring skill. Their figurative ornaments are so captivating, that we are excited by pleasure and solemnity to inquire after the truths which are thus clothed with the richest drapery of style.

The particular illustration of a great part of the prophetic symbols, will necessarily occur during the

course of these lectures. I had intended to have given you a general view of the nature and rules of prophetic chronology: but I have not time now to enter upon this subject. Perhaps it may more properly be introduced when we come to examine some of the important dates that are contained in the Apocalypse.

Passing from these general remarks to the book which we are particularly to examine, we shall only observe in this lecture, that it was written in the close of the first century. Daniel had predicted four universal monarchies; three of them had risen and fallen; the fourth, the Roman, was in its power in the time of John; he takes up the thread of Old Testament prophecy, and points out in exact order the principal events that should happen to the church, and those great revolutions in the world affecting the church, till the consummation of all things.

The grand division of the book is given ch. i. 19. "Write *the things which thou hast seen,*" the events recorded in the previous part of the chapter; "and the *things which are,*" the state of the churches in Asia, contained in the 2d and 3d chapters; "and the *things which shall be hereafter,*" which are contained from the 3d chapter to the end of the book, and which reach to the general judgment.

There is a subdivision in the last part, of seven seals opened in their order; seven trumpets sounded in their order; and seven vials poured out in their order; together with fourteen solemn visions. This emblematic diversity cannot fail to excite attention, by the sublime novelty of the scenery.

All the intelligences which we know in the universe, divine, or angelic, or human, holy or unholy, appear symbolically, or really, in this book. But

the two leading and opposite characters are the great Redeemer and the prince of darkness. The Saviour protects, blesses, guards his people; renders the temptations and the persecutions of Satan unavailing; and at last causes his church to triumph in all the holiness and joy of the millennial day. In tracing this combat, in showing the overthrow of heathenism and corrupted Christianity, the contrast between saints and sinners is constantly presented, until Christ appears on his great white throne, and makes a final separation between his friends and his enemies.

To which of these two great classes that divide the world do you belong? In reading the account of the holy warfare exhibited in the Apocalypse, do you find your character delineated in the description of those who are fighting under the banners of the Redeemer? Have you like them come out from the world, and opposed the enemy of souls by pure principles and by a holy life? If so, you have in the prophetic writings, promises and encouragements that can cheer you in the deepest gloom; that can dispel the clouds of temporal distress; that can fill you with rapture in the hour of dissolution; that assure to you the crown of glory. Resting on these promises, supported by these encouragements, you may in the field of battle, in the heat of this spiritual conflict, sing the song of triumph not only with respect to your personal salvation, but also with respect to the ultimate and complete victory of the church.

But if this cause, dear to the heart of the Son of God, and of all holy intelligences, is not dear to you; if by sentiment or conduct you are opposing

the gospel, all the predictions of scripture utter against you the most tremendous denunciations, and proclaim "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish," against your soul, and the unholy cause in which you are engaged. Abandon the hopeless contest: you cannot expect to pull Messiah from his throne; you must be subdued either by his grace or his power. Yield yourselves then to him; he is now waiting to be gracious; he delights in unbloody conquests: long as you have been in rebellion, he is willing to receive you as his friends, and make you participate in his triumphs.

And suppose not for a moment that you are safe, if you do not actively oppose the cause of God; there is no neutrality in this holy warfare: "He that is not for me, is against me," is here the language of Jesus. Unless you become the open, firm, decided soldier of the cross, you must with "the fearful and unbelieving," sink under all the agonies of the second death.

SERMON CXIV.



LECTURES ON THE APOCALYPSE.

No. II.



REVELATION, CHAP. I.

ST. JOHN long survived the rest of the apostles; and when they all had been united to the church triumphant, and had most of them passed to glory from the rack, from the flames, or from other instruments of torture, he was still spared to the church on earth, for its instruction and consolation. Sixty-two years had now elapsed since the blood of atonement had been shed, and the sacrifice for man's redemption offered. The disciples of the Redeemer had multiplied in every part of the Roman empire: churches for the worship of the true God had risen on the ruins of heathen temples; and the schools of vain philosophy had been deserted for the sublime instructions of the gospel. The venerable John, who had attained his 90th year, still felt all those fervours of affection for Jesus, which he so often manifested when the Redeemer was on earth; old age could not chill the warmth of his attachment, and he was surrounded by the disciples of Him, on whose bosom he had leaned, by whose cross he had

stood; loving them and beloved by them. Such was his situation and conduct, when, in the ninety-fifth year of our Lord, the cruel Domitian gave new fury to the rage of persecution, and endeavoured to drown religion in the blood of its friends. On this occasion, so eminent a disciple could not be overlooked, and St. John was banished by the emperor from the churches which he had planted, and the occupations which were dear to his heart, to the barren and desolate island of Patmos, which is in the Ægean sea, and has since been called Patino, or Palmosa. It was a mode of punishment not unusual, and it was expected that the poor exile on this uninhabited and dreary spot, would soon die, in all the tortures of famine, and the horrors of utter dereliction. But the services of the apostle to the church were not terminated, and he was preserved by Him who controls at his pleasure all the laws of nature. And, oh! how richly was he compensated by the Lord for the cruelty and unkindness of men! What rapturous intercourse did he, while in his banishment at Patmos, enjoy with his Saviour! He was there blessed with those celestial visions recorded in this book; he looked down the long current of years, and contemplated the various combats of the church, till it should stand completely victorious over all its foes, and shining in all the lustre of the millennial glory! He stood on the portals of heaven, and beheld the throne of the Eternal, and heard the praises of his Redeemer chaunted in the climes of immortality, by adoring myriads of happy, holy, exalted intelligences! He saw that Jesus, whom he had once beheld lifted up upon the cross amidst the scorn, the reproaches, the execration of the multitude, surrounded by a glory which dark-

ened the lustre of the highest archangel, and of which the splendours that shone on the mount of transfiguration were but a feeble emblem! Ah! surely, though the ignorant world might pity him, the two years spent by the beloved disciple in this hallowed spot, must have been esteemed by him among the most precious seasons of his life.

His first vision is contained in this chapter. Before considering it, we must briefly explain the introduction to the whole book. It is declared to be "*the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to him.*" It is in the execution of the prophetic office of the Redeemer, that he displays the future states of the church; but as Mediator, he always refers to the Father, who, in the economy of redemption, is always represented as the great Source of salvation, as well as Defender of the rights of the godhead. *As God*, the Saviour is omniscient, and needs not a revelation; *as Mediator*, he communicates instruction to us, according to the Father's will.

Let me remark, by the way, that it is from the original Greek term *Αποκαλυψις*, which signifies *Revelation*, that this book is so often termed the *Apocalypse*.

The Revelation was communicated to John by one of the angels, who acknowledge Jesus as their Lord, who hasten to perform his will, who delight in showing kindness to those believers with whom they shall hereafter form one glorious society.

Thus was given to the aged apostle the knowledge of those things, some of which would immediately take place, and the rest be successively accomplished. Nor was the communication made in vain; for John faithfully wrote all that he saw and heard, and declared that it was the certain "word of God," the

infallible "testimony of Jesus Christ," and pronounced a solemn blessing upon all who diligently study this book, who understand the important truths contained in it, and who have a temper and disposition correspondent to those august plans of Providence that are developed in it.

After this general introduction, which is contained in the first three verses, St. John peculiarly addresses the book to the seven principal churches of Asia Minor, which had either been planted, or taught and increased by him. Of the names and characters of these churches, we shall have occasion to treat when we consider the epistles sent to each of them. Like the ancient prophets, this prophet of the New Testament prefixes his name. According to the ordinary custom of the apostles in their epistles, this venerable apostle wishes the churches "grace and peace." He prays that these blessings may flow from "him who is, and who was, and who is to come;" that is, from the self-existent, ever-living Jehovah. These terms are elsewhere applied to the Son; they cannot, therefore, express the distinctive personal character of the Father, although they doubtless here refer to him, and point out the peculiar office he sustains in the scheme of providence and redemption; for, as I have just remarked, "in the divine economy, with respect to all dispensations relating to the church, God the Father is represented as maintaining the prerogatives of deity, and the Son and Spirit, as acting either *from* him or towards him."^{*}

The apostle adds, "*and from the seven spirits which are before his throne.*" Though different senses have

been annexed to these words, yet the most common is probably the most correct interpretation: that the one Holy Spirit of God is here meant, who, according to the highly figurative and emblematic language of this book, is termed "the seven spirits," from the great diversity and perfection of his gifts and graces, and operations, and in reference to the seven churches.*

And especially does John implore this grace and peace "from *Jesus Christ*." Having mentioned the name of his beloved Redeemer, he pauses to dwell for some time on his character, and our obligations to him: he is that *prophet*, on whose instructions we may confidently rely; "the *faithful witness*," whose testimony is always sure, whose declarations are infallible: he is that *priest*, who, having offered up his life as a sacrifice for our sins, rose in proof of the acceptance of this sacrifice, and became "the *first-begotten of the dead*;" not only the first who rose to natural life, never again to submit to death, but also the first who rose by his own power, and as the first fruits assuring the resurrection of all his children: he is that *King* who is possessed of unlimited authority; "*Prince of the kings of the earth*;" able to restrain, to subdue, to destroy them, and to render unavailing all their designs against him.

Who will not venerate and honour such a Redeemer? Who that has felt the effect of his atoning blood, and has experienced the fruits of his living power, will not join with John, when, turning from the contemplation of his greatness to the remembrance of his goodness and condescension, he cries, "*Unto*

* See Mede's Discourse on Zech. iv. 10. and notes.

him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, be glory and dominion for ever and ever?" Cold and insensible indeed must be the heart of him who will not add, with the sacred writer, "*Amen*;" so may it, so ought it to be. And never let that man hope for future felicity, who refuses this tribute of praise and gratitude to the great Redeemer.

That these sentiments of reverence, of honour, and of love, may be more fully excited, and that we may be animated to obedience, and encouraged under trials, the apostle directs us to the Saviour about to come speedily, by remarkable dispensations of Providence, and at last to appear in majesty to judge the world: "*Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.*" In these triumphs of their Saviour over his finally impenitent enemies, his friends will rejoice, and cry, "*Even so, Amen.*" Now we mourn over them, we entreat them to turn and live; we weep when we behold their obstinate resolution to destroy themselves; but then even their fearful doom cannot interrupt the joys, or suspend the songs of the blessed. High and comprehensive views of the divine justice, of the necessity of the punishment of these despisers of a Saviour's grace, forbid the redeemed to indulge even a sigh of regret; although we may imagine that their rapture assumes the character of adoring submission, and that their anthems of praise for the redemption of mankind, for a moment give place to one more solemn and majestic, which the prophet of God once learned from the lips of seraphim, "*Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts.*"

To remove all doubts of the accomplishment of the predictions that should be uttered, the Saviour declares to John his essential dignity and glory : “ *I am Alpha and Omega.*” These are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, the language in which the predictions were uttered ; they represent the Redeemer as the first cause and last end of all things : their import is plainly shown in the succeeding words : “ *I am the beginning and ending, saith the Lord, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.*” Every rule of fair interpretation must be violated, if these words are not assigned to Jesus. We will consider their more definite meaning, when we hear him repeating them.

Such is the awfully solemn introduction to the first vision with which the apostle was blessed. He speaks then of the place to which he was banished, and of the season when he saw the Redeemer. It was at Patmos, “ *on the Lord’s day,*” that day on which his devotions had often been mingled with those of the faithful. Far from them, he still could enjoy communion with his Lord. He was on that day “ *in the Spirit :*” a supernatural influence suspended the exercise of his bodily senses, and his mind was powerfully affected by the Holy Spirit. In this situation, he heard behind him a voice, strong and piercing as that of a trumpet. This sudden and unexpected sound, like the trumpet upon Sinai, prepared him for the solemnities that were to follow. He heard some being distinctly say, “ *I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last ; and what thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia.*” Turning to behold the person that spake, he saw seven golden candlesticks, which were emblematic of Christian churches, in which the

light of truth, of holiness, and joy, should continually shine, and in which divine love should constantly flame. In the midst of them was "*one like unto the Son of man*:" the blessed Saviour proving how dear to him were the concerns of his church.

Our Saviour ascended to heaven in a human body: it still remains in the world of felicity the eternal monument of redeeming love, but is glorified and exalted in a manner suited to the high dignity of Immanuel; in it, he will come to decide our everlasting destinies, and "the vile bodies" of believers shall at the resurrection, "be fashioned like unto this glorious body." But we are not to suppose that Jesus appears in heaven, as he was here exhibited to the apostle: the description is entirely symbolical, and represents the union of the purest innocence, the most elevated glory, the most comprehensive knowledge, impressive majesty, irresistible power, and tender solicitude for the church in the Redeemer: he appeared with the robe of the high-priest, and with a girdle richer than that of Aaron, to teach us that he exercises for us his priestly office in heaven; "*His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow*." This is a natural emblem of age; but as age gives experience and allays the passions, it may denote the knowledge, prudence, circumspection, and equity of the Son of God; and it may also represent the majestic splendour proceeding from the rays of light and glory round his head. "*His eyes were as a flame of fire*," to express at once his omniscience, the all-penetrating nature of divine knowledge, and his indignation against those foes whom he was about to punish. "*His feet were like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace*," to represent the strength, the purity, and beauty of all his dispensations. "*His*

voice" terrible and sublime, "as the sound of many waters." "In his right hand he had seven stars:" they are the ministers of his church, who are stars as to their duty to shine before others, and as to their reward, since if faithful, their lustre in heaven will be perpetual: Jesus holds them in his hand, supporting, enlightening, defending them. "From his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword," a symbol of the efficacy of that word by which he subdues his enemies and protects his friends. "His countenance was as the sun shining in its strength," bright, dazzling, but cheering.

So august was the spectacle, that the apostle was overwhelmed by it; the powers of nature failed, and "he fell at the feet of Jesus as dead." But the blessed Redeemer instantly dispelled the apprehensions and strengthened the frame of his disciple: "He laid his right hand upon me," the emblem of his gracious and almighty power, in order to revive and raise me up, and said, "Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." Surely these are words that are calculated to dispel every fear. Let us consider them for a moment. "I am the First and the Last." Than this declaration, nothing can more fully declare that truth which lies at the foundation of the gospel-system, which is the source of the hope of the sinner, and the consolation of the believer, the real divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Deny this truth, and the revelation of God is no longer suited to the wants and woes of guilty man; the trembling and agitated conscience no longer can find full rest and perfect peace; the "fountain opened for sin and uncleanness" is sealed, and a stone placed upon it, which not even an angel can roll away. The thunders still roar, and the lightnings play around

the brow of Sinai; the law still utters its curse; the cross and intercession of Jesus, lose their efficacy; and the violated sanctity of God, and his character, as the moral Governor of the universe, still call for our perdition. But blessed be God, if this truth is important, it is unequivocally asserted in the holy volume; and this single title, were there no others to be adduced, ought for ever to close the lips of the Socinian blasphemer. Thrice in Isaiah the Lord claims it as a title peculiar to himself; thrice in the Apocalypse, it is claimed by Jesus as his due. "Thus saith the Lord," this is the language of inspiration in the Old Testament, "Thus saith the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer the Lord of Hosts, I am the First and I am the Last, and besides me there is no God; fear ye not." (Is. xlv. 6.) "Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I Jehovah, the first and with the Last, I am he." (Is. xli. 4.) "I will not give my glory to another: Hearken unto me, O Jacob, and Israel my called, I am he; I am the first, I also am the last." (Is. xlvii. 11, 12.) When these passages are compared with those in which the Redeemer assumes this as his prerogative, can we doubt of his essential divinity?

Fear not then, Christian; your Saviour is omnipotent. Were he a creature like yourself, however elevated a creature, you would still have reason for despondency and apprehension; but now, when you approach to him, though burdened with your guilt, assailed by your spiritual enemies, desirous of being pardoned, sanctified, raised to heaven, you need not doubt of his power to confer even these inestimable blessings, since he is the mighty God.

The Saviour adds, for the consolation of his apostle and of believers in every age, "*I am he that liveth ;*" the ever-living God in my divine nature, having life in myself as Mediator, and therefore able to secure the interests of my church. In my human nature, "*I was dead ;*" I once hung upon the cross, there to atone for the sins of the world, to purchase for myself a church, and to bring in everlasting righteousness : "*And behold,*" with joy, with faith and hope, "*I am alive for evermore ;*" I conquered death, I rose, I live for ever in that nature which then died : in it, I live in heaven as the high-priest and prevalent Intercessor for my people, as the Lord and King of Zion ! Again I ask you, my brethren, who will not with the enraptured apostle, in considering these declarations, cry out with satisfaction and delight, "*Amen ?*"

Fear not then, Christian. He who died to redeem you to God by his blood, lives, eternally lives, possessed of almighty power to apply the fruits of his redemption : be not swallowed up with sorrow, if those dear and tender connexions who possess thy love, are called to the tomb ; your best, your most precious friend, your Jesus, liveth for ever, liveth for thee, to give thee consolation and support. Fear not, if thou thyself art called to descend into the tomb : thy Saviour has conquered the King of terrors ; and if thou expire in his love, like him, though dead, thou shalt be alive again, and shielded for ever from the strokes of death.

Still further to cheer his apostle, the Saviour adds, "*I have the keys of hell and of death.*" Those of you who are acquainted with the original scriptures, well know that the term *αιδης*, here translated *hell*, does not ordinarily signify the *place of the accursed*, (for this, a different word *γεεννα* is used.) but the whole of the in-

visible world; the state of all who have departed from earth, whether good or bad. Over this extensive world, the Lord Jesus as Mediator, exercises absolute power and dominion; for this is the import of the figurative phrase, "to have the keys of it," the key being often used as the emblem of power and authority. He has also dominion over *death*, the passage from the visible to the invisible world, and he removes men from the present state when and in what manner he pleases. You see then the import of these impressive words: "I exercise unlimited dominion over the whole invisible world: I assign to those who enter it their everlasting states: at my command death bears the children of men from the earth, and at my orders the grave shall restore those whom it has received."

After this address, the apostle is enjoined to write the things which he had seen, and those which should be revealed to him; and the symbols of the candlesticks and stars are explained to him.

My brethren, we also shall see the Son of God. Ah, despiser of Jesus! if when the Redeemer came with a message of mercy and with sentiments of love to the holy apostle, he nevertheless trembled, and could not sustain the glorious vision, what will be thy condition, when he shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those that know not God, and when the awful splendours of his indignation shall burn before him? Ah, Christian! a higher privilege than that here enjoyed by John, is reserved for thee! Thou also shalt see Jesus; but thy body spiritualized, and strengthened by divine power to behold divine glory, thou shalt fix a steady gaze upon him, and feel thyself invigorated and strengthened by every glance.

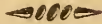
Believer! rejoice in the elevation of thy Saviour. He who "was dead and is alive again;" who conquered the last enemy for us, and "destroyed him that had the power of death;" he "who brought life and immortality to light;" he whose heart is love, whose affection to thee is inconceivable; who became man and expired upon the cross to save thee; and who now sways the sceptre of the universe, bids thee look upward and behold the heavens opened, and himself standing ready to receive thee: he holds the key that admits thee to joy, to immortality, to God: his own hand holds the crown of righteousness, which for ever shall sparkle on thy brow! Ah! fall before his throne, and adore him with confidence. Dismiss thine apprehensions, since thine interests are in secure hands: tremble not even at the tomb, since it is opened for thee by thy Beloved; since, through it, he conducts thee to glory.

Bereaved and desolate mourners! think of Jesus as he here exhibits himself, and be resigned. It was he who removed your friends; he who as their Creator, had a supreme right over them; who, as Mediator, has purchased the keys of the invisible world and the grave by his precious blood. Do you doubt his wisdom? Are you qualified to be his counselor? Dare you impeach his rectitude and justice? Can you doubt of his love? Is it fit that the wishes of you, blind ignorant mortals, who "are but of yesterday, and know nothing," should overrule the unerring determinations and wise counsels of Immanuel? Will you still dispute, as by want of resignation you do dispute with him, who shall govern the world?

Impenitent and thoughtless man! meditate on the glory of Jesus, and then say whether it is safe in thee

longer to neglect him? Myriads of exalted intelligences bow to him in that invisible world over which he presides; and who art thou, perishing sinner! that thou shouldst refuse to acknowledge his authority? He died that he might obtain power to admit thee into heaven, in consistence with the divine attributes; and wilt thou requite his goodness by rushing into hell? Thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, pay homage to him, yet he still condescends to thee, dust and ashes: shall this condescension, instead of melting thy heart, only increase thy guilt? Oh! in time be wise! Again he invites thee, and offers himself to thee? Sinner, wilt thou now accept him? Oh! delay not the answer, lest the key should turn, and the opportunity of salvation be lost for ever!

SERMON CXV.



LECTURES ON THE APOCALYPSE.

No. III.



REVELATION, CHAP. II. AND III.

IN our last lecture we beheld the apostle filled with love and adoring awe at the display of his Saviour's glory. Jesus ordered him to write to the seven principal churches of proconsular Asia. These epistles are found in those two chapters which we shall now rapidly review with you.

Some persons, with more ingenuity than judgment, have supposed that there is in these chapters a description of seven principal states, through which the church universal should pass: there is not even a probable argument in favour of this opinion, and there are many insuperable objections to it. The real state of seven churches then actually existing is exhibited; while lessons are taught useful to Christians in all ages and places.

To each of them is prefixed a title derived from the symbolical representation of the Saviour in the first chapter, which we have already explained. They are addressed to the *angels* or ministers of the churches. This is a title derived from the Jew-

ish synagoge, in which one of the officers was thus called; but though primarily addressed to the ministers, they refer to the whole body of the people.

The first epistle is addressed to the angel of the church of *Ephesus*, which of all these churches was nearest to Patmos. It was in this city that the Roman proconsul, who governed Asia Minor, resided; and here also St. John had for a long time dwelt. The gospel was first preached among them by the apostle Paul, as he went from Corinth to Jerusalem, A. D. 53, to keep the feast of Pentecost. (Acts xviii. 19.) The city had been peculiarly noted for its idolatry, and for that splendid temple of Diana, which, though built at the expense of all proconsular Asia, was not finished in less than 220 years. Yet even in such a spot, the prospects of Paul were so encouraging, that after celebrating the festival at Jerusalem, he returned, and spent three years in this city, declaring the gospel, and confirming it by the most splendid miracles. His labours were attended by the most abundant success; a large and important church was founded. After Paul had been expelled from the city, in consequence of the tumult raised by Demetrius, Timothy still continued here to animate, to instruct, and to console the body of the faithful. While there, Paul wrote to him the first of those two important epistles, which are preserved in the New Testament; and the year before his martyrdom this venerable apostle addressed to the whole church of the Ephesians that admirable epistle, which has tended so much to the edification and comfort of Christians in every age. This church, thus favoured by the labours of Paul and Timothy, was also blessed, according to the universal tradi-

tion of the ancient writers, by a long residence of the apostle John among them.

From its first establishment it had been troubled by false teachers, who denied or perverted the most important truths of the gospel. Against these, Paul speaks in his epistle to Timothy, and of them he warns the elders of Ephesus, in his touching and eloquent farewell address. Thus put upon their guard, the Ephesians carefully examined the doctrines that were brought to them, and rejected those that were not conformed to the gospel. They opposed with zeal the Nicolaitans, who were viewed with peculiar abhorrence by the Saviour: these were heretics, who, while they dared to call themselves Christians, taught that impurity and idolatry were harmless, and authorized by gospel liberty.* For this rejection of those who would seduce them from the true faith; for their works of piety; and for their patience under afflictions, the Ephesian believers are commended by the Redeemer. But he beheld in them the want of that zeal which they once possessed; they "had lost their first love." Strenuous in maintaining the true faith, they yet had not that vigorous affection to Jesus, to his cause, and people, which once glowed in their hearts, and produced correspondent effects in their lives. He calls upon them to repent; threatening that otherwise he will soon come in the dispensations of his providence, and "remove their candlestick out of its place;" take away their name from among the churches, and deprive them of spiritual privileges. To animate them to repentance, and to encourage

* See the sentiment of Eichhorn on the identity of the names Νικολαος and οφθαλμοι, both signifying conquerors of the people.

them to maintain a good warfare, he declares, that all who overcome shall enjoy in the heavenly paradise blessings sublime and immutable; blessings, the greatness and perpetuity of which would have been but faintly represented by the privileges which would have resulted from eating of the tree of life in the earthly paradise, had man continued innocent during the time of trial, and then been permitted to partake of it.

My brethren, ought not the church of Ephesus make us think of ourselves? Have we all of us as much of the joy and life of religion as we once possessed—as lively exercises of faith, and love, and obedience? Oh! let us listen to the kind and monitory voice of Jesus, and repent; he is yet waiting to be gracious; he has not removed our candlestick; let us in time deplore our declensions from him.

About forty-five miles north of Ephesus, was *Smyrna*, a city so ancient, that it had been celebrated even in the time of Homer. Here Christianity was early introduced; and such was the purity of the church here established, that the epistle addressed to it contains no reproofs, but consists only of commendations and directions. There is little doubt that the venerable Polycarp at this time presided over it. He is the same person of whose glorious martyrdom many of you have read; when urged, in order to avoid the flames, to renounce the Redeemer, he exclaimed, “Fourscore and six years have I served him, and he hath never forsaken me: shall I then now deny my King who hath saved me?”

The members of this church are declared to be “rich” in faith and good works, though they had suffered much affliction, and been reduced to worldly poverty; they had undergone peculiar trials from

some pretended Christians, who yet were “of the *synagogue of Satan* :” for this is probably the meaning of that expression, “them who say they are Jews, but are not.” In the epistles of Paul we are thus to interpret many such passages as, “the seed of Abraham,” the “Israel of God ;” and in several parts of this book, where so much of the scenery is drawn immediately from the Jewish temple and worship, we must adopt the same mode of exposition.

Piety will not exempt us from sufferings; this church is forewarned, that it should endure tribulation for “ten days,” which may refer to the ten years’ persecution under Dioclesian, but more probably is here, (as in other passages of the scripture,) a definite term put for an indefinite, and meaning *a long period*, during which their graces should be tried. That they might not shrink from these sufferings, Jesus promised to those who should be faithful unto death, the never-fading crown of the conqueror; the crown of immortal life for that temporal life which they might be called on to lay down for him; and declares, that this shall be the privilege, not merely of the martyr, but of all who overcome, that they “shall not be hurt by the second death;” that awful state of misery which must be experienced by all the enemies of the Redeemer; that living death, that dying life, under which the wretched sufferers shall in vain sigh for annihilation, and long to be blotted from existence.

Sixty-four miles to the north of Symrna, was *Per-gamos*, the ancient residence of the kings of the race of Attali; celebrated for the pomp with which Esculapius was here worshipped, and for the extent of its library; for the birth of Galen and the death of Scipio. So furious and zealous were the idolaters

of this city, that Satan seemed here to have established his throne. No wonder then, that the church here had been exposed to persecution, and that Antipas had been put to death. Of the history of this "faithful martyr," who is commended by the infallible Judge, we know nothing: history has suffered the events of his life to perish from amongst us; but they are recorded in the Lamb's book of life, and will be declared to us at the last great day. But though this church had remained unshaken by persecution, some of its members had so far apostatized, as to unite with the Nicolaitans, who, repeating the detestable artifices of Balaam, were by idolatry and impurity, corrupting the church, and preparing for it divine judgments. The Saviour calls upon them to repent, declaring that he will otherwise come speedily in the course of his providence, and "fight against them with the sword of his mouth;" that is, will execute upon them all those judgments which his word denounces against those who depart from the truth and purity of the gospel. On the contrary, he assures those who continue faithful, that he will give them "to eat of the hidden manna:" they shall be supported and refreshed by communion with me, the true bread which came down from heaven; they shall have those blessings of the spiritual and eternal life, which the stranger intermeddled not with; which are safely hidden in me, as the manna was laid up before the Lord, and concealed in the ark. Jesus adds, "To him that overcometh, I will give a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it." The allusion is either to a white stone, by which anciently the acquittal and absolution of those who were accused, were declared; or to the white

stone given at the Grecian games to the victors, to entitle them to receive rewards. The meaning then is, that whatever reproaches or censures from the world sincere believers may sustain, they shall be acquitted and crowned by their Judge. Of this they already have a pledge in those characteristics of the new man, which none but those who bear them can suitably conceive, prize, or value; which now give them peace, and assure to them the rewards of glory.

Forty-eight miles south-east of Smyrna, was *Thyatira*. The church in this place is praised by the Redeemer for its Christian graces, and benevolent conduct. These too had continually increased: instead of apostatizing or becoming lukewarm, "the last were more than the first." Ah! why is not this more frequently the case? Why, after we have experienced so much of the goodness of God and the compassion of the Redeemer, after having bound our souls with so many obligations, why is it not always true, that our last works of piety, and love, and obedience are more numerous and spiritual, than when we first gave ourselves up to Jesus?

But even this church is not without reproof. Some woman, who is here called Jezebel, from a conformity of disposition and crimes with this impious wife of Ahab, pretending to extraordinary divine influence, and to the prophetic spirit, endeavoured to deceive the faithful, and to introduce all the abominations of the Nicolaitans. The Saviour had long borne with her, and given her space to repent, but she had abused his long-suffering, and the church had neglected to silence and to expel her. Jesus declares that he will inflict, upon her and her companions sufferings conformed to the nature of their

crimes, so that in their punishment they may read their guilt; and that all should be forced to acknowledge his omniscience.

To encourage those who had not been seduced, they are taught that they shall not participate in these afflictions; that no new doctrines or ceremonies shall be imposed on them; and they are exhorted to maintain the same purity of doctrine and practice for which they had hitherto been distinguished. Acting thus, they are assured that they shall partake of the dignity, and be sharers in the conquests, of the Redeemer; and that all opposing powers shall be subdued under them. Jesus adds, To him that overcometh "I will give the morning star:" all the light and grace, the comforts and enjoyments which are to be found in me, who am the bright and morning star; all the glory and lustre which cause the morning star to be hailed when, after the gloom of night, it foretels the approaching day; all the splendours of that world where "they who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever."

Sardis was situated thirty-three miles south of Thyatira: it had once been noted for its opulence; had been the capital of Lydia, and the place where Cræsus reigned. The church here is not charged with any corruption of doctrine, nor with any licentiousness of manners. Embracing all the principles of the gospel, there was nothing immoral in their conduct. Were they therefore blameless in the sight of the Redeemer? Alas! there were many of them who while they "had a name that they lived, were dead." Regarded as saints by men, too many of them were still dead in trespasses and sins; and others were lifeless and cold in the performance of

all sacred duties. They are solemnly admonished to recall the emotions and sentiments which they had when the gospel was first brought home to their hearts; to repent of their declensions; lest the Saviour should come suddenly, and surprise them individually by death, or as a church by his judgments.

Yet in the midst of this general declension, Jesus perceived "a few who had not defiled their garments;" who had kept themselves from the pollutions of the world, and preserved all the spirituality and ardour of religion, and the power of godliness. To these he promises that they should "walk with him in white," in this world: as worthy to be here regarded as his children, and ever rejoicing in the sense of his presence and care; and in the world to come they shall be clothed in robes of righteousness, light, and glory, that have been "washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb;" and instead of having their names blotted from the book of life, where they were enrolled as heirs of glory, they shall be openly acknowledged by the Saviour in the presence of the Father and his holy angels in that day when the everlasting sentence of all shall be pronounced.

Philadelphia was about twenty-seven miles south-east of Sardis: it received its name from its founder, Attalus Philadelphus. In the epistle to this church there is no reproof. It is declared that a door which none could close was opened to them by the Omnipotent, to admit them to blessings here and hereafter. Feeble in comparison with other churches, they had yet resisted all opposers; in the midst of trials, they had remained faithful. Some proud, presumptuous pretenders, boasting of the peculiar influences of the Spirit, and censuring all who did not

unite with them, had endeavoured to seduce them, as persons of the same character had assailed the church of Smyrna. But their efforts were in vain; the Saviour promises that these shall be humbled at the feet of those whom they had reproached, and compelled to acknowledge his care over his church. He assures the believers of Philadelphia, that they shall be preserved in the midst of those temptations that were coming on the earth, and exhorts them to keep in continual view that crown which should be given to all that persevere; he assures them that they shall be admitted to that world of glory represented as the city and temple of the Lord; that there they shall stand as immoveable pillars consecrated to God, marked with the name of the Redeemer.

To the south of Philadelphia was *Laodicea*, receiving its name from Laodice, the wife of Antiochus Theos, (the Syro-Grecian king,) its builder. The most awful reproofs are given to the members of this church; they retained the profession of religion, but were unaffected by it. They appeared careful only to preserve the name of Christians, regardless of the Christian spirit. For such criminal indifference the Saviour threatens entirely to reject them. Their guilt was aggravated from their high self-conceit; destitute of the only true riches, they yet supposed that they had "need of nothing;" that they possessed every gift and blessing of believers. Odious as was their state, Jesus does not immediately reject them: he compassionately entreats them to come to him, sensible of their wants, and obtain from him all that they need. He tells them that without repentance, they must expect the severest chastisement, if they are not given up as in-

corrigible; he declares, that notwithstanding such frequent repulses, he still stands and sues for admission to their hearts, into which he will bring the richest blessings; and he concludes by a promise of greater dignity to the faithful than the most ambitious could desire, or the most sanguine imagine: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." He shall be partaker of the inconceivable power and glory conferred on the exalted Mediator, and shall eternally reign with him.

And now "let him that hath an ear, hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." These epistles were written for our instruction, as well as for those to whom they were more immediately addressed; the admonitions and directions contained in them should teach us what is our duty.

Jesus still bears the same relation to his churches: he is present with us; he observes our conduct and our hearts; and to him we must approve ourselves. It is of little consequence "to be judged by man's judgment; to our own Master we must stand or fall."

Human nature is still the same; we are exposed to the same temptations with these early churches. Let us guard against any corruptions of the truth; any loose doctrines, any unrighteousness of life, any diminution of zeal and fervour; let us cherish the spirit of true piety, remembering that it is indeed of little importance to "have a name that we live, if we are dead;" never forgetting that "he who walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks has eyes of fire, and searches the heart."

Let the woes denounced against the open enemies of the church, rouse the careless and unbeliev-

ing: "If the righteous scarcely are saved, where will the wicked and ungodly appear?"

Finally, let us rejoice that our candlestick is not yet removed; that we enjoy the ordinances of religion; that Jesus again comes to us this day, knocking at the door of our hearts. Oh! may he enable us to open the door, that he may come in and sup with us. and we with him.



SERMON CXVI.



LECTURES ON THE APOCALYPSE

No. IV.



REVELATION, CHAP. IV. and V.

NEVER was a more splendid vision exhibited to mortal than that which was here presented to the beloved disciple. It combines all the terrible majesty which appalled the Israelites, when they stood at the foot of Sinai, with the grandeur and mystic obscurity of the manifestations of Jehovah to Isaiah, to Ezekiel, and to Daniel: and is rendered more touching and interesting than them all, from the fuller display of redeeming love.

It is the solemn introduction to that part of this book which is more immediately prophetic; and

is intended like the corresponding visions in the Old Testament, to impress the mind of him to whom the revelation is primarily made, and to dispose us to receive the predictions with reverence, and study them with care.

It was exhibited to St. John while he was "in the spirit:" his senses were closed to external objects, and while in a holy rapture, a supernatural ecstasy, these representations were made to him with clearness and force. Heaven appeared to be opened to him; the voice of the Redeemer, which had already been addressed to him in the vision described in the first chapter, again sounded to him like the voice of a trumpet: solemn, loud, and majestic, as that which was once heard on Sinai. He listened with joy to the gracious invitation: "Come up hither, and I will show thee the things which must be hereafter."

Before describing the vision, let me repeat the observation I have already made to you: the language of this book, and of prophecy in general, is symbolical; every symbol conveys an important truth; indicates real properties in the object to which it is applied; yet we are not to suppose that it always has its exact external archetype. Thus we have seen that every trait in the hieroglyphic description of the Saviour in the first chapter, gives us instruction as to his character or offices. Thus in the present vision, we rejoice in the certainty of his atonement while he is exhibited as the Lamb that was slain; yet in both instances we are not to imagine that the Saviour appears in these outward forms in the world of glory; and we are to regard those painters who have thus exhibited him, as deficient alike in taste, in elevated views of Jesus, and in a knowledge of the prophetic language. So also it would be ab-

surd to suppose that the four living creatures have that external appearance by which their attributes and qualities are symbolically represented.

After this remark, which I pray you to remember, and apply during the whole of these lectures, let us consider the vision itself.

The throne of the great and glorious God was exhibited. There was no definite similitude, no exact form of the Invisible; but a display of his presence far more majestic, glorious, and awful, than in the Shechinah, which in the temple rested between the cherubim. There appeared a splendour which infinitely exceeded the lustre and radiance of the most precious and brilliant gems. I speak thus generally, because I suppose that there are no particular mysteries to be sought in the jasper and sardine, which are peculiarly mentioned. The throne was encompassed with a rainbow of the soft and vivid green of the emerald. The rainbow, as you recollect, was the token of the covenant with Noah: here it surrounds the throne of the eternal Father, and in the tenth chapter we perceive it encompassing the head of the Redeemer. It teaches us, that the great and glorious Jehovah is our covenant God: it reminds us, that while his majesty and power will be displayed in the punishment of his enemies, he will ever remember the promise and oath of the covenant which assure the happiness of his children: it shows, that though so great, he is still on a throne of grace; that in the midst of his glory he is kind; and that we may look with confidence from those insufferable splendours which dazzle even the seraphim, and oblige them to veil their faces, to this mild and cheering evidence of his tenderness.

Yet lest we should for a moment forget his authority and grandeur, and that with all the confidence derived from covenant relation to him, we might mingle holy awe—"thunderings and lightnings, and" articulate "voices," proceeded from the throne of Him who, though thus gracious, never ceases to be majestic.

In the midst of this throne of Jehovah appeared the Redeemer, in his mediatorial glory. He was represented under the symbol of a Lamb that had been slain for sacrifice, and who, though alive, bore the marks of recent slaughter, to denote the perpetual efficacy and unfailing virtue of that atonement which, as our *priest*, he had made. He had seven horns: the emblem of perfect power, showing his ability, as *king* of his church, to defend it, and to subdue all its enemies; and seven eyes, to denote that he, the great *prophet*, has all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, a full acquaintance with all the circumstances of his church, a watchful care over it, a knowledge of all things future, and authority to distribute the gifts and graces of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in all their variety and excellence, according to his pleasure.

Immediately before the throne "were seven lamps of fire burning, which are the seven spirits of God." There is an allusion to the seven lamps in the Jewish temple, which were never to be extinguished. We have already shown you, that in this highly figurative book, this phrase expresses the one Holy Spirit of God, whose communications are so manifold, who sheds light, and holiness, and joy, into the souls of all his children; and blesses even the spirits of the just made perfect.

There was also opposite to the throne, "a sea of glass, like unto crystal," similar to the molten sea in the temple, and expressing the same great truths which it represented. The intent of the molten sea was, as you remember, to wash the priests before they offered their sacrifices; and in water drawn from it the sacrifices themselves were washed before they were presented to God. Both it and the sea in the vision represented that blood of the Redeemer, without which neither our persons nor our services could be acceptable. To show the unsullied purity and sinless worship of heaven, that which John beheld was "clear as crystal."

Nearest the throne of God were four *living creatures*, for thus the word *Zoa* should uniformly be translated. The description of them is entirely hieroglyphical: they have six wings full of eyes; having respectively the appearance of a lion, a calf or ox, a man, and a flying eagle. This species of figurative representation is, as you have seen, usual among the prophets; and, indeed, was common among all the eastern nations.* But what beings are thus represented here? Not angels; as many have supposed, for these are separately mentioned; but some who have been redeemed from among men, as is evident from the express declaration of their song. They are distinguished also from the general body of the faithful; they are the pious ministers of God; not merely the evangelists, to whom so many painters have applied these symbols, giving the man to Matthew, the lion to Mark, the ox to Luke, and the eagle to John; but the general body to faithful pastors in all ages. They are *full of eyes*, having

* Among a thousand instances of it, none are more striking than the inscriptions on the palace of Persepolis.

spiritual discernment; they should possess the undaunted courage of the *lion*; the patience and readiness to labour of the *ox*; the intelligence and compassion of the *man*; the elevation of mind, the celerity, the penetration, and quick-sightedness denoted by the *eagle*. They are represented as *four*, a number often used in such phrases as the four winds of heaven, to express universality. Happy the ministers who have these traits of character! They shall, in the future world, stand near the throne of their God; as those, on the other hand, who are unfaithful, shall suffer under double condemnation. None in heaven will be higher in glory than a Paul; none in hell will be sunk in deeper perdition than a Judas.

Beyond them, but still around the throne of God, are the twenty-four elders, seated on inferior thrones. They represent the universal church, and their number is probably derived from the twelve patriarchs of the Old Testament, and the twelve apostles of the New; they are *clothed in white*, denoting their perfect justification, and their entire sanctification; they have *crowns*, to display their dignity and glory, and to exhibit them as a royal priesthood; they all have *harps*, to show the melody of their hearts and the charms of their heavenly song; and "*golden vials full of odours*," denoting those prayers that rise more acceptable than the incense from the golden censers of the typical priests under the law.

But there is a world of sublime intelligences who never have dwelt in flesh, and who never sinned. These form one great and glorious family with the redeemed; they stood around the representatives of the church of Christ, prepared to unite with them in adoration. Their number was countless: myriads

and millions; "ten thousand times ten thousands, and thousands of thousands."

These blessed beings are continually employed in worship. They rest, indeed, from affliction, and from sin; no pain or pollution attends the redeemed to that world of glory, but they are not unoccupied: it is the vigorous, delightful rest of active spirits which they enjoy. Without intermission they praise God for his moral and natural perfections, and for that immutability which assures them of the perpetuity of their happiness. "They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come!" They bless him for the wonders of creation and providence: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive honour, and glory, and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." High as they are elevated above us, they shrink into nothing before the infinite Jehovah; and when they thus adore, they cast their crowns with humble reverence before him.

And oh! how sublime and rapturous must be their songs! Beholding, through the vast extent of God's dominion, displays of his perfections of which we cannot now conceive; and having all that darkness which to us so often hangs over the ways of Providence dispelled, and seeing that infinite love and unerring wisdom have directed every step that they have taken.

But there is another subject, which excites still higher raptures, and wakes a louder song: this is redemption through the blood of the cross. In the vision that we are explaining, a particular circumstance introduces this song. It is one of numerous passages of scripture, which leads us to conclude,

that, besides the general adoration in heaven, there are seasons of peculiar thanksgiving, and more solemn praise. When some of the divine attributes are more fully manifested to the blest than they had ever been before, their hallelujahs are louder, their worship more profound.

St. John saw in the hand of Him on the throne, a book or roll, written within and without, and sealed with seven seals: it was the history of the church, which he was about to reveal. To show its importance, and to display the excellence of the Redeemer, a mighty angel asks, with a loud voice, Who is worthy of this great commission, to reveal the purposes of God to man? To the question there was no reply. In the whole compass of created beings, no one was found of sufficient worth, dignity, power, and authority. St. John was overcome with sorrow, and wept; but his tears were dried, when one of the elders assured him, that though no mere creature could open this mysterious book, yet that divine person, who is the true Messiah, who is called "the lion of the tribe of Judah," in allusion to the patriarchal blessing upon that tribe, who, in conformity with several predictions of Isaiah, is termed "the root of David," was able and authorized to reveal these counsels.

The apostle then beholds him in that mediatorial character, in which he has already been described to you, as the Lamb that was slain, and sees him receive the book to announce its predictions, and effectually to accomplish them in their proper season.

There is immediately a shout of joy in heaven; the four living creatures and elders, the representatives of the church of redeemed sinners, are the pre-

centors in the choir, and they also conclude the song. It is *new*, in opposition to the song on creation and providence; in opposition to the song of the Old Testament saints, who could not speak of redemption accomplished; because of its excellence, and because the pleasure derived from it will never diminish. It consists in praise to the Redeemer: "Thou art worthy to take the book and open the seals thereof, for thou wast slain." "Other warriors are saluted with songs and acclamations, because they have slain their enemies; but Christ is applauded; he is crowned by the Father, and cheerfully saluted King by his church and people; they proclaim his worthiness in loudest hosannas, because he himself was slain." Nor is this wonderful when we consider the consequences of his death. "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth:" thy kingdom will at last prevail, and we shall participate in the victories of our King.

All heaven united in the song. Innumerable angels, without one jarring note or one cold feeling, cried with the redeemed, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive *power*," authority over all; "and *riches*," the possession of all things, and all the stores of mercy, grace, and comfort; "and *wisdom*," large as his authority and dominion; "and *strength*," omnipotent energy to accomplish his holy purposes; "and *honour*," from all creatures; "and *glory*," essential and mediatorial; "and *blessing*," from all the happy beings who have seen his excellence or tasted of his love. This is the endless due and the rightful power of him, who once appeared in ignominy and died

upon the cross. Such was the adoring praise of these exalted spirits :

“ The multitude of angels, with a shout,
Loud as from numbers without number, sweet
As from blest voices uttering joy : heaven rung
With jubilee, and loud hosannas fill’d
The eternal regions—
No voice exempt, no voice but well could join
Melodious part :—such concord is in heaven.”

Immediately the universal chorus is heard from the whole creation ; from angels, separate spirits, whose bodies were under the earth or in the sea, and saints on earth, unitedly crying, “ Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever.” Thus they “ honour the Son even as they honour the Father.”

The four living creatures solemnly cry, “ *Amen*,” so may it, so ought it, so shall it be ; and the elders prostrate adore “ Him who liveth for ever and ever.”

Brethren, let us bless God that a door is opened, so that we can look into heaven ; though we cannot expect the prophetic vision of John, yet we have “ the sure word of prophecy,” the torch of revelation, which throws light upon those things invisible to our bodily eyes ; we know what are the holy joys and occupations of heaven ; we know the path that conducts to it. In the-gospel a voice louder than a trumpet, cries to us, “ Come up hither,” ascend now in the exercise of faith, of love, and desire, and prepare to come up hither, and dwell here for ever, when you depart from earth. Happy they who have listened to this voice ; they can look into the world

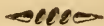
of glory, and see there a covenant God and an all-powerful Redeemer; they can there behold crowns and thrones prepared for them. Ah! when they shall be united with this glorious company, will they ever regret that they were disciples of Jesus?

1. Acknowledge your obligations to this Redeemer. Had the proclamation been made in heaven after the fall of man, "Who is worthy" to redeem him? angels must have been silent; none could rescue you except the Lamb that was slain; he has died for you; will you neglect his precious atonement? He is dear to every inhabitant of heaven, shall he not be dear to your souls?

2. When we think of the worship of heaven, let us lament our coldness, and languor, and weariness. Shall angels thus be moved by redeeming love, and shall we, who are so much more interested, be insensible? Oh! let us implore grace to imitate them; to unite with our exalted brethren in those ascriptions to Jesus which are so justly his due.

3. Finally: since there are so many myriads in the world of glory, elevated and happy, though of no higher original than ourselves, let us seek the same honour and immortality; since our souls are capable of such dignity; since it is offered us by the great Redeemer; since he urges us to be happy; let us not madly renounce these joys, and rush to that world where, instead of the harp of the seraph and the hosannas of the redeemed, nothing will be heard but groans, and shrieks, and the sighs of everlasting despair.

SERMON CXVII.



LECTURES ON THE APOCALYPSE.

No. V.



WE resume those lectures on the Apocalypse, which have been interrupted by the peculiar services of the two last Sabbaths. You recollect that after a general introduction on the nature, the importance, and the peculiar language of prophecy, we considered the author of this book, and the time and circumstances in which it was written : we explained the splendid visions vouchsafed to the apostle ; we illustrated the epistles to the seven churches ; we contemplated the glory of the exalted Jesus ; and listened to the rapturous and adoring gratulations of angels and the redeemed, when he received the book in which were inscribed the purposes of Providence. to open its seals and to execute what was there foretold. We have thus been brought to

CHAPTER VI.

which we are to explain in the present lecture.

The chief opposers of the kingdom of Christ, were the Jewish nation and the Roman empire. The former had already been punished for their guilt ; the temple had been destroyed ; the smoking ruins of Jerusalem displayed the indignation of the Almighty, and numberless Jews had been loaded with chains

and carried into captivity. At the time when the apostle was in Patmos, the strength of Satan against the church was collected in the Roman empire: It became the chief object of the judgments and mercies of God: it existed from the time of this revelation under three distinct forms; as an empire professing heathenism; as an empire professing Christianity; and as a state, after its division, upholding by all its power and arts a system of corrupt religion. The events that should occur to it and the world, are also foretold in three classes: under the seals heathenism is overthrown; under the trumpets the united Christian empire is punished for its corruption of religion; and under the vials the anti-christian hierarchy is visited with the severest woes for its false doctrines, its unholy conduct, and persecution of the saints; and at last, is utterly destroyed.

The chapter which now claims your attention, contains an account of the opening of the first six seals, and embraces the history of the Roman empire and the church from about A. D. 97, when John enjoyed these visions to A. D. 323; when the empire ceased to be heathen, and Christianity was established under Constantine.

When the

1st Seal was broken and the roll opened, the apostle heard a voice loud and majestic as thunder, saying unto him, "*Come and see.*" It proceeded from the first of the four living creatures whom, as you remember, we showed you to be symbolical of the faithful ministers of the Redeemer in all ages and in all parts of the world. It was he who had the appearance of the lion that thus spake: and his address to the apostle shows us that it is our duty to observe the providences of God, and that ministers are bound

to call upon their hearers to observe the signs of the times. It is a duty that is pleasant and easily performed, when, as under the present seal, the extension of the kingdom of the Redeemer is exhibited to us.

The apostle beheld “a white horse, and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him, and he went forth, conquering and to conquer.”

It is the blessed Saviour who is here presented with traits, similar to those by which he is painted in Ps. xlv. 3—5: “Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O Most Mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty; and in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things; thine arrows are sharp in the hearts of the king’s enemies, whereby the people fall under thee.” Thus, also, he is represented in the 19th chapter of this book. “I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True; and in righteousness he doth judge and make war: and he was clothed in a vesture dipped in blood, and his name was called the Word of God.” Rev. xix. 11. 13.

There is no difficulty in explaining the particular parts of this hieroglyphic. Jesus is represented as an illustrious conqueror, going forth to war: he has a *crown*, the emblem of supreme command, and of the victories already gained, and still to be gained by him. He has a *bow*: the power of his word and spirit penetrates like sharp arrows into the hearts of his enemies. He is seated upon a *white horse*: the *horse*, from its beauty, strength, speed, and fitness for the service of man, in this and the three succeeding seals, signifies a *dispensation of Providence*. The nature of this dispensation is indicated by its colour.

On the present occasion it is *white* ; not only to represent joy and triumph, but also purity, righteousness, and mercy. He who is seated on the horse is either he who regulates the course of Providence, or one commissioned by him. In this seal it is the glorious Redeemer ; but in the other three, they are those sent out by him to afflict his enemies. He goes forth *conquering and to conquer*, passing successively from one triumph to another. You perceive then, what is here taught us : Christ had begun to subdue the nations to himself, and would still proceed till his last enemy should be destroyed.

It was verified in the wonderful spread of the gospel in this early period ; in that astonishing extension of Christianity, for which the unbeliever in vain endeavours to find any adequate cause.

There is a peculiar propriety and beauty in commencing with this cheering view, lest the hearts of believers should be overwhelmed with sorrow at the prediction of those woes which awaited them ; but assured of the ultimate triumph of their King, they can listen with composure to the annunciation of those judgments, which were soon to be poured out upon the Roman empire.

The victories of Jesus, hitherto exhibited, are unbloody ; they consist in subduing the hearts of his enemies, and converting them into friends ; but he will inflict vengeance on those who continue in rebellion. This is taught when the

Ild Scal is broken, and another roll opened. The apostle is called to examine it, by the second living creature bearing the appearance of the ox ; reminding us of the labour and patience which become all, and especially Christian ministers, in times of peculiar suffering.

St. John perceives “a red horse, and to him that sat on him power was given to take peace from the earth, and that they,” that is, principally the enemies of the gospel, “should slay one another.”

Nothing can be more plain than this hieroglyphic. It points to wars, and massacre, and blood, among those foes of the Redeemer, against whom he had come out to war. Read then the history of the Roman empire, from about A. D. 100 to A. D. 138, and you will every where see Providence commenting upon prophecy. The Jews and Romans, the great enemies of the gospel, who for some time had lived together in peace, now appeared to be occupied only in slaughtering one another. The massacre of 460,000 Romans in Cyrene, Egypt, and Cyprus, by the Jews, in the latter years of Trajan, with the dreadful vengeance inflicted on them by the Romans; the rebellion of the whole Jewish nation under the false Messiah, the impostor Barchochab, their slaughter of the Romans; and on the other hand, the tremendous victories over the Jews, by Adrian and his commanders; which, however, were so dearly bought that, in his letters to the senate, he abstained from the ordinary salutations; although 580,000 Jews had been slain by the sword, besides the countless number which perished by famine and wretchedness, and 1000 of their strongest towns destroyed; their utter expulsion out of Judea by Adrian, and the heavy tax which they paid him for the sad privilege of coming annually, for one single day, to look at the ruins of Jerusalem, and weep over them:—These are some of the events which show how fully this prediction was accomplished.

But other woes were to succeed: the

IIIrd Seal was opened, and the third living crea-

ture cried, "*Come and see.*" It was he who had the face of a man; and we are taught by his address, how necessary reason, sympathy, and prudence are, under severe general judgments.

St. John beheld "a black horse, and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And a voice in the midst of the four living creatures said, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine."

The colour of the horse indicates the affliction that will attend his progress; the balances denote the scrupulous care with which it would be necessary to weigh out provisions; the declaration from the midst of the four living creatures shows, that the famine will be severe. The *χοινιξ chœnix*, the measure here spoken of, was the allowance for the daily provision of the labourer; the *denarius*, or Roman penny, (about 14 cents,) was the day-wages of a labourer: all then that could be procured by constant labour would be merely personal subsistence. The latter clause, "*See thou hurt not the oil and the wine,*" *Καὶ τὸ ἐλπίον καὶ τὸν οἶνον μὴ ἀδικήσης*, may perhaps better be translated, "*See thou do no injustice as to the oil and the wine.*" Bread, oil, and wine, the absolute necessities and the comforts of life, were sparingly and carefully to be weighed out.

And does not history immediately explain this seal? The last extended to A. D. 138. This reaches from that period to A. D. 193. During this time, Antoninus Pius and Antoninus Philosophus were upon the throne. All the historians of the time speak of the uniform famine under them both. The former preserved the people from insurrection only by distributing provisions from his own stores; and Aure-

lius Victor, speaking of the latter, says, that in his reign there was nothing with which mortals can be afflicted, but what raged, and, among these calamities, he includes famine.

The calamities that threatened the world were not yet terminated; for, on the opening of the

IVth Seal, St. John saw “a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and hell,” rather, the invisible world, a crowd of ghosts, “followed with him. And power was given to them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death,” that is, with pestilence, “and with the beasts of the earth.”

To this the attention of John was also called by the fourth living creature, like an eagle; to show how elevated in our affections, and quick-sighted with regard to duty, we should be in seasons of uncommon calamity.

There is no possibility of mistaking the general meaning of this prophecy; it denotes a period of peculiar mortality from the four great judgments, with which God visits the guilty. Nor is there any difficulty in tracing the accomplishment of it. The last seal terminated in A. D. 193. Read the history of the Roman empire to A. D. 270, when this seal concludes, and you will see the verification of this awful picture; you will behold death reigning in every mode; you will contemplate only desolation and wo.

The armies at their pleasure raised, deposed, murdered emperors. In the course of ten years, thirty different emperors were set up by the armies in different provinces, and they were continually warring with each other: massacres were perpetual: the northern barbarians broke in upon the em-

pire: the emperor Valerian was taken prisoner by the Persians: in the reigns of Gallus and Volusian, such a pestilence prevailed as had never been heard of; beginning at Ethiopia, for fifteen years it entirely depopulated many provinces of the empire; wild beasts were of consequence multiplied, and their depredations were dreadful.

But all this did not produce repentance, nor allay the fury of the heathens against Christians. This we are taught by the

Vth Scal, which, when opened, presented a scene different from the others. The apostle "saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them: and it was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also, and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled."

Though the persecutions of Christians have not been previously mentioned, yet they are here referred to; and a season of peculiar oppression that awaits them, the terrible persecution under Dioclesian, is foretold. Yet Christians are supported under this prospect, by beholding the splendid rewards of the martyr, and the short season during which their sufferings were to endure. No living creature calls to the apostle to "come and see," because in these persecutions, one of the first objects was to close the churches of Christians, and to kill and imprison all the ministers of the gospel; but though these are no longer exhibited, we hear in their place

the voice of the holy martyrs. They appear under the altar, on which they have been offered as sacrifices to God; their blood speaks, as did that of Abel; not from a desire of vengeance, but from a regard to the glory of God, and the good of the church, they pray that the power of the persecutor may be abolished, and that the enemies of the Redeemer may be punished. White robes were given them, the symbol of their justification before God, and of their righteousness; and it was declared to them that others should suffer.

Who is so ignorant of the early history of the church, as not to know that, from the conclusion of the last seal to A. D. 303, when this seal terminates, these persecutions prevailed? Who has not heard of the cruelties of Dioclesian? And did not the blood of the martyrs speak at once to God, imploring from him retribution, and to men, giving them instruction? How easily could we heap up the names of martyrs in this period, including those of every age, and condition, and sex; joyfully submitting to torments, the mere account of which makes our blood run cold, and affords us a striking proof of the cruelty of which man is capable. But I have not time to enter into these details. I hasten to the illustration of the

VIIth Seal, which embraces the period from the year 303 to 323, when Christianity was publicly established in the Roman empire. The account of this is given from the twelfth verse to the end of the chapter.

The figures, indeed, are derived from the transactions of the judgment-day; but an attention to prophetic chronology, as well as a regard to the symbolical language used in the scriptures, will convince us that there is no reference here to the end of the

world. Many events are to happen after those that are recorded in the end of this chapter; and nothing is more common in the prophets both of the Old and New Testaments, than to represent the punishment of idolatrous nations by figures derived from the events that shall occur at the dissolution of the world. It would be easy to prove this, did our time allow, by the induction of particular instances. There is also a propriety in this phraseology, since God then comes to judge these communities, as he will judge individuals in the final day. And besides, there is no obscurity; for we shall see, before the termination of these lectures, that there is a uniformity in the application of all the prophetic symbols.

These remarks, taken in connection with those made in our first lecture, will enable us fully to understand the events foretold under the sixth seal. "There was a great earthquake;" the civil and religious constitution of the world was changed. "The sun," the symbol of supreme government, and here of the ancient pagan government of the Roman empire, "was darkened, and became black as sackcloth of hair;" was degraded and humbled. "The moon," the ecclesiastical state of the empire, "became as blood," lost all its lustre, their temples were overthrown, their false systems renounced. "The stars," their idol deities, "fell from heaven," were no longer regarded. "The heaven departed as a scroll," the whole system of their pagan worship was shrivelled and destroyed. All, of every rank in society, felt that they could make no opposition to the Omnipotent; that they could not defend themselves against the Redeemer. In one word, that wonderful revolution took place, which, commencing

in A. D. 303, was completed by the firm establishment of Christianity under Constantine, in 323.

Here we pause. Nothing would have been easier than to have illustrated more fully every part of the preceding discourse. But enough has been said to give you a general view of the subject; and we are desirous to advance, with as much rapidity as possible, in this mystic but animating book. One great design in choosing it as the foundation of a course of lectures, was to show you where we now stand, and what are the consequent duties imposed upon us. But in order to convince you more fully on these points, I thought it fit to trace with you the whole line of prophecy from the time of John to the present period.

Let us not conclude the present lecture without some practical remarks.

1. Admire the authority, the power, and the glory of Jesus. He went forth to conquer the nations: his success is proved by the countless number of happy, holy, exalted beings, round his throne, who have been subdued by his grace, and who now participate in his glory. It is proved by the reception of his gospel in so many countries where once the altars of paganism were reared. It shall be proved more fully when that day arrives which is so rapidly hastening on, when the whole world shall be submissive to him. Solemnly inquire then, Has he conquered me? He must be your Lord; he must be victorious over you, either by his grace or his power; you shall be brought to his feet, either as voluntary subjects, or as foes crushed by his might. Think of the righteousness and mercy of his kingdom, and submit to him. Remember that he is still "to conquer," and pray for the extension of his

kingdom, and use all the means in your power to promote it.

2. Child of affliction! you have been reviewing some of the sufferings of early Christians. Repine not then at thy lot; thou art not walking in an untrodden path: through much tribulation the early believers entered into glory. He who supported them, can support thee; he who crowned them is still faithful, and sympathizing, and kind.

3. We have seen the prevalence of war, and pestilence, and famine, in the earlier periods of the church: what cause of thankfulness is it that we are not visited with these judgments of God! We have contemplated the fury of the persecutor: oh! how grateful should we be, that we are free from the rod of the oppressor, and can worship God according to the dictates of our consciences! Surely our peculiar privileges call for more devoted lives.

4. We have contemplated the happiness of the martyrs: the same robe of righteousness, the same crown of glory, will be given to all the children of God. If faithful unto death, we shall mingle with them in the world of felicity, and adore and bless our common Lord. Let us follow them so far as they followed Jesus.

5. Finally: let us live in the believing expectation of the judgment-day, that day when, without a figure, the events shall occur which are represented in the conclusion of this chapter: when the wicked shall in vain look to created objects for support; when nothing can preserve them from "the wrath of Him who sitteth upon the throne," and from the more intolerable wrath of the Lamb, the injured, insulted, contemned Lamb of God. He now offers to take

away our sin : let us no longer trifle with him ; let us not be satisfied till we are authorized to look to him as our friend, and to anticipate the judgment-day as the period when he will manifest himself as our advocate and Redeemer.

SERMON CXVIII.



LECTURES ON THE APOCALYPSE,

No. VI.



REVELATION, CHAP. VII.

IN our last lecture we explained the visions that were exhibited on the opening of the first six seals of that prophetic book that was given to the Redeemer, that he might reveal its contents to the church, and accomplish the purposes of Providence that it contained. In this explanation we traced the history of the church from the period when this revelation was communicated to John, to the establishment of religion under Constantine. After this important event, there was a respite from persecution, and a season of tranquillity ; during this time the visible church greatly increased, and the number of nominal Christians was augmented ; but as wealth and honour were now connected with religion, the

public profession of it did not afford the same evidence of sincere piety as when the rack and the flames were the portion of the followers of Jesus. The Saviour therefore sealed those in a peculiar manner who were real believers; thus designating them as his redeemed property, and assuring them of protection and defence during those judgments that were soon to come upon the earth, and that were announced by the sounding of the trumpets in the succeeding chapter. Thus too will the Saviour mark and secure his own, in all ages of the world, through all the corruptions and dangers of the church. The whole of the number thus redeemed and glorified by him, appeared to the apostle, and he contemplated their elevation and felicity with joy and gratitude. Such is the general meaning of this chapter: let us consider it more in detail.

In the same roll in which the dissolution of the pagan system was represented, St. John beheld four angels standing "on the four corners of the earth," or at the four cardinal points. They are the ministers of God's providence, and at his command they inflict calamities or pour out judgments upon guilty nations. Of these calamities and judgments, violent winds, which carry desolation with them, and sweep away opposing obstructions, are a frequent scriptural symbol. But these angels act not without a commission. They here appear "holding the winds," waiting for the orders of God: till he speaks, all is calm: "the earth, the sea, and the trees," all ranks and orders of men, are uninjured. It is probably a reference to that period of unusual tranquillity and peace, which intervened between the establishment of Christianity by Constantine, in A. D. 323, and his death in A. D. 337.

It was intimated, that this tranquillity should continue but a short time. Another angel of superior dignity rises from the east: it is the Redeemer, who rose in the east as the glorious Sun of Righteousness, and thence shed the light and consolations of the gospel: you recollect that he is elsewhere termed "the angel of God's presence;" (Isaiah lxiii. 9.) "the angel who bears God's name;" (Exod. xxiii. 21.) "the angel or messenger of the covenant;" (Mal. iii. 1.) and "a mighty angel." (Rev. x. 1.) He has authority over the four other angels, as he has over all the heavenly host, and speaks to them as their Ruler and Lord. He perfectly knows all his true followers; he has power to seal them, and does actually seal them by the conferment of the Holy Spirit of promise. The gift of this Spirit, whereby Christians are elsewhere said to be "sealed unto the day of redemption," distinguishes them as clearly in the view of God as an external mark impressed upon their foreheads would point them out to their fellow-men. The angels are commanded to suspend the execution of those calamities which, under the trumpets, will be brought upon the world, till the real disciples of Jesus are thus sealed: are thus designated as his peculiar and purchased possession: and are as certainly assured of the divine protection as were those sealed ones in Ezekiel ix. upon whose foreheads was set a mark, because they sighed and cried for the abominations done in the midst of the city, and concerning whom, those that carried the slaughter-weapons were charged, "Come not near any one upon whom is the mark."

The number of those who were thus sealed, is said to be one hundred and forty-four thousand: a definite for an indefinite number, and alluding at once to the

twelve tribes under the old dispensation, and to the twelve apostles under the new. They were few in comparison with the multitudes that then professed Christianity; but, alas! in every age how many are there who have the external seals of the sacraments who are destitute of the internal seal of the Holy Spirit?

Those who are sealed are said to be gathered “out of all the tribes of the children of Israel.” I have already remarked to you, that throughout the greater part of this book, the images are derived from the Jewish temple and worship: and that when the tribes of Israel are spoken of, the true Israel of God, the church of the Redeemer, is meant, and not merely the natural posterity of Jacob. This is a mode of speaking familiar to all the apostles: how often does Paul term believers “the seed of Abraham,” because they have the same faith? “the circumcision,” because their hearts are purified? How often do Jerusalem and Zion signify the whole church? It is not then at all surprising, that this phraseology should be common in so mystic a book. The sealed are those who belong to the invisible church, whether they originally were Gentiles or Jews. In the enumeration of the tribes, Dan and Ephraim are omitted; perhaps because these tribes were the leaders in idolatry, and therefore not calculated to represent the pure church, and in their stead are substituted Levi and Joseph: the former indeed had no portion among his brethren, but is entitled to the same celestial blessings with the rest; the latter, to whose two sons Jacob gave such a blessing as constituted them heads of two distinct tribes.

In addition to those who were sealed during this short period of the church's tranquillity, the apostle was taught that in every age, whatever might be the corruptions or the persecutions of the church, there should always be the sealed ones of Jesus. To encourage Christians, there was then exhibited to St. John the glorious assembly that shall at last appear in purity and joy before the throne of God. As the prophets of the Old Testament frequently interrupt the series of their predictions, to speak of the advent of Messiah, the great object of ancient prophecy, so St. John has several times interspersed in the course of this book, views of the church as it shall finally appear triumphant over all its enemies, and crowned with felicity and glory by its Redeemer. These views are introduced with great beauty and propriety, to animate believers under those sufferings they are called to endure; to make them stand firm in the faith in the darkest and most disastrous times; and by an enlarged and comprehensive view of "the general assembly and church of the first-born in heaven," to dissipate the gloom which rests upon the mind in contemplating those divine judgments, or those human corruptions, which constitute so large a portion of the history of the church on earth. From the 9th verse to the end of the chapter, we have such a view of that church triumphant, to become members of which ought to be the great object of our desire and pursuit. Let us arrange under a few different heads the chief traits of this beautiful and sublime picture.

1. We are pointed to *the chief beings who shall inhabit the world of glory*:

There is the *great God*; every where present, yet in heaven he more peculiarly manifests himself:

there is his palace, his throne : there he unveils his perfections in a more resplendent manner than in any other part of his dominions ; so displays himself, that the beatific vision, the great source of felicity to the redeemed, is enjoyed by them when removed from the sorrows of earth, they enter “ the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

There is the *Lamb of God*, Jesus, in his mediatorial character. We stand not only before the throne, but also before the Lamb. He who shed his blood for our salvation ; he to whom we have so often devoted ourselves ; he whom our souls adore, and desire more clearly to see, and more fully to enjoy, shall be there. We shall behold him who for us submitted to such agonies, inconceivably glorified and exalted.

There are the *angels of God* : even now they form part of the family which acknowledges Christ as its Head ; even now they hold an uninterrupted intercourse with the church of the Redeemer upon earth ; they minister to the heirs of salvation ; and in the world to come, informing us of many offices of love they have performed to us, they shall unite with redeemed sinners in their praises and hallelujahs. It is true, having never sinned, and been exposed to the curse of the law, they cannot raise so high a song for recovering grace as we can : they therefore appear in this chapter, as well as in other parts of this book, as standing further from the throne than the elders and living creatures, the representatives of the ransomed children of Adam : yet they still unite with the church triumphant, falling on their faces, worshipping God, and crying, “ Amen : blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour,

and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen!"

There, are *all good men*, "of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues." Those who have lived at different periods of the world, will there meet: an Abel will bow with Isaiah, a John with a Watts. Those from various parts of the world will there be united: the believing Hindoo and the converted American; all the followers of the Redeemer who love one another upon earth, but who are prevented by distance of place, by interposing seas, or mountains, from seeing each other in the flesh; all who have lived in various states of the church; those who have obtained the crown of martyrdom; and those who have preserved their integrity amidst the smiles and allurements of the world; those who just opened their eyes upon the earth, closed them in death, and soared to glory; and those who long and successfully warred under the banner of the Redeemer. All good men who here were divided by various sentiments, and prevented by their peculiarities of belief from having a perfect union, though their souls were supremely attached to Jesus, shall there mingle their hearts, and wonder at their former coldness and distance: one blaze of light shall irradiate every heart; and all dissention shall for ever cease.

2. We are taught what is the *number* of the blest, or rather, are assured that they will consist of "a multitude which no man can number." From the time of Abel, the first redeemed sinner, accessions have continually been making to the society of the glorified. There is not a day that passes, in which there are not some, shaking off the burden of sin and corruption, who are admitted to the plenitude

of holiness and joy: myriads upon myriads shine already in heaven as the evidences of the Father's love, the trophies of the Saviour's grace. And we are taught by the scriptures, that all who shall be saved before the millennial glory of the church, will be only the first-fruits, bearing no greater proportion to the spiritual harvest, than the first-fruits offered in the temple did to all the harvest throughout Judea. Imagine all these collected, and you will easily conceive that however little the flock of Christ may now appear, yet when all his followers shall at last be collected, they will be innumerable.

3. We are taught *whence they came*: they all "came out of great tribulation." They experienced indeed different degrees of sorrow: some experienced the tortures of martyrdom; others lived in a more serene state of the church: but they all have had to contend with sorrows; to conflict with temptation, with sin, with spiritual distress. To none of them did God promise, on none of them did he confer, perfect exemption from distress.

4. We are taught *how they obtained heaven*: the blood of the martyr did not merit it: the sufferings of the believer did not deserve it: there is but one fountain in which they all have been cleansed, the atoning blood of Jesus: there is but one song in which they all unite, "Thou, Saviour, art worthy, for thou wast slain." Neither sufferings nor merits are there presented, as the ground of pardon and salvation; "the blood of the Lamb," and that alone, was their plea upon earth for justification, and is the theme of gratitude and triumph when they enter into heaven.

5. We are taught what is *the nature of their felicity*:

they have *white robes*, are perfectly holy and fully justified; they have *palms* in their hands, the symbol of victory and triumph, as well as the accompaniment of praise; they are *before the throne of God*, who dwells among them, affording them brighter manifestations of his glory than in the ancient temple, and more intimate communion than any of his saints can have in this world of darkness and distance from him. "*They serve him day and night:*" heaven indeed is a state of rest, but not the rest of an unintelligent substance, or of tired powers; but that of an active spirit, which can only be easy and at rest when freed from the clogs that impair its vigour and restrain its activity. It is indeed a freedom from weariness and toil, but not a cessation from action: there the redeemed serve God, not with dull and lifeless affections, as ours too often are, but with unceasing life and vigour, joy and transport. There they are *freed from all calamities*; "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." Neither those temporal nor spiritual calamities, which here so often agitate their hearts and bring tears into their eyes, shall attend them beyond the tomb. God himself, who in their afflictions upon earth, "pitied them as a Father pitieth his children," shall then "wipe all tears from their eyes," and pour the rich stream of blessedness upon their souls. Jesus will exercise towards them his pastoral office: as the good Shepherd, he upon earth laid down his life for his sheep; followed them into the wilderness; drew them back from the precipice, down which they were rushing; nourished them by his ordinances; and in communion with him made them to lie down by the still waters, and led them to green pastures. In heaven,

on the throne, he is still their Shepherd: he gives them richer consolations; he feeds them with higher joys than they could conceive on earth; he leads them to the living, ever-flowing fountains of blessedness, and makes them happy beyond their conceptions, and for eternity.

Such is a brief sketch of the enrapturing view presented to the apostle.

1. Afflicted Christian! in contemplating it, wilt thou still repine at afflictions that must so soon and so gloriously terminate? Who will murmur at "great tribulation," which results in heaven, and will render still dearer its perfect and eternal beatitude?

2. Who is prepared for this heaven? He, and he only who is washed in the blood of the Lamb. If uninterested in his atonement, all our sufferings on earth are only the terrible presage of that eternal agony which awaits the enemies of the Redeemer. Art thou united to him by faith? does thy life attest that thou art his child? has he sealed thee by his Spirit, and does this Spirit dwell in thee and animate thee as the pledge, and earnest, and first-fruits of heaven?

3. Finally: let us emulate the felicity of the blessed; let us aspire to the same glory; with such sublime prospects let us not cleave to the earth, and with the serpent feed upon dust; but seek for honour, glory, and immortality. To us are offered robes as white, crowns as radiant, palms as verdant, as those possessed whom the apostle here beheld. God give us grace so to live, that at last we may be united with them!

SERMON CXIX.



LECTURES ON THE APOCALYPSE.

No. VII.



REVELATION, CHAP. VIII.

WE have beheld six of the seals broken in succession, and have explained the events that were symbolically foretold by them. We have beheld the overthrow of paganism in the Roman empire; have seen the commencement of those corruptions that are about to bring down the judgments of God; have marked the condescension of our Saviour in sealing his real disciples, that they may be designated as his peculiar property, and be assured of defence and protection by him. We have now advanced to the seventh seal, which includes all the seven trumpets, as the seventh trumpet includes all the seven vials. We have found, in every step that we have taken, that history confirmed the Bible; that the works of God in providence were the best commentary on his predictions in his word. In our progress we shall see still more evidence of this important truth.

I have remarked to you, that, when John wrote, the chief strength of Satan against the church was

collected in the Roman empire; and that a considerable portion of this book is designed to show the conduct of Providence towards this empire. It existed, from the time of this revelation, under three distinct forms: as an empire professing heathenism; as an empire professing Christianity; and as a state, after the division of the empire, upholding, by all its power and arts, a system of corrupt religion. The events that should occur to it, and to the church as connected with it, are also foretold in three classes: Under the seals, heathenism is overthrown; under the trumpets, the united Christian empire is punished for its corruption of religion; and, under the vials, the anti-Christian hierarchy is visited with the severest woes for its false doctrines, its unholy conduct, and its persecutions of the saints; and, at last, is utterly destroyed. The seals, the trumpets, and the vials, are indeed as the successive volumes of the same work, containing the history of Divine Providence; and by this diversity of emblems, a spirit of inquiry is excited, and the charms of variety and novelty given to the scenery.

The apostle beheld the seventh seal opened: but before its contents are revealed, there is, for a short space, a profound and reverential silence in heaven, a pause of suspense, till the designs of Providence are declared.

Preparations are made for the execution of some extraordinary judgments on the world: "Seven angels who stood before God," perhaps the seven principal archangels so often referred to in this book, and in the prophecy of Zechariah, come from their station, and receive seven trumpets, indicative of the alarms that would soon be produced by wars, desolations, and woes.

But in the midst of public judgments, the Saviour will not forget his friends. Before he permitted the four angels to loose the winds, he sealed all his real children. Before the blast of the trumpet is heard, he exhibits himself to them, careful of their interests. "Another angel," the angel of God's presence, "stood before the altar" of burnt-offering, to denote the atonement he had made with his blood, and "had a golden censer with much incense," to denote the fulness of his merit, and the acceptableness of his mediation through his expiatory sacrifice. This incense he offered up "with the prayers of all saints," rendering their devotions acceptable by his intercession before the throne of grace, the mercy-seat, which intercession had been typically represented by the perfume of incense rising from the golden altar in the temple.

How animating and touching are those representations of Jesus that are every where interspersed in the Apocalypse! It is, perhaps, this circumstance which most endears it to the ordinary believer. He whose historical researches have not been sufficient to enable him to compare predictions with their accomplishment, nevertheless reads this book with deep interest, because he every where in it meets with that Saviour whom he loves. Whether he considers the glory in which he appeared to the beloved disciple, which so overpowered the faculties of nature as to cause John to fall at his feet as dead: whether he regards him exhibited as the Lamb that was slain; as the object of adoration to angels and the redeemed; as the interceding angel of the covenant, standing for us at the golden altar: whether the believer view Jesus in these, or any of the other sublime or tender forms in which he is perpetually

exhibited in this book; love, and faith, and hope, and joy, must be excited.

Pause for a moment at the representation of the text, and ask thyself, 'Am I a man of prayer?' It is taken for granted that thou art, if thou art one of the saints. The supplications of believers will rise to God, will be presented to the Redeemer. In vain dost thou call thyself a Christian, if, in the offices of devotion, thou dost not frequently approach the mercy-seat. Thou treatest with contempt the advocacy of Jesus, if thou dost not, by frequent prayer, employ him in this office.

Inquire whether, in affliction, thy prayers are multiplied. Judgments were about to be poured out, and the Advocate, the kind Intercessor, hastened to the golden altar, to receive the numerous petitions that would be poured out by his children. Wo to thee, if affliction does not render the throne of grace dearer to thee, and cause thy visits to thy closet to be more numerous! It is a sad sign of insincerity, if, under the pressure of sorrow, thou choose to struggle with it alone, rather than shed thy tears into the bosom of Jesus; if thou choose to bear thine own burden, rather than flee to him to be delivered from it, or to obtain strength to endure it.

Inquire what is thy plea in prayer. Dost thou expect to be heard because of thy sincerity; because of thy freedom and enlargement in thy devotions; because thy affections were deeply moved when thou wast engaged in the exercises of devotion? Ah! notwithstanding all this, there is so much imperfection mingled with thy first services, that they could not be accepted by a holy God, were not Jesus in heaven receiving thy supplications, and at prayer for thee. Use no other plea than that which he pre-

sents: his atoning blood and justifying righteousness. Ever remember, that if he is able to save to the uttermost, it is because he ever liveth to make intercession for us.

But, enemies of the Redeemer, neglecters of the grace of God! never forget that the compassion of Jesus is not a weak pity, which interferes with the claims of justice; that he is regardful of the honour of his Father, as well as of the miseries of mortals. The same Saviour who had sealed his followers, and assured them that their prayers should be heard and answered, passes from the golden to the brazen altar, and filling his censer with those coals of this altar, which denoted the burning wrath of God that could be satisfied only by an atonement, cast it down upon the earth. It represented the divine vengeance that would be executed upon those who had already deeply corrupted religion; and, notwithstanding their profession of Christianity, displayed not the spirit of the gospel. This act was followed by "voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake:" symbols of those woes and calamities which fell upon the empire before the sounding of the trumpets, in the interval between the extinction of the family of Constantine, to the death of Theodosius, from 353 to 395. There were calamities, invasions by barbarians, who were again repulsed; and the Romans still maintained their territories, though in anxiety and suspense.

But the tempest at last burst, for the angels were no longer restrained by the great Redeemer, and the *first trumpet* sounded; "and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth, and the third part of the trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up."

The symbols of *hail* and *fire* are frequently used to signify the desolating judgments of God. David thus describes the vengeance of the Lord against his enemies: "The Lord thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hailstones and coals of fire." (Ps. xviii. 13.) Thus Isaiah foretells the invasion of Israel by the Assyrians: "Behold the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand." (Is. xxviii. 2.) Thus also the approaching destruction of the Assyrians is announced: "The Lord shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall show the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of his anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones." (xxx. 30.) It would be easy to add other illustrations of these symbols: these are sufficient. *Blood* is here added to show, not only that there will be great devastation, but also much slaughter.

This was to be inflicted on "the third part of the earth;" the phrase generally used in this book to mark the Roman empire.

The "trees and the grass;" the great and the poor, were alike to suffer from it.

Turn now to history, and see how perfectly all this was accomplished. I enter not into particulars: you will find them in all the histories of the Roman empire; and in none more fully than in the work of Gibbon, who, though an infidel, unconsciously bears testimony to the divinity of the scriptures. We have already, in the explanation of this book, been brought down to A. D. 395. From this time to A. D. 453, when this trumpet concludes, we find a series of calamity, bloodshed, and devastation, of which, even at

such a distance of time, we cannot read without shuddering. The repeated invasions of Alaric; the ravages under Radagaisus; the desolating progress of the Vandals; the woes brought by Attila, who so often boasted that "the grass never grew again where his horse had trodden:" these, and other similar calamities, till the year 453, the period of the sudden death of Attila, fully verified these predictions. They were woes which, like the hail, came from the north.

The *second trumpet* sounded; "and as it were, a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea; and the third part of the sea became blood; and the third part of the creatures which were in the sea and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed."

The symbol of *the sea* is explained by John himself, Rev. xvii. 15: "The waters which thou sawest, are people, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." As opposed to the earth, it signifies many nations collected together, no longer in a quiet, but in an agitated state. Such was the situation of the Roman empire after the furious tempest from the north, described under the preceding trumpet.

Mountains, in the style of prophecy, are cities: *casting them into the sea*, denotes their desolation. Look at the description of the destruction of Babylon, Jer. li. 24, 25, 26. 42: "I will render unto Babylon and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea, all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight, saith the Lord. Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, which destroyest all the earth, saith the Lord: and I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain. And they shall not take of thee

a stone for a corner, nor stones for foundations; but thou shalt be desolate for ever, saith the Lord. The sea is come up upon Babylon: she is covered with the multitude of the waves thereof." The substance then of the prediction is, that Rome, which, like Babylon, had been a destroying mountain, should be made a remarkable example of divine vengeance; that she should be visited with slaughter and desolation; that a large number should be destroyed by the wars in the provinces dependent on her; that the sources of her wealth and her naval power should in a great degree be cut off.

Turn to history, and see whether this was verified. The last trumpet conducted us to 453. Two years afterwards, Genseric at the head of his Vandals, came from Africa to Rome: for fourteen days and nights the captured city was given up to indiscriminate pillage; the empress Eudoxia and her two daughters were carried captive; and the city never recovered its former power. In 471, it was again besieged, taken, and plundered, by Ricimer, a Roman general, at the head of the barbarians who had served under him. In these and in similar manners, it was cast down from its elevation.

The *third trumpet* sounded; "and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp; and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; and the name of the star is called Wormwood, and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter."

A star falling from heaven signifies in the prophetic language, the deposition of a prince, or the apostacy of a minister of religion. In the former sense, you recollect it is used of the king of Babylon: "How

art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!" and so in other places. In this sense it must here be used, for St. John is speaking of the empire of Rome. The *effect* of the fall of this star was (not to turn the waters into blood,) not to produce slaughter, but to be made bitter; to cause great public distress by the inefficacy and confusion of government; to turn the streams and sources of defence and comfort into the bitterness of disappointment and disgust.

Turn again to history. You find Odoacer, king of the Heruli, in the year 476, taking Rome, deposing Momyllus, or Augustulus, putting a period to the western empire, and himself assuming the name of king of Italy. The consequence was, "that the great benefits of government were no longer enjoyed; all authority became despicable by weakness or mismanagement. Instead of protection and civil advantages, the people every where languished in distress, and knew not where to apply for justice or defence. Such a state of things may with great propriety be represented by the rivers and fountains of water being made bitter with wormwood."

The *fourth trumpet* sounded, "and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise."

The darkening of the sun, moon, and stars, is, as you have seen, the constant and natural emblem of the diminution and destruction of political glory and influence. This is here foretold, with regard to the western empire. Notwithstanding the fall of the imperial star, yet the former government of Rome, its senate, its consuls, and its other magistrates,

nominally continued. They remained during all the wars and commotions that intervened from 476 till 568, when Justin II. emperor of the east, sent Longinus to Italy, who deprived Rome of all its authority, and reduced it to the form of a small duchy, of which he was the first exarch. Its authority was entirely destroyed by these humbling and striking events, and its political heavens eclipsed.

The chapter concludes with the annunciation of the three wo-trumpets, that will usher in events that are intended, not for reformation, but for punishment.

My brethren, I am sensible that there are parts of these lectures that do not appear highly interesting to you. This arises in part from not being perfectly acquainted with the symbolical language of prophecy. But every new lecture, or, as I may call it, new lesson, will remove this difficulty in some degree: you will acquire the precise and definite meanings of the various symbols; and when this prophetic alphabet, as I may term it, is fully learned, you will find this mode of instruction captivating for the blaze of metaphor, and attractive from the rich ornaments in which the most important truths are dressed. Besides, we are continually advancing to the consideration of those glorious predictions which are the object of our joyful expectation and hope; and the consideration of the predictions that have been fulfilled, not only strengthen our faith in the accomplishment of those blessed events that are promised, but also multiply the proofs that it is the God of providence, the ruler of the world, who is the author of the scripture.

1. Let this subject show us the manner and spirit with which we should study history; not merely to

admire the talents or exploits of men, but to trace the operations of Divine Providence, regulating all things for the display of his attributes, and the interest of his church.

2. Learn that great truth, that righteousness exalteth a nation; that sin is the cause of divine judgments; that, of consequence, he is the best patriot and truest friend to his country, who, instead of increasing by his private vices the sum of public guilt, is, by the holiness of his heart and life, and the fervency of his prayers, drawing down the blessings of God on the community of which he is a member.

3. In contemplating the judgments of God upon the guilty, meditate upon those eternal agonies which await his enemies in the world to come. You see the exhibitions of his power and holiness: let the terrors of the Lord alarm you, and induce you to seek his friendship through the Mediator.

4. Finally: think continually, Christians, of the Angel of the covenant pleading for you. In darkness and sorrow and temptation, in the discharge of duty, and in the agonies of death, remember him who loved you upon the cross, who loves you in heaven. Go boldly to him, that you may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need.

SERMON CXX.



LECTURES ON THE APOCALYPSE.

No. VIII.



REVELATION, CHAP. IX.

You know that the predictions in this book refer to the world, as its state affects the interests of the church, or directly and immediately to the church itself. The former is the object of the trumpets. In explaining the first four of them, we have traced the history of the Roman empire, from the time that Christianity was established in it by Constantine, till the division of the western empire into several independent states. It was at this period that Antichrist, the man of sin, began to appear in his power and guilt; and an observance of the exact chronological order which we have seen hitherto pursued by the sacred writer, would have led him to the immediate consideration of those gross corruptions of religion; but with propriety he defers this subject to the pouring out of the vials, and proceeds to exhibit those circumstances which led to the destruction of the eastern empire. And when he has thus in order terminated the account of the overthrow of

the whole Roman empire, he returns to the state of religion during this period.

The two first woes, or the fifth and sixth trumpets, are contained in this chapter; they consist of hieroglyphical representations, more compounded than most of those which we have already explained; but concerning their general design and object, there is, among modern commentators, little difference of opinion.

On the sounding of the fifth trumpet, the apostle saw "a star fall from heaven to the earth; and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit."

What is this fallen star? Is it, as some suppose, Pope Boniface IV. on whom the title of universal bishop was first conferred? This is surely not a natural interpretation of the passage. Is it, as others have thought, Mahomet himself? There is no view in which he can be represented as *a star*. Is it the monk Sergius, or Bahira as he is called by oriental writers, who assisted Mahomet in the composition of the Koran, that is here referred to? He is too little known to authorize this opinion.

On the whole, I embrace, though not without some hesitancy, the sentiments of those who suppose that Satan is here meant. All of you who are acquainted with the original language, will acknowledge the correctness of a criticism that has often been made, that the text would literally be translated, "I beheld a star that had fallen from heaven." (πεπρωτοτα) By the permission of Divine Providence, this fallen angel was allowed to open the bottomless pit, and the calamities and seductions of a false religion were presented to the world.

So soon as the pit is opened, a smoke so thick and black as to darken the sun and the air rises from it.

It is an emblem of the errors that could darken the understandings and hide truth from the minds of those who then lived : for truth is light, and error is darkness.

From the bottomless pit locusts rose. Let us present the traits by which they are exhibited ; let us explain the hieroglyphic, and then look to history for the meaning of it.

1. They were like horses prepared unto battle ; they had crowns on their heads ; faces like men ; hair like women ; teeth like lions ; breastplates of iron ; with stings like scorpions ; flying in such multitudes that the sound of their wings was as the sound of the chariots of many horses rushing to battle ; prevailing for five months, but commanded by God “ not to hurt the grass of the earth ; nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only those men who have not the seal of God in their foreheads ; not necessarily inflicting death, but tormenting those in their power so that death became desirable ; and under a king who was the angel of the bottomless pit, who was the Destroyer.

2. Review those several symbols ; place them in plain language, and see what is foretold. Like horses prepared for the battle, they are to be martial armies, making a rapid progress through the world ; they have crowns of gold on their head, not merely those turbans ornamented with gold, and in the form of crowns, but also the splendour of the successive victories they have gained ; faces like men, and teeth like lions, indicating their fierceness, strength, and courage in battle ; hair dressed in a curious and effeminate manner ; breastplates of iron, and therefore not easily to be conquered or repelled ; stings like scorpions, inflicting woes, but not de-

stroying; remarkable for their number; in their strength for five months, which, according to the prophetic chronology, is one hundred and fifty years; hurting not the productions of the earth, and comparatively little injuring real Christians; commissioned and led by Satan, the angel of the bottomless pit, or by an emissary like him, and induced by him to propagate lies, and endeavour to destroy Christianity.

3. We have seen the hieroglyphic and its exposition. Had we time to refer to the prophecy of Joel, and to other parts of the Old Testament, it would be easy to show you how frequently similar figures to those in this chapter are employed. This we cannot now do. Let us, however, from history, illustrate them.

The order of these visions admonishes us to look to some event illustrative of this prophecy, after the destruction of the western empire. All the events that were previous, and the calamities that followed till 568, when the exarchate of Ravenna was established on the ruins of Rome, you have seen foretold under the preceding trumpets. The first wo then succeeds, and there can be no possibility of erring as to the remarkable judgment which it foretels.

In the year 579, Mahomet was born: that man who introduced a system of false religion, that was propagated by the sword, and that was extended over so many nations, that we are not surprised to see it mentioned in the prophetic writings. I enter not into a minute description of his character and conduct; this you will find in numerous authors to which you can easily have access. I wish only to mention so much as will illustrate this prediction. Entering into the cave of Hera in 606, he came from

it in 612, "in all the darkness of a new-invented, confused, false religion, and with all the rage of enthusiastic frenzy." Though he gained a number of proselytes at Mecca, yet he was obliged to flee from it to Medina in 622, at which time the Hejira, the era of Mahometan computation, commences. He then taught his disciples that his religion was to be propagated, not by disputing, but by fighting; and the rapidity of his conquests, and of those of his successors, is inconceivable. Look over their history, and compare it with these prophetic symbols. The imposture was soon spread over all the adjacent regions, like a black cloud of smoke belched from the infernal pit. His armies, like innumerable locusts, poured upon the countries around. They bore many crowns, attesting their conquests. "In the space of eighty years, they subdued and acquired to the diabolical kingdom of Mahomet, Palestine, Syria, both Armenias, almost all Asia Minor, Persia, India, Egypt, Numidia, all Barbary even to the river Niger, Portugal, Spain, many islands of the Mediterranean sea, and advanced to the very gates of Rome."* Thus brave and powerful, they were noted for their attention in ornamenting their hair. They sought not to kill, but to lead men to embrace the Mahometan religion; yet the miseries of those who were subjected to them were great, though their lives were spared. The effects of their religion and invasion were painful as the stings of scorpions. Restrained by Providence, they literally gave an order before their marches, "Destroy not the palm-trees, nor burn any fields of corn; cut down no fruit-trees; do no mischief to cattle, only such as ye kill to eat."

* Mede, 468.

The wo was to be continued for five months, that is, one hundred and fifty years. In 612, Mahomet proclaimed his religion; and in 762, the caliph Almanzor, tired of war, built the city of Bagdad, and called it "the city of peace." These troops had as their king the angel of the bottomless pit, Abaddon, Apollyon. The armies were raised by the power and policy of the devil, and led on by himself, or an emissary like himself, whose object was to propagate falsehood, and to destroy the truth.

Such is, in substance, the event foretold by the fifth trumpet. It is announced, that "one wo is past;" that, for a time, the world will rest from its effects; but that two others, equally dreadful, will ensue.

The sixth trumpet sounds. The second wo is announced. A voice is heard from the four horns of the golden altar; from the place of the Redeemer's intercession, vengeance is declared against his enemies. He, who at the altar pleads for his children, thence denounces the punishment of those who neglect his salvation.

He orders the four angels, that are bound in the river Euphrates, to be loosed. The command is obeyed: and these angels, who are "prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, to slay the third part of men," are loosed. Immediately, St. John saw an army of horsemen, amounting to two hundred thousand thousand, a definite number put for an indefinite, to express their multitude. The riders inspired terror, having breastplates of fire, and jacinth, and brimstone. The horses had heads like lions, and out of their mouths issued fire, and smoke, and brimstone; and the third part of men

were killed by their breath. Their tails were serpents, with which they did much hurt.

Such is the hieroglyphic. The prediction, in simpler language, is evidently this. A countless army of horsemen should proceed from the Euphrates; they should inspire fear, and carry desolation, wherever they went; many should be destroyed by them; the tails like serpents indicated, that, when they had subdued and passed through a country, they would greatly afflict it, as by the stings under the former trumpet.

All this perfectly corresponds with the irruption of the Turks into Europe, their destruction of the eastern empire, and the miseries they brought upon corrupted Christians. The only objection that can be made to this application of this passage is, the length of time intervening between the fifth and sixth trumpets. But this has already been accounted for in our prefatory remarks.

As usual, I enter not into minute particulars of the history of this people. This you will find in authors who have expressly treated of them. I wish only to present circumstances enough to show the fulfilment of the prophecy. The Turks, originally from the Caspian Sea, were hired by the Sultan of Persia, against the Caliph of Babylon, who was then head of the Saracenic empire, in 832. When the Sultan, through their means, obtained the victory he refused to reward them; and they then drove him from his kingdom, and there established themselves. After some time, they made peace with the Caliph, and professed the Mahometan religion. In 1051, they obtained permission to set up an emperor of their own in the Asiatic territories, and they shortly after

established four sultanies, bordering on the river Euphrates. There for some time they were bound, restrained from extending their conquests, by their disputes, by the providence of God, and by the crusades. But, at last, they were united, and loosed, and permitted to punish degenerate Christians. In 1281, they obtained the first victory over Christians, by taking the important city of Kutahi from the Greeks. From that period, they often spread desolation over many parts of Christendom. In 1453, they took Constantinople, and overturned the eastern Roman empire; and their last victory was in 1672, when they took Cameniec from the Poles. The hour, day, month, and year, (according to prophetic calculation, in which a day represents a year, and the year is regulated by lunar computations,) amount to three hundred and ninety-one years and fifteen days. The years exactly point out the interval between the first and last of these conquests; and if historians had been as precise in mentioning days as years, we should have doubtless found the days equally exact. Since the year 1672, their dominion has been on the decline; and at the *end* of the sixth trumpet, the Ottoman power will fall, together with the temporal power of the Pope. In all their traits, they correspond with the representation of John: they came from the Euphrates; their armies consisted principally of horsemen; they breathed slaughter, and destroyed countless multitudes; the Mahometan imposture, and the absolute despotism, with all their attendant evils, with which those countries have been cursed that have been subdued by them, may express the torments inflicted by the snakes in their horses' tails; and I know not

whether it is fanciful to imagine, that the fire, and smoke, and brimstone, issuing from their mouths, may allude to the gunpowder and cannon, now so common, but first used by them at the siege of Constantinople.

The conclusion of the chapter informs us, that the design of this wo was to punish the degenerate professors of Christianity for those vices in which they indulged, and by which they were too much assimilated to the heathen; but that it did not bring them to repentance and reformation; and that therefore new judgments should be inflicted on them.

1. And now, think with solemnity and holy awe of the universality and power of Divine Providence: men, devils, all creatures, are submissive to it. God has only to speak, and thou shalt be punished; he has only to will it, and in the midst of all calamities thou shalt be secure. Is the God of providence then thy friend? Art thou reconciled to him through the great Redeemer, and interested in his promises? Happy if this be the case: under the most appalling judgments thou mayest sing, "*Though the earth be removed, God is my refuge and strength.*" In every situation thou mayest look up to Jesus at the golden altar, pleading for his sealed ones, not permitting afflictions to approach them, or else converting them into blessings. But wo to thee if this be not the case! wo to thee if the God of providence be thine enemy! Thou canst not contend with him; though he bears long with the guilty, his vengeance will at last descend upon them. Oh! in time submit to his dominion: embrace his Son: devote thyself to him, that thou mayest be happy. Never forget that this God, so holy and powerful, is not a distant and re-

mote Being, on whose attributes thou mayest coolly meditate; but one on whom thou art absolutely dependent; with whom thou hast many solemn relations; who continually observes thee, and who will fix thee in heaven or in hell. With such a being it is not safe to trifle: such a being it is madness to oppose or offend.

2. See the necessity of the special grace of God for the conversion of man: the severest afflictions cannot of themselves change the heart: these men so severely punished, yet repented not. How often have similar examples been presented to us! How many of you, my brethren, have thus been visited by calamity, and yet are unsanctified! You have struggled, you have murmured, you have inwardly accused God of severity; and have become more hardened. Oh! let affliction make you, like the poor prodigal, think of your Father's house; let it drive you to his throne, and his arms; let it lead you to supplicate his grace: then, and then only, will it prove a blessing.

3. See the danger of neglecting spiritual mercies; because these were disregarded, spiritual judgments were inflicted. Abuse not the privileges you enjoy, lest God should give you up also "to strong delusion and to believe a lie." Preserve the truth and the purity of religion, lest you also become the prey or the victims of deceivers, and experience the indignation of God in this world and that which is to come.

4. Finally: think for a moment of that world, the agonies of which are such, that it is emphatically true, that "men shall seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee

from them." There the immortality that ennobled these lost, unhappy beings, has become their curse: there they perpetually lament that they can never, never die: there they in vain pray that they may be blotted from existence; death flees from them: "the smoke of their torments ascendeth for ever and ever."

God of mercy! Father of our Saviour! save us from these agonies! Lead us now to the Redeemer: through him may we now obtain that spiritual life which will conduct us to a world, where, instead of these woes, our eternity shall be marked only by raptures and thanksgivings.

SERMON CXXI.



LECTURES ON THE APOCALYPSE.

No. IX.



REVELATION, CHAP. X.

WE have listened to the angels sounding the first six trumpets, and from history have traced the accomplishment of the predictions that were then uttered. We have beheld the dissolution of the Roman empire, the ravages of the Saracens, and the irruption of the Turks: but severe as were these calamities, they did not bring to repentance the corrupted and degenerate church. New woes were therefore announced under the seventh trumpet: this is represented as beginning to sound in the 14th verse of the next chapter, and the whole of the 10th, and the first thirteen verses of the 11th chapter, are a parenthesis introduced between the sixth and seventh trumpets. Our text is a solemn introduction to the important predictions that are uttered under the last wo-trumpet.

The apostle beheld a mighty angel descend from heaven, full of majesty and glory. From the description of him, and its correspondence with the representation of the Redeemer in the first chapter,

there can be no doubt that it was our blessed Saviour himself, the uncreated Angel of the covenant, the Angel of God's presence. "*He was clothed with a cloud.*" In the pillar of cloud he had conducted the camp of Israel; in the cloud he had ascended to glory, after his resurrection; he will come in the clouds of heaven to judge the world; and he now appears clothed with a cloud, to restrain the full blaze of that lustre which could not have been supported even by John, accustomed as he was to heavenly visions. "*A rainbow was upon his head.*" This, as you remember, was the token of God's covenant with Noah. In the 4th chapter of this book, and in the 1st chapter of Ezekiel, it is represented as encircling the throne of God; to remind us, that in the midst of his glory he is kind, and will ever remember the promise and oath of the covenant, which assure the happiness of his children. Here it surrounds that Redeemer who made peace between God and man, and in whom the new covenant is established. Days of suffering and trial for his church are about to be predicted. He therefore appears with this symbol, to teach us, that however violent may be the storms and tempests which shall assail this mystic ark, it shall still be preserved. "*His face was as it were the sun:*" bright with glory, but cheering and reviving to his children. "*His feet were as pillars of fire;*" showing what was the lustre concealed by the enveloping cloud, and representing the purity, beauty, and stability of all his dispensations.

"*He had in his hand a little book open.*" He had before received the *scaled book*; and his authority and power as Mediator, to reveal and execute the purposes of God, had been gratefully celebrated by the church. Of that book, six of the seals had been

broken, and their contents displayed: the seventh is hereafter to be unfolded. Entirely distinct from this is the little book which the Saviour holds in his hand; it consists of the revelation made in this particular vision, and terminates in the 14th verse of the next chapter. It was necessary that this little book should here be introduced to render the seventh trumpet intelligible: this trumpet announces the destruction of the antichristian system; but this system has not hitherto been explained: the preceding prophecies of this book have referred to the state of the world as it affected the church; and it was therefore proper that a general view of this corruption of Christianity should here be given. We shall see, when we illustrate the next chapter, how accurate and extensive is this brief sketch. The little book was *open*: the sealed book foretold events that were future; that could be known only by revelation from Christ. In explaining it, we have been conducted by the sixth seal to the year 1672. After this the little book is introduced, and declared to be *open*; because at this period the corruptions and cruelties of Antichrist, to which it refers, had been exhibited to the world, and recorded in history.

The Saviour "*set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot upon the earth;*" to show that his dominion is universal; that he has power over all the world; and that his majesty shall every where be displayed.

"*He cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth.*" Though he appeared on earth as the meek and gracious Saviour; though he was adored in heaven as the Lamb that was slain; yet he is also omnipotent; terrible to the unholy; and appearing in all the power of "the Lion of the tribe of Judah."

Responsive to his, “*seven thunders uttered their voice.*” On Sinai they attested the present God; here they show the majesty of Jesus, give new solemnity to this august scene, and command our attention. The voice of these thunders was articulate and intelligible. John was about to write down what they announced, when he was forbidden to do it, by a voice from heaven, and to seal them up in secrecy. They were intended for the use and information of the apostle himself, and it is vain for us to inquire what was their nature.

The Angel of the covenant then “*lifted up his hand to heaven,*” the ancient and solemn manner of appealing to God by an oath, “*and swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer: but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound,*” [or, as Doddridge translates it, *who was about quickly to sound, ὅταν μελλῆ σαλπίζειν,*] “*the mystery of God shall be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.*” The general import of these words is this: When those events that were announced to John by the seven thunders shall have occurred; when those things predicted by the seventh trumpet, which was soon to sound, shall have been accomplished; then time itself shall cease, and be swallowed up in an unchanging eternity; and “*the mystery of God,*” the darkness in which the dispensations of his providence, towards the church and individuals, are so often involved, while in the light of eternity we see that “*he has done all things well.*”

It would be useless to present you with the criticisms of some learned men on part of this oath.

From the ambiguity of the Greek word, *χρονος*, which signifies both *time* and *delay*, several have translated the clause, "there shall be time no longer," "*there shall no longer be delay*," that is, in executing judgment upon the enemies of the Redeemer. But there is no necessity for this departure from our translation; and not only the awful solemnity with which the declaration is made, but also the fact, that the mystery of God will not be finished till the end of the world, concur in showing the propriety of our translation.

After this solemn oath, St. John was ordered to go and take the book from the hand of the angel and eat it: he obeyed the command, and found it at first sweet as honey, but afterwards bitter. There is a similarity between this command, and that given to Ezekiel, which he records in the 2d and 3d chapters of his prophecy. The general meaning is perfectly plain: to *eat*, when figuratively applied to any intellectual subjects, signifies to receive them deeply into our mind and heart. Thus Jeremiah says, (xv. 16.) "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart." Thus the apostle was to *eat the little book*; thoroughly to understand and digest it. This at first was a source of high delight: the acquisition of knowledge at all times is pleasant: to understand the designs of God towards his church, to receive those revelations that would be profitable to believers, was sweet. But our blessedness often results from being ignorant of the future; and when John thought of all the calamities that the church should endure, before, standing victorious on the fields she had won, she should shine in all the

knowledge, and holiness, and joy of the millennial day, he was filled with grief and anguish.

The reason why the apostle was ordered to receive and digest the instructions given to him, is added; "Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings." Though he had foretold many important events, his work was not finished. He was to receive still more important prophecies, that were to be communicated to many in different countries, of various tongues, and of every condition in life: and to be the means of supporting and comforting the people of God in all ages of the church.

The chapter that we have explained, presents to us many practical lessons. Let us dwell for a short time on a few of them.

1. Behold how glorious is the Redeemer, the mighty Angel of the covenant; uniting in himself every thing that is august and every thing that is tender; all that is awful and all that is endearing; possessed of unlimited power to punish his enemies, yet never forgetting his covenant engagements to his children. Christian, he is thy friend, gracious to pity thee; mighty, almighty, to defend, to protect, to comfort, to save thee! There are "secret things which belong unto God." into which we cannot pry, which have been sealed up; but the excellences, the loveliness of thy Redeemer, are not among these secret things: no voice from heaven forbids thee to read them, or to communicate them to others: they are declared in tones louder than the voice of the seven thunders, yet in accents sweeter than the harps of seraphs: meditate on them profoundly; dear and precious at first, they will not afterwards, like the mystic book of the prophet, become bitter; but will

be thy consolation through life, the ground of thy triumph in death, the subject of thy song throughout eternity. Impenitent man, this glorious Being is neglected by thee! He entreats thee to be happy, and thou contemnest him: but he will not always thus entreat thee: and if thou die in thy present state, thou shalt shudder at that majesty which gives joy to the pious, and be crushed by that power which crowns and glorifies the Christian.

2. Often remember that there is an appointed period when time shall be no longer. It once did not exist: there was a year, a day, a moment, that was *the first*; and there shall be a year, a day, a moment, that will be *the last*: an eternity preceded the birth of time, an eternity will succeed its death: the visible frame of nature, these heavens and this earth, shall then be no more; changes and seasons shall be no more: when the sun shall be torn from the heavens, when the moon shall be changed into blood, there will remain only a state of immutable joy in heaven, of unceasing wretchedness in hell! Do you say we shall not live till those great events occur? We shall be reposing in our graves before the voice of the archangel and the trump of God shall be heard. It is true; but still remember that for you, individually, time will soon have an end, and that then you will be placed in that state, in which you shall be found at the consummation of all things temporal: soon, very soon, he who has the keys of death, shall declare, that for you, time shall be no longer; the time of securing the favour of God through the Redeemer; the time of being fashioned in the divine image; the time to serve God or man, or to exercise the Christian graces; the time of hope, and of preparation for judgment and heaven. Trifle a little lon-

ger, careless mortals, and nothing will be left you but the agonizing remembrance of mispent time, and the bitterness of unavailing remorse, while sinking under the indignation of the holy God. Friend of Jesus ! time for thee shall soon be no longer : the time of darkness and of difficulty, of bereavement and trial, of combat with indwelling sin, and conflict with thy spiritual adversaries, of distance from God, of desertion, of wicked society ; and thou shalt enter upon an eternity of thanksgiving and praise, of unsullied holiness and unintermitted rapture. Brethren, since such is our situation, why do we not more look above and beyond this passing world ? why are not our hearts more fixed upon eternity ? why are our thoughts, and pursuits, and affections, principally devoted to the occupations of this little span of time upon earth, which, though of inconceivable importance, as it decides our everlasting state, is yet in itself nothing, absolutely nothing in comparison with eternity ? Why do we not more live as pilgrims and strangers, feeling that this is not our home ; regarding the sublimity of our destination ; employing life for the great purposes which should occupy it : to repent, to believe in Christ, to obtain a deliverance from the state of sin, and an admission into the state of grace, to glorify God, to extend the kingdom of the Redeemer, and to promote the temporal and spiritual good of our fellow-men ? Happy they who thus live ; the termination of time will be to them the period of their triumph, the consummation of their joy.

3. Finally : it is delightful to remember, that hereafter the mystery of God will be finished. There are many things in providence and grace inexplicable to us while we are on earth ; but then, believers shall find the fulfilment of the words of our

Saviour, "What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." They shall perceive, that every thing which occurred to them, or the church, was consonant to the divine perfections; was demanded by infinite wisdom, justice, and goodness; was necessary for their eternal joy and consolation. "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now we know in part, but then shall we know even as also we are known." Reading over the whole history of the conduct of God to our world, retracing every step of our lives, we shall shout, 'Clouds and darkness were often round about him; but justice, mercy, and faithfulness, were ever the habitation of his throne, and the source of his conduct.' In the anticipation of that day, calmly trust in God: if you find mysteries that you cannot solve in nature, in scripture, in providence, remember that God is infinite; that his plans extend from eternity to eternity; that you "are but of yesterday, and know nothing;" but that the period is hastening when "in God's light you shall see light." Wait with filial trust and adoring confidence till it pleases him to remove the veil; and secure the happiness of that man of whom the Saviour speaks, "Blessed is he, whosoever is not offended in me." When your dearest hopes are blasted, when your fondest expectations are withered, when your schemes for usefulness are frustrated, when all around you is dark and perplexing: still, instead of murmuring or censuring Providence, cry, 'I will not repine while infinite wisdom and mercy preside over the universe, and over me; while the throne of my God is established in the heavens; while the Redeemer has all authority in heaven and on earth. Blind and ignorant, I often wish for those things that would be injurious to me,

and to the cause that is dear to me; I rejoice in the superintendence of the All-Perfect; the Lord reigneth, and I will rejoice. His mystery will hereafter be fulfilled; darkness shall be dissipated; and in the light and glory of heaven, I shall hereafter cry, with adoring wonder and thankfulness, "He hath done all things well."

SERMON CXXII.



LECTURES ON THE APOCALYPSE.

No. X.



REVELATION, CHAP. XI. 1—13.

WE remarked, in our last lecture, that the whole of the tenth, and the first fourteen verses of this chapter, constituted a parenthesis thrown in between the sixth and seventh trumpets. This was necessary to render the seventh trumpet intelligible. By this trumpet, the destruction of the antichristian system is announced; but this system had not hitherto been explained to the apostle; the preceding prophecies of this book referring to the state of the world as it affected the church; and it was therefore proper that a general view of this corruption of Christianity

should be given in this place. And this is done in the little book received from the mighty Angel of the covenant.

We have seen that when severe judgments were to be poured out upon the world, true believers were sealed as the peculiar property and charge of God. Now that the corruptions of the church are about to be described, they are again explicitly distinguished from mere nominal Christians. This is taught us in the first and second verses, by figures that are derived from the Jewish temple, and by images similar to those employed in the fortieth chapter of Ezekiel, and the second chapter of Zechariah. St. John receives a measuring reed, and is ordered by the Angel of the covenant, the great Head of the church, to "*measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein;*" but, "*to leave out the court without the temple and not measure it; because it, together with the holy city, was to be given up to the Gentiles, to be trodden under foot forty and two months.*" The Jewish temple consisted of the sanctuary and two courts; the inner court, where the altar of burnt-offerings stood, was appropriated to the priests; there they performed the services of religion, and, on ordinary occasions, the people did not enter it. In the outer court, the people in general stood. In the second temple, there was added the court of the Gentiles, to which strangers were admitted. The part of the temple where the altar stood, where God was peculiarly present, and solemnly worshipped, represents the sincere disciples of the Redeemer, who, in the language of Peter, "*are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*" Of these who worshipped in spirit and in

truth, and who should be the objects of God's special love, the apostle is ordered to take an exact account; while mere nominal professors, destitute of the spirit and power of religion, notwithstanding their profession and their privileges, are left out in common with the world, regarded as mere worshippers in the outer court, and not as the sealed and peculiar people of God. A reason for not measuring this court is given to the apostle. Both *it*, and "*the holy city*" in general, that is, the visible church, were to be profaned by the Gentiles, or by those who, while they pretended to be worshippers of the Redeemer, yet, in their idolatry and unholy conduct, resembled heathens rather than Christians. The precise nature of that great apostacy which is here referred to, is more fully developed in the succeeding chapters. For the consolation of the pious, it is added, that this profanation shall not be perpetual; that it shall be terminated at the end of forty-two prophetic months. You know that, in prophetic chronology, a day denotes a year; you see this in Daniel's prophecy, and numerous other passages. The forty-two months, then, or twelve hundred and sixty days, as the same period is termed in the next verse, denote twelve hundred and sixty years. At what time this important period, (at the conclusion of which the church will appear in all the lustre of millennial glory,) commences and terminates, we shall be led to consider, with some minuteness, in a future lecture.

During all this time, the *two witnesses* of the Redeemer are to prophesy. Their character and qualifications are given *from the third to the sixth verse inclusive*. "And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. These

are the two olive-trees, and the two candlesticks, standing before the God of the earth. And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies; and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy; and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will." They are *witnesses*, defending the truth as it is in Jesus, against antichristian corruptions, and ready to die in attestation of it. They are not merely, as some have supposed, two illustrious individuals. The length of their testimony forbids this supposition. Nor are they the Old and New Testament church; this does not accord with the definite period of their testimony: nor, as others have imagined, the Old and New Testaments; it would be forced to say that these were slain, and that their dead bodies lay in the streets. They are the succession of those pious men, who, during the whole time of darkness and corruption in the church, testified to the truth, and maintained the pure gospel against prevailing errors. As in prophetic language, *king* or *horn* signifies not an individual, but a succession of rulers, so *witness* signifies a succession of pious men, zealous for the truth. Many have shown from history, that, in the darkest ages of the church, such men have never been wanting.

These witnesses are said to be *two*: to teach us that they should be comparatively few, yet still sufficient, since this is the number required by the law; and also, in allusion to those illustrious persons, who appeared two and two, to plead the cause of God, and bear their testimony against prevailing sins.

Of these, three are particularly referred to in these verses: Joshua and Zerubbabel, after the Babylonish captivity; Elijah and Elisha, during the idolatry of Israel; and Moses and Aaron, at the departure from Egypt.

They *prophesy*, not so much by foretelling future events, as by defending, explaining, and enforcing the truths of the scriptures; a sense which the word *prophesy* often bears in the New Testament. They are in *sackcloth*, exposed to affliction and persecution, and mourning over the vice which they every where behold.

Like Joshua and Zerubbabel, in the fourth chapter of Zechariah, “*they are two olive-trees, and the two candlesticks, standing before the God of the earth.*” They are furnished with all needful supplies of grace, and they hold up the light of truth in the midst of surrounding darkness.

Like Elijah, who by his word brought down fire from heaven, to consume his enemies; like Moses, for whose vindication fire consumed the two hundred and fifty men who offered incense with Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; “*fire proceedeth out of the mouths of these witnesses, and devoureth their enemies.*” They denounce the threatenings of God against the wicked, and the fiery indignation of the Lord will be manifested against their foes. By the divine interposition crushing their opposers, they are prevented from being cut off or silenced.

Like Elijah and Moses, their prayers shall be so prevalent with God, that the most wonderful effects will be produced, whenever these peculiar manifestations of the divine regard to them, and opposition to their enemies, shall require them.

The death of these witnesses is mentioned, verses 7—10. “And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. And they of the peoples, and kindreds, and tongues, and nations, shall see their dead bodies three days and a half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another, because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.”

The “beast ascending out of the bottomless pit” has not been previously mentioned. It will be fully described when we come to the thirteenth and seventeenth chapters. It is sufficient in this place to remark, that it denotes the antichristian power. Provoked by the testimony borne against its corruptions, this power will wage war upon the witnesses, will be permitted to conquer them, so that for a time they will appear to be silent and dead. This shall be done publicly, in the view of the world. While the utmost rancour against the witnesses is expressed, there shall be loud congratulations and applauses by all the friends of Antichrist. This event shall take place in some part of the Roman western empire, that was submissive to Antichrist; and that for its iniquities is compared to Sodom; for its idolatry, superstition, and cruelty towards the people of God, to Egypt; and to Jerusalem, because, while it pretended to be a holy city, it killed the saints, and afresh crucified Christ in his

members. The great question here to be considered is, Has this slaying of the witnesses taken place, or is it still future? I am persuaded that it is an event that is still future. It is certain that the whole time for which they were to testify has not elapsed, and it was not till after the expiration of the twelve hundred and sixty years that they were to be slain. Besides, their death is mentioned as the very last great struggle of the beast, who is successful for three years and a half, when God immediately and powerfully interposes, and ushers in the latter-day glory of the church.

And let not the Christian be discouraged in anticipating this death of the witnesses. Notwithstanding it, religion will be continually advancing; the cause of the Redeemer will be extending over the world: for this prediction has reference, as we have already said, to some part of the Latin Roman empire; and according to the judicious remark of Scott, probably at the time that the witnesses are slain, "there may be many very flourishing churches in America, Africa, and Asia;" and we may add, in many parts also of Europe.

But the witnesses, like their Saviour, shall rise again, shall ascend to heaven, shall be still more instrumental than before in spreading the gospel, to the confusion of its enemies, and the joy of its friends. This we are taught in the eleventh and twelfth verses: "And after three days and an half, the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet, and great fear fell upon them which saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven, saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies beheld them." You immediately perceive that this

is not to be understood literally: a literal interpretation would be inconsistent with the remarks already made, that these are not two individuals, but successions of men, and that their death is the forcible silencing and suppressing of their testimony. The general meaning is evident; though we attempt not to describe minutely an event that is still future. After the enemies of the Redeemer had for three and a half years supposed that they had triumphed over the witnesses, new friends to truth shall arise, with the same spirit as these persecuting men possessed, and shall be as evidently under the care, protection, and blessing of God; and as assuredly advanced above the malice of their enemies, as though they had visibly, in the presence of their foes, been taken up to heaven in a cloud.

At the same time that the witnesses ascend to heaven, "an earthquake destroys the tenth part of the city;" that is, one of the ten kingdoms into which the Roman empire was divided; one of the ten horns of the beast. Time will minutely explain this prediction. It in general denotes some great commotions to take place in one of those kingdoms, when seven thousand shall be slain. This will not be a disregarded and unimproved dispensation, for "the remnant shall be affrighted, and give glory to the God of heaven;" shall acknowledge his authority, and submit to him.

Such are the contents of the little book: a sketch of the history of the church during the one thousand two hundred and sixty years that must elapse from the period when the church became antichristian, until it obtained the victory over all its foes.

I. See the insufficiency of a mere profession of religion, unattended by the spirit of the gospel.

Many who called themselves Christians, are here classed by him who reads the heart, among Gentiles. Never forget, that in the final day the name of a Christian will not be received as an evidence of true Christianity. Many will then perish as utter enemies of the Redeemer, who on earth called themselves his followers. Search deeply then your souls and your lives; measure yourselves by the word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice. Be not satisfied, though men regard you as Christians; they do not decide your everlasting doom. Be not contented till you have such a testimony of the approbation of God, wrought in you by the Holy Ghost, and attested by an exemplary life, as will sustain the scrutiny of the Omniscient, the trial of the judgment-bar; as will be rendered more bright and lustrous by the light of eternity.

2. Observe, that in the darkest periods of the church, Jesus has had his witnesses; scorned, perhaps, by the world, overlooked by the great, neglected by the historian; but having their names written in the Lamb's book of life. With what joy, believers, will you meet in heaven many thousands of those friends of Jesus who adhered to him in the worst of times; who esteemed the "reproach of Christ greater riches than" the world could bestow, and who now rejoice in their choice of that good part which can never be taken from them!

3. How much more desirable is it to be real believers, even though affliction or martyrdom should be our portion, than to be encompassed with all that the world idolizes, and destitute of true piety! Who would not rather be one of the persecuted and obscure witnesses of Christ, than the most splendid of the impious men who opposed them? Where are

these last? In that world where the recollection of their former pomp and magnificence cannot for a moment assuage their pains; where the remembrance of their reproaches and persecutions of the pious adds new agony to their souls. And where is the witness of Jesus? On earth he had, perhaps, accumulated sufferings; but in the midst of them he was happy: for under them he felt the consolations of grace, the presence of the Saviour, the assurance of glory. Perhaps he sealed his testimony with his blood, and expired on the rack or in the flames; but, like the great body of martyrs, he had supernatural supports, and felt all the sweetness and efficacy of religion; he heard the voice of Jesus saying to him, "Come up hither." His spirit was received and crowned by that Redeemer whom he had owned, whose cause he had defended, for whom his heart had beat high with affection. Looking back from the world of glory over all his trials and sufferings, does he now regret that he devoted himself to Immanuel? Does he not adore that grace which enabled him rather "to endure affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season?" With one of these two classes, the enemies or witnesses of Jesus, you must for ever be associated; in one of these two worlds, heaven or hell, you must dwell for ever. Choose between them, for life and death are now offered to you.

4. How vain are all the efforts of the enemies of the church! Founded on the rock of ages, the gates of hell shall never prevail against it. Often has it been assailed; often have its enemies congratulated themselves on its supposed extinction; but the witnesses, who they flattered themselves were irrecoverably dead, have risen with new power, Zion

has shone with greater glory after her sufferings, and her splendour will still increase, as long as the throne of God is established in the heavens, and the Redeemer has the government of the world. Strong as Omnipotence, the cause which thou lovest, Christian, shall hold on its course, and bear down all opposition. Are our everlasting interests and our dearest hopes inseparably united with the prosperity of the kingdom of Christ?

5. Finally: happy are they who are led by judgments upon others or themselves, to give glory to the God of heaven. Who of us has not witnessed the afflictions of others; has not had to contend with personal trials? What has been their effect? Have we remained stubborn, impenitent, refusing to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God? Then these temporal calamities shall be succeeded by eternal woes. For their misimprovement we must answer to God; and they will only inflame our future reckoning. But if they have been sanctified; if they have taught us the vanity of the world, we may exclaim, 'Happy afflictions! which made me remember that this is not my home! which drove me for support to the throne of grace, to the arms of my Redeemer! which made me come to myself, and think of my Father's house! I bless the mercy which sent them; I will ever adore the grace which sanctified them!'

Children of sorrow! may such be the result of all your trials!

SERMON CXXIII.



LECTURES ON THE APOCALYPSE.

No. XI.



REVELATION, CHAP. XI. 15—19. and XII.

THE conclusion of the 11th chapter announces the sounding of the seventh trumpet; under it many scenes of calamity are to occur to the church, and many trials to be endured by believers. These are plainly and strikingly described in the subsequent chapters: but to comfort the saints, they are first taught what shall be the glorious issue of all these afflictions, what shall be the result of these dispensations of Providence, and what the future triumph and joy of the church. While it is clearly intimated that there will be persecutions, it is also declared, that God will judge the cause of those who have suffered martyrdom for the truth, and will avenge them; and that the confusions of the nations, and the corruptions of the church, shall introduce that happy period when “the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.” The vision concludes by teaching us that God is mindful of his covenant; that all heaven re-

joices in his judgments upon his enemies, and the manifestation of his grace to his friends. This is the general meaning of that part of the 11th chapter which was not explained in our last lecture. Attractive as is this subject, dear to the heart of the Christians as are the truths that are here presented, we merely glance at them, because when we arrive at the 16th chapter, we shall see them again presented in their regular series, and more fully illustrated. During this lecture we confine ourselves to the 12th chapter. Its object is to give an account of the church during that important period of one thousand two hundred and sixty years, which is so often mentioned in this book as the season after which it shall appear in all the lustre of millennial glory. The apostle saw in heaven a *wonder*, or rather a remarkable *symbol*, as the original term *εἰκασίον* signifies, “*a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.*” It is a beautiful exhibition of the spiritual and true church of the Redeemer. You know that not only in the sacred scriptures, but also among all poets, and on the medals of all countries, states and churches are represented under the symbol of females. She who is here exhibited, is termed in the Old Testament, “*the king’s daughter, greatly desired for her beauty;*” and in this book is called, “*the Bride, the Lamb’s wife.*” She is “*clothed with the sun:*” arrayed in the pure and shining righteousness of Christ, and irradiated with light, holiness, and comfort, derived from this Sun of Righteousness. She *stands upon the moon*: which here, as opposed to the sun, may signify the world, all the enjoyments of which are comparatively changeable and diminutive: above these the church of God is raised: she looks down upon them:

with holy indifference, and seeks sublimer and more perfect joys. She wears as her ornament and honour, the doctrine of the twelve apostles and of the ministers of reconciliation who have succeeded them. These are her crown and stars. She is “*in travail* :” an expression which signifies her desires, and prayers, and labours, to produce converts to the Redeemer, and to bring forth a spiritual offspring unto God. She is that mystical “*Jerusalem, who is the mother of us all* ;” that “*Zion of whom it shall be said, This and that man were born in her*.”

This sign appeared in heaven. *Heaven*, when applied to states, denotes, as you have already seen, *civil power and elevation* ; when applied to the church, it is the symbol of ecclesiastical polity. Thus it is used in this chapter to denote the visible church in its most extended form ; for in the same heaven appear the woman and her foe, the sincere and insincere professors of the religion of Jesus.

This we are taught in the next verses : “*And there appeared another wonder (or sign) in heaven : and behold a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his head ; and his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth ; and the dragon stood before the woman that was ready to be delivered, to devour her child as soon as it was born*.” In the ninth verse we are taught that this was the “*old serpent, called the devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world* ;” he who had tempted our first parents in paradise ; he who ever is opposed to God and goodness, and who seeks to propagate falsehood and wickedness throughout the earth. He is represented with the same number of heads and horns as the beast who is described in the next chapter, and which denotes Antichrist, because he

invisibly directs and manages this beast who belongs to him, who is his representative and agent. The meaning of this precise number of heads, and horns, and crowns, will more naturally be considered in our ensuing lecture, when this symbolical beast denoting Antichrist is explained. The dragon thus exhibited as the soul of Antichrist, is *red*, to denote persecution, cruelty, and bloodshed. He drew down "*the third of the stars,*" those corrupt and unholy pastors, who were so different from those that adorned the crown of the spiritual church. "*He stood before the woman,*" to devour her offspring. This denotes the watchful malice of Satan against Christ and his religion, and his endeavours to prevent the progress of the Redeemer's cause in the world. More implacable than Pharaoh against the children of Israel, than Herod against the babes of Bethlehem, Satan was desirous to destroy all who should be born to God.

Yet his efforts were in vain: "The woman brought forth a man-child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron, and her child was caught up unto God and his throne." There is here an evident allusion to the second Psalm, in which it is declared concerning the Messiah, "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." Nevertheless, it is not of *Christ personal* that the apostle here speaks. He had ascended to glory, he had gone up to the throne of God, long before the period when John received these revelations. But such is the union between Christ the head, and believers his members, so fully do they participate in his triumphs,

that what is said of Him is often applied to them. Thus we find this very expression in Rev. ii. 26, 27. "He that overcometh, and keepeth my works to the end, to him will I give power over the nations. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessel of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I received of my Father." It is then of *Christ mystical*, of the succession of true converts, of his spiritual church and people, that the scripture here speaks. These, notwithstanding the opposition of Satan, instead of being extirpated, shall finally obtain sovereign power over the nations; and in the mean time are as secure under the protection of God, as if they were carried up into heaven, and there placed before his throne.

"The woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days." "To her," we are told in the fourteenth verse, "were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place; where she is nourished from the face of the serpent for a time, and times, and half a time;" that is, according to prophetic language, one year, two years, and half a year: which, reckoning as the scriptures do by lunar years of three hundred and sixty days, make one thousand two hundred and sixty prophetic days, that is, one thousand two hundred and sixty years. The general meaning of this prediction is evident: it is, that though for these one thousand two hundred and sixty years, the church should be in distress, in danger, and often in a bewildered state, yet she shall be as assuredly preserved as was Elijah, when he fled into the wilderness from Ahab, or as were the Israelites, when in the wilderness

they were nourished with manna from heaven. This divine protection is represented by the eagle's wings, in allusion to several passages of the Old Testament, in which this figure is employed to illustrate the care of God over the ancient church in the desert. "Ye have seen," says God to Moses, "what I did unto Egypt, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you to myself." (Exod. xix. 4.) And Moses, in his eloquent song, declares: "He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness. He led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange God with him." (Deut. xxxiii. 10—12.)

We have not yet arrived at that part of this book in which we shall most naturally be called upon to explain the commencement and the termination of this noted and often repeated period of twelve hundred and sixty years. It will be sufficient on the present occasion to observe what we shall hereafter prove, that the only two probable years for commencing them, and the only two concerning which there is much diversity of sentiments in the students of the holy volume, are the years 606 and 756. If with the majority of commentators, we embrace the former opinion, the church will come out of the wilderness, and the millennium will commence in 1866. If we be led to prefer the latter, it will be deferred till 2016. I speak generally, without entering into those particular inquiries that I shall feel it a duty hereafter to make, when these dates are more explicitly examined before you. At any rate, I doubt not that in this very house, long, very long before, in the course of nature, it can crum-

ble into ruins, will the millennial glories of the church be displayed, and a degree of holiness, of knowledge, of sacred joy, be here experienced by crowded congregations, of which we can have little idea while we are still in the wilderness state.

During this period, the vision represented war in heaven, that is, in the external and visible church, as it already has been explained to you. "Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven: and the great dragon was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." Michael has before been mentioned in Dan. xii. 1. and Jude ix. He is one of the principal archangels: I do not suppose there is any probability in the sentiment supported by Horsley, that he is the Redeemer. He contends with the enemy of God, and overcomes him. The general interpretation of this passage I regard as correct; that it refers to the glorious Reformation, when in so many countries, the real cause of Christ triumphed; the heavenly forces were victorious; the power of truth prevailed, notwithstanding the subtle and furious opposition of the prince of darkness: and the dragon, animating the beast, "was cast out of heaven into the earth;" lost his spiritual power over the minds of men, and was made to depend upon his earthly power alone for the maintainance of his tyranny.

There was joy among the glorified on this event: They rejoiced that Satan, "the accuser of the pious," who misrepresented their characters, their actions, their motives; who endeavoured to hinder their usefulness, was cast out. They declare what was the mode whereby this victory was obtained over Satan;

not by human wisdom and power, but “by the blood of the Lamb,” through faith in the Redeemer, as the only atoning sacrifice, “and by the word of their testimony,” through the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, and their open profession of it; and their readiness to lay down their lives in the cause of Jesus, rather than renounce his truths.

But while for this victory all heaven is called upon to rejoice, a wo is pronounced upon the inhabitants of the earth, the carnal and worldly-minded, for the rage of Satan was augmented, because he knew “that he had but a short time:” the period that is to elapse from the reformation in the sixteenth century to the termination of the one thousand two hundred and sixty years being short, in comparison with the time in which he led the nations captive at his pleasure.

He therefore persecuted the woman, the church, and “cast out of his mouth water as a flood after her, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.” This represents the heresies and errors which in so many instances succeeded to the reformation; and which were to be expected among men who had suddenly been brought from that spiritual darkness and slavery, in which they were educated.

But the church was not destroyed; “the earth helped the woman;” the worldly-minded and unholly, from various motives, as in the case of Henry VIII. and a thousand others, aided the triumphs of religion, and rendered the attempts of Satan unavailing.

The dragon, thus disappointed, “went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of

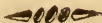
Jesus Christ." This verse probably alludes to the same calamities and furious assaults of Satan, that are to be made on some part of the church at the termination of the one thousand two hundred and sixty years. The event will at once throw light upon this and upon the slaying of the witnesses.

1. While you contemplate the beauty and glory of the church, inquire whether you are living members of it. I do not ask whether you belong to its external communion; you are taught by this chapter, as you are by the whole word of God, that notwithstanding this, you may perish for ever. But has the Sun of Righteousness risen upon your souls, with healing in his wings? Are you clothed with the garments of salvation? Have you that spiritual-mindedness which distinguishes all the real followers of the Redeemer? Is the gospel your crown, and do you obey it? Are you built upon the doctrine of the apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone? Do you respond in your affections and desires to the glorified, and rejoice in the extension of the Saviour's kingdom? Are you individually engaged in the holy warfare with Satan and the enemies of the Saviour? Are his blood, his word, and his Spirit, the weapon on which you rely for success? Happy for you, if this be your character; you are then under the protection of Providence: though not yet caught up to the throne of the Eternal, yet "your life is hid with Christ in God," and can never be wrested from you; Satan may assail you, yet you will ever find that greater is he that is in you, than they that are against you; and you shall at last be brought to share in the victories of Jesus.

2. But ye, who in any manner, by sneers, by re-

proaches, by misrepresentations of the pious, endeavour to retard the growth of the Saviour's kingdom, behold in Satan your model. It is he, whom you imitate; it is he whom you delight by your conduct; it is he whose doom you must undergo, and whose fate you must share, if your character and conduct be not changed. Is he so good a master, so kind a friend, that for him you will renounce the God who made you? the Saviour who died for you? Oh! in time be wise: shake off this disgraceful servitude, and devote yourselves to Him whose kingdom must at last prevail; and who deserves the warmest attachment of your hearts, the uninterrupted service of your lives!

SERMON CXXIV.



LECTURES ON THE APOCALYPSE.

No. XII.



REVELATION, CHAP. XIII.

THE particular points to be explained in this chapter are evidently these :

The beast with seven heads and ten horns.

The beast with two horns.

The image, mark, name, and number of the beast.

Let us briefly examine each of these in order.

The first hieroglyphic is illustrated by the seventh chapter of Daniel. This illustrious prophet, more than 550 years before Christ, foretold that there would be four famous monarchies successively reigning over that part of the world where the church of God should exist: of these the 1st, or Assyrian, was represented as a *lion*; the 2d, or Persian, like a *bear*; the 3d, or Grecian, like a *leopard*; the 4th was to be "diverse from all the rest, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly." The other traits ascribed to it in Daniel, show that it is the Roman empire of which he speaks.

Three of these empires had passed away when John wrote. He lived under the fourth: and his description of it corresponds with the predictions of the Old Testament, and with the records of history. It is "*a wild beast,*" θηρίον, the symbol of tyrannical power. It is compounded of the three former beasts of Daniel, the leopard, the bear, and the lion, or the Grecian, Persian, and Assyrian empires; to show that its power is equal to all the others, and that it is composed of all the nations over which the dominions of the other beasts extended. It has "*seven heads:*" an expression which is explained in the 17th chapter, as denoting seven kings, or governing powers, having supreme authority. Of these the angel declares, that in St. John's time, "five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come;" that is, five of these ruling powers were past and gone, like so many heads fallen off. One then existed, which was the sixth, and another should succeed. Livy and Tacitus both afford us a comment on this passage, when they say that the Roman empire was at first under kings, then consuls, dictators, decemvirs, and tribunes, with consular power; these five had ceased; emperors had succeeded; and there was still to be a new head, a new mode of exercising the imperial power.

The *ten horns*, crowned, are the ten kingdoms into which the Roman empire was divided. It is not necessary here to mention their names. You will find them in every good commentator, or history of Rome.

"*Upon the heads of the beast was the name of blasphemy;*" impious words or idolatrous actions denoting the unholy sentiments of the mind, are often thus termed. The simple idea then, is, that under every

form of the Roman empire, it should be idolatrous, opposed to God, and impious. And he knows little of spiritual religion, who will not acknowledge that this was true, not only when the head of the empire was heathen, but also when it was nominally Christian.

The source of the authority of the beast is pointed out. "*The dragon,*" whom in the preceding chapter we have seen to be the devil and Satan, "*gave to the beast his power, and seat, and great authority;*" influencing him to persecute, or to deceive and corrupt the church of God.

"*One of the heads appeared as though wounded to death.*" It was supposed impossible that the monarchy should revive, when Augustulus, the last emperor, was deposed by the Goths in 476. The wound that the empire then received seemed to be deadly; but "*the deadly wound was healed;*" the monarchy revived in a new form indeed, ecclesiastical instead of civil, but its authority was not less extensive nor absolute. "*The world wondered after the beast.*" Surprised at his restoration, they gazed with astonishment; they paid homage to him, and subjected themselves to his authority: "*they worshipped him,*" regarding him as a kind of deity; "*and they worshipped the dragon,*" complying with those idolatrous services, and embracing those opinions which Satan had invented in opposition to the pure gospel.

Henceforward a striking alteration was made in his voice and actions; his blasphemies, his idolatries, his pride, his tyranny, his persecutions over the saints, till the termination of the twelve hundred and sixty years, (which are here for the fifth time mentioned,) are strikingly described from the 6th to the 11th verses. I the less regret that I have not time particularly to

illustrate them, as some of the great points exhibited in them will hereafter be again presented to us. Let me merely quote the remark of a good man, with respect to one of the traits of his character: "A calculation of the sufferings inflicted by the beast upon the saints over all the nations of Christendom, would astonish the world. Probably not less than 15,000,000 of men have lost their lives for their attachment to the truth, and their opposition to heresy, since the rise of Antichrist. Were all the *saints* in Christendom to be slain on the present day, it would not equal the number of the martyrs against the man of sin, who have already sealed their testimony with their blood."*

A new account is then given of this fierce and blasphemous power; he had, in a civil or worldly character, persecuted the saints; he now is exhibited as an *ecclesiastical power*, assuming the appearance of meekness, and claiming an authority from the Lamb of God; yet inflicting the severest woes on all who do not bow down to him. Though distinct, he is cotemporaneous with the seven-horned beast.

"*He has two horns like a lamb.*" Horns, as you have seen, are the symbol of power; those of fiercer animals denote high authority; those of a lamb are not to destroy, but for distinction, and for some weak defence. This second beast then appears, not entirely without power, but with no such power as should excite alarm. His appearance is mild and inoffensive: he is as a Lamb, the emblem so often used in this book for the Saviour; he professes to resemble him, and to be commissioned by him; yet in reality he is a wild beast, and "speaks as a dragon;" is the instrument of the old serpent in his de-

* M. Leod

signs against the church; and uses the language of blasphemy and cruelty, so opposite to the meekness of the Lamb of God. His *two* horns may signify, according to some, his inconsistent union of temporal and spiritual power; or, according to others, the two distinct bodies of his clergy, the regular and the secular, by which his authority is maintained. He exercises the power of the first beast; he becomes so united with him, that their separate agency is scarcely to be distinguished. Notwithstanding the dying condition of the first beast, he affords him such aid, that all the inhabitants of the former empire submit again to the authority that had been exercised over them, and adore the new power connected with it. He pretends to perform the most stupendous works, and is distinguished for what Paul calls, "lying wonders, with all deceivableness of unrighteousness." He claims the power of Elijah to bring down fire from heaven, to inflict the present and eternal vengeance of God on all who do not obey him.

Who that is acquainted with the history of that period, does not observe here a true delineation of the ecclesiastical empire of Rome? Under the weakness and apparent dissolution of the imperial government, it obtained civil power, while professing to act only in a sacred character. It pretended to miracles; it claimed authority from Christ; it said that it was acting by plenary power from him; it was exalted by ignorance and superstition, till it was almost adored.

It then set up the *image of the beast*, described in the fourteenth and fifteenth verses. The former beast, or Roman empire, appeared a mere carcass, without life or activity. The second beast per-

sueded the ten kingdoms, into which it was divided, to make an image resembling him. This image is the papacy. The pope of Rome claimed the same authority that was possessed by the ancient emperors, and it was granted to him by the great majority. He was their image, usurping the same powers, requiring the same homage, exercising the same tyranny, presiding in the same city; all that were disobedient were exposed, not only to excommunication, but to death.

Thus St. John includes in this chapter the secular Roman empire, the ecclesiastical Roman empire, and the pope, the head of that church.

All, except the martyrs of Jesus, received a *mark* in their right hands, or in their foreheads; and without this, civil privileges were forfeited. It is an allusion to ancient customs. It was usual for slaves to receive the mark of their masters, soldiers of their general, worshippers of their idols. These were impressed on the right hand, or the forehead, and were of various kinds. I know not that it is necessary to seek any external mark: I suppose it to be merely a figurative expression, to denote the professed obedience and public subjection to the church of Rome.

We have but one more question remaining: *What is the number of the beast?* That there is a mystery in the number is evident, from the expressions of the sacred writer: "Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man: and his number is six hundred threescore and six." Without entering into those critical disquisitions that would be misplaced on this occasion, it will be sufficient for me to say, that I am persuaded of the correctness of the inter-

pretation given by Clarke, in his learned volume on this subject. It is a name that must be sought for in Greek, the language in which the apostle wrote. It is the name of the beast, or kingdom, of which he is treating. We must expect to find it in the simplest mode employed by the Greeks in expressing a kingdom. It has been shown, by a minute and particular examination of the Greek names of all the kingdoms that have ever existed or been mentioned, that there is not one that in any of the ordinary modes of expressing a kingdom gives, by the value of its numeral letters, six hundred and sixty-six,* except that to which it is evident, by the context, the apostle here refers: Ἡ Λατίνη βασιλεία, the Latin kingdom.

All of you who are conversant in the history of that period of the world, know the propriety of this appellation to the Romish power. From the division of the empire into east and west, till the dissolution of the western empire, the subjects of both were called Romans. After this, the inhabitants of the western empire lost the name of Romans, and were called after their respective kingdoms. The eastern was still, however, called the *Roman* empire, till after its destruction (in 1453) by Mahomet II. the Turkish sultan. But the subjects of the eastern empire, from and even before the time of Charlemagne, called the western people, or those under the influence of the Romish church, Latins; and their church, the Latin church. Hence the division of the whole Christian church into Latin and Greek;

* η 8—λ 30—α 1—7 300—ι 10—ν 50—η 8—β 2—α 1—τ 200—
 ι 10—λ 30—ε 5—ι 10—α 1.—Total, 666.

hence the name here given to this antichristian power.

I fear that, from the brevity that I have studied, there may be some obscurity in my illustrations to those of you who have been but little in the habit of perusing the prophetic writings. Should this be the case, the difficulties will be removed when we arrive at the seventeenth chapter, when these two beasts are again presented to us.

My brethren, while I have been retracing to you the calamities inflicted by civil and ecclesiastical tyranny, I have not forgotten the privileges which we enjoy, privileges which this day are so forcibly recalled to us. I fear not to violate the sanctity of this house, nor the holiness of the Sabbath, by reminding you of them, and calling you to exercise gratitude for them.

Instead of a form of government that claims as its symbol a ferocious beast; that has received authority from the dragon; we have one such as the most wise and virtuous of ancient legislators laboured in vain to accomplish; such as speculative statesmen of former ages rather delineated in idea than expected ever to see carried into execution; a government where the rights of the individual are secured, as well as they can be by any human institution; where the laws are not arbitrary, depending only on the caprice, the interest, or the passions of a single man: but fixed, made by yourselves, and to be suspended or changed only by those who enacted them; a form of government which, by the admirable union of liberty and energy that is found in it, preserves us on the one hand from the horrors of despotism, and, on the other hand, from a furious

licentiousness, more bloody and ferocious than despotism.

And let us rejoice that we are equally free from the cruel dominion of the second beast; that we are not compelled to receive our sentiments from the prince or the established priest; but have the inestimable privilege of worshipping God according to the dictates of our consciences; that religion is not here polluted by the touch of the secular arm; that there are here no flames, no racks, no inquisition, no tortures, no civil disabilities, for those who refuse to bear on their foreheads or their hands the sign of a particular church. The sacred rights of conscience, which know no other master than God, are here unassailed. Religion presents itself to you in its native charms; and, relying upon Him from whom it proceeds, asks no other support. We have often said, and we repeat it, If the truths which we preach are not of God, let them fall; if they have been taught by him, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against" them.

These are reflections that are naturally excited by the subject of our lecture, and by the remembrance of that glorious event which this day commemorates; and they are reflections which enable us to look forward with composure to those woes that will yet be inflicted upon some part of the church, at the slaying of the witnesses. This event, we have seen, is yet future. It is the punishment of persecution, and when it occurs, we shall sympathize with our brethren. But when God thus "rises to make inquisition for blood," we shall be safe. Numerous as our sins are, we have never formed a street of the mystical Babylon, where the divine

vengeance is to be displayed ; we have not shed the blood of the martyrs, nor persecuted the sons of Abraham. Our land was in a great degree peopled by those who fled from oppression, and it has not ceased to be the asylum of the afflicted of all nations. Ever may it retain this high character ; ever may it be free from the power both of the secular and the ecclesiastical beast ; from civil and religious tyranny ! And we shall then continually see, as we have seen, the cause of the Redeemer perpetually extending in our country ; many converted to him ; and the millennial glories hastened by numerous revivals. Thus may we all be brought into the liberty of the sons of God ; be made free from sin and from vassalage to Satan ; and become the children of the Redeemer.

SERMON CXXV.



LECTURES ON THE APOCALYPSE.

No. XIII.



REVELATION, CHAP. XIV. 1—13, INCLUSIVE.

IN reading the ancient prophets, you must often have observed that the annunciations of judgments about to descend upon the guilty, and predictions full of terror, are frequently succeeded by the most bright and rapturous visions of the peace, the purity, and final triumphs of Messiah's kingdom. This is the case also with the apostle John: to dispel the gloom that must rest upon the minds of the pious from the view of those deep corruptions of the church that are foretold in the preceding chapters, he here teaches us that notwithstanding the fury and the subtlety of Antichrist, not one of God's sealed ones shall perish: he points us to the high joy and everlasting glory in which their sufferings shall terminate; he shows us the gospel universally diffused, and the enemies of the Redeemer consigned to eternal wo. Such is the great design of the verses that have been read to you. Let us consider them in detail.

“I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Zion,

and with him a hundred, forty and four thousand, having (his name and *το ονομα αυτου και*. 'This is found in the best manuscripts, and is inserted by Griesbach,) *his Father's name written in their foreheads.*" *Sion*, where the ancient temple stood, where God specially dwelt and peculiarly manifested himself, is used sometimes to express the church, and sometimes to denote heaven. In this last sense, it is to be understood in this place: because these happy beings were seen, and their song was heard, before the throne of God, and before the living creatures and the elders: but these are all uniformly represented in these visions as being in heaven. In this celestial *Sion*, John with rapture, again beheld *the Lamb*; the Saviour who died as our sacrifice; but who, "though he was dead, is alive again, and ever liveth" to protect and bless his people. He is surrounded by the one hundred and forty-four thousand, on whose foreheads the name of God is impressed. You immediately perceive that there is here a reference to the seventh chapter, where one hundred and forty-four thousand were sealed as the peculiar and purchased possession of Jesus, as under his divine protection and special care; and to be secured by him amidst all the corruptions of the church, and the judgments to be poured out upon the world. Those who were thus "sealed to the day of redemption," by the conferment of the Holy Spirit of promise, (which as clearly distinguished them in the view of God, as an external mark impressed upon their foreheads would point them out to their fellow-men.) now appear with their Redeemer, safe and happy, rejoicing in his faithfulness and in the fulfilment of his promises. One hundred and forty-four thousand, a definite for an indefinite number, are said thus to be sealed; one hundred

and forty-four thousand appear in the New Jerusalem; not one of the real children of Jesus is lost; not one of the sealed ones was led to renounce him: in the darkest times, exposed to persecution or seduction, they were all upheld by their heavenly Friend; and they now are *with him*, partaking of his glory and his joy, and expressing their attachment and dependence.

While gazing upon the splendour of these holy, happy, exalted beings, the apostle heard them burst forth into one general concert, grand and deep, solemn and majestic, awful, yet harmonious; while at intervals, were heard shouts of joy, loud as the roaring of the mighty billows of the ocean, or of peals of thunder. "*I heard a voice from heaven, 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.*" Such will be a great part of the occupation of the glorified: they will praise God day and night for ever: thus we behold them employed in all the celestial visions with which John was blessed. They have doubtless many occupations and sources of joy of which we know little: they dwell together in society; they contribute to each other's delight; they contemplate God, his perfections, and his works, and continually acquire new knowledge on these subjects: but though employed in these and numberless other ways, they forget not to praise the Lord with burning love, and in the most exalted strains. They *see him*; and the full view of divine excellence and glory, awakens all their powers, enlarges their hearts, and compels them to burst forth into praise. They have different and inconceivably deeper *views of the mercy of God, of the grace of the Redeemer*; and their praises cannot continue, as ours too often are. low, dull, and inter-

rupted. Their souls are *full of love*, and their praises must be ardent, vigorous, and powerful, as this principle from which they spring.

Brethren, if we hope for heaven, let us now engage in this delightful work of praising God. If we are real believers, we belong to the same society with those who are thus occupied in glory : we must here be fitted for heaven ; we must have our hearts here tuned to praise, or we shall never be employed in it hereafter. Those works for which praises are chiefly sung by the church triumphant, were wrought in this world, and surely should not be forgotten while we are travelling through it. Let me add a remark of the excellent Jon. Edwards, on this verse : “ It is an appointment of God that we should not only praise in our prayers, but that we should also *sing* his praises. This was a part of divine worship, both under the Old Testament and the New : this was the practice of Christ and his disciples ; this is the command of the apostles ; and this is the employment of heaven. If then, there be any of the godly who neglect this duty, I would desire them to consider how inconsistent such a neglect is to their profession, and to their state, and to the mercies which God has bestowed : having received so much from him, can you content yourselves without singing the praises of your Heavenly Father and glorious Redeemer ? And parents should be careful also that their children should be instructed, that they may be capable of performing that part of divine worship.”

You must acknowledge, my brethren, that these remarks of the venerable Edwards, are not unnecessary for ourselves.

The song which was sung by the sealed ones was *new*, in opposition to the song on creation and provi-

dence; in opposition to the song of the Old Testament saints, who could not speak of redemption accomplished, because of its excellence, and because the pleasure derived from it will never diminish. Alas! while in this distant world we cannot conceive its loftiness and sweetness; “*none could learn that song but the one hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.*” As even in this world, none can properly praise God for redemption, except those who partake of it; “as the stranger” to vital piety has no communion in their spiritual “joy,” so even real believers, while in this state of darkness and imperfection, can scarcely imagine the sublime raptures, the ecstatic hymns of “the spirits of the just made perfect.”

The *peculiar character* of these happy ones who dwell with Jesus, is then given us: “*They are virgins and undefiled.*” You well know, my brethren, that in consequence of the strictness of that covenant, into which God deigns to enter with his church, and which is represented as a conjugal relation, idolatry and apostacy are spoken of under the figure of impurity or adultery. This is true, not only with respect to the Jewish church, but in the seventeenth chapter of this book, the apostatized and idolatrous Christian church, is termed “the mother of harlots.” These had not joined in these corruptions: they had in the midst of the general depravity, maintained the pure gospel; and to it, their doctrines and worship were conformed.

On earth “*they followed the Lamb:*” while others were “wondering after the beast,” they obeyed the commands and imitated the example of the Redeemer; not abandoning him in public nor in private, in prosperity nor in adversity. And now in heaven

they dwell with Him, "and are led by Him to living fountains of waters," to joys pure and eternal; they still depend on the virtue of his sacrifice; they still seek their happiness from him.

"*They were redeemed from among men.*" Purchased by the blood of the Lamb that was applied to them, and rescued from captivity to sin and Satan.

"*They are the first-fruits unto God and the Lamb.*" Like the first-fruits of the field, and the first-born of the Israelites, consecrated to the Lord; like the first-fruits, an assured pledge of that rich and abundant harvest, which will at last be gathered into heaven.

"*In their mouth was no guile.*" Nathaniels, Israelites indeed, they were faithful and upright in their profession of Christ, and in their testimony against the corruptions and idolatry of Antichrist; and free from falsehood and hypocrisy in their general conduct.

"*They are without fault before the throne of God.*" Perfectly justified by the righteousness of the Redeemer, and sanctified and freed from the very existence of sin, they are "presented to God, blameless and without spot."

After thus exhibiting, for the support of the pious, the blessed state of those who should remain faithful during the period of darkness and error in the church, St. John was shown the mode in which the dominion of Antichrist upon earth should be destroyed. He "*beheld another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation and kindred, and tongue, and people.*" I have already remarked, that I do not suppose we are to seek a strictly chronological arrangement of events in this chapter; it is a

bright and consolatory representation of important truths, properly interposed between the gloomy scenes that occur in the preceding and succeeding chapters. I suppose, therefore, that there is no necessity of referring the flight of the angel to the Reformation, or to the efforts of the pious at a preceding period. The vision evidently denotes some wonderful diffusion of the gospel near the termination of the reign of Antichrist, that shall be one principal means of his destruction. Just before the destruction of the beast and the false prophet, the *gospel*, *everlasting* in its origin, proceeding from the immutable God, and devised in the counsels of eternity; *everlasting* in its substance, since it was radically the same in all dispensations; *everlasting* in its duration, since it will never be utterly lost, and in its effects, which will never cease: this gospel shall rapidly and irresistibly be diffused throughout the world, and through it error and superstition shall be abolished, and the delusions of false religion vanish. Do I err in supposing that this prophecy is remarkably accomplishing at the present moment? Never was such a spectacle exhibited as is now presented by all the Christian world! You must have been, indeed, most inattentive observers of the providence of God, if you have not marked the angel flying; if you have not seen that, by means of Bible and Missionary Societies, the gospel has, in a manner truly wonderful, been proclaimed among numerous nations, who till lately had never heard of it, and been presented with new splendour and glory to many people who had long neglected it, or almost lost the knowledge of it in its purity, through prevailing corruptions. The voice of the angel, his declaration both in the written and preached word,

is, "*Fear God*;" entertain a holy reverence for him, and offend him not by idolatry or sin. "*Give glory to him*;" humbly adore Him and Him only; seeing the manifestation of his perfections in nature, providence, and redemption, give him the glory due unto his name, and bow not down to saints or idols. "*The hour of his judgment is come*;" it is brought into clear view, and vengeance will soon be poured out upon his foes. "*Worship him then that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.*" The character of God, as Creator, is with propriety dilated on for the instruction of those, whether the followers of Antichrist or idolaters, to whom the gospel is sent.

Another angel announces by anticipation that destruction of Babylon that is more fully described in the eighteenth chapter: "*Babylon is fallen, is fallen: that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath [δύμω, or of the vehemence] of her fornication.*" We have seen, and it will more plainly appear in illustrating the seventeenth chapter, that by Babylon is meant the metropolis of the anti-christian empire. It is termed Babylon, for its idolatry and haughtiness, and for keeping in captivity the true church. To have said in plain terms, *Rome*, would have been inconsistent with that degree of obscurity proper for prophesy, and would have been considered in the time of John as a crime against the empire. The reason of her destruction is assigned: she has enticed the nations into that idolatry and corruption which have kindled against them the wrath of God; she has seduced them into practices which bring down upon them the indignation of the Lord.

The terribleness of this indignation is declared by the *third angel*. Woes are denounced against all who adhere to Antichrist, and forsake the pure gospel, in terms than which none can be more terrible; by figures than which none can be more appalling. Instead of the enchanting cup with which Babylon intoxicated the nations, “*they shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation.*” “*In the presence of the holy angels,*” to whom they will in vain appeal for help or pity; “*in the presence of the Lamb*” of God, whose gospel they corrupt, whose grace they neglect, and who then will come as their Judge; “*they shall be tormented with fire and brimstone.*” To this agonized pain there shall be neither end nor intermission, for “*the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever; and they have no rest, day nor night.*” Thus terribly shall thine enemies perish, O God! Thus shall the followers of Antichrist be destroyed.

Having thus shown by impressive contrast the different states through eternity of the sincere friends and of the enemies of the Redeemer, the apostle adds, “*Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus:*” that is, ‘Here is the ground and reason why the saints endure without shrinking the severe trials to which they are exposed under Antichrist; they look forward with confidence to honour, glory, and immortality; and fearing Him who can cast both body and soul into hell, they “fear not those who can only kill the body, and after that have nothing else that they can do.”’ And here is the reason also why these representations are given before their proper place in the chronological order of these visions, to encourage those who have the mark of

God upon them to be steadfast and immoveable. And this effect is produced : for while so many listen to the beast. “ *they keep the commandments of God :*” conforming in heart and life to his word, as the only rule of faith, practice, and worship ; they keep “ *the faith of Jesus :*” believing, maintaining in their purity, professing all the ordinances and institutions of the Redeemer.

But, the believer, who lived in the time of darkness and persecution, might exclaim, ‘ Of what avail will it be to me, that Antichrist shall hereafter be destroyed ? that at the termination of his reign his votaries will be punished, while the faithful followers of Jesus shall be rewarded ? In the mean time, many thousands of us may perish before the deliverance of the church is accomplished. For the full consolation and support of Christians, and as a triumphant answer to this objection, St. John “ *heard a voice from heaven, saying, Write, blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth :*” Immediately after death they shall enter into felicity ; their happiness shall not be deferred till the destruction of Antichrist, and the appearance of the church in that purity and glory to which it shall attain. “ *The Spirit,*” who is infallibly true, assures them that “ *they shall,*” immediately on their death, “ *rest from their labours :*” from their sufferings for Christ, from sorrows of every kind, from conflicts with sin, Satan, and the world : “ *and their works shall follow them :*” not preceding them as a meritorious plea, but attending them, as evidences of their sincerity and the measure of the reward of grace. Their works of faith and labour of love will never be forgotten.

While we here pause in our lecture, let us think of ourselves. In one of these worlds, so widely dis-

unct, that have been exhibited in these verses, each one of us must for ever reside : with the Lamb we shall enter into the heavenly Jerusalem, and adore him that was slain ; or with the followers of the beast shall undergo tortures unspeakable and interminable. Life and death, the blessing and the curse, are set before you : choose then between them. Should you hesitate for a moment in this choice ? “ Who can dwell in everlasting flames : who can lie down in eternal burnings ? ” Who so base, so ignoble in his aims and feelings, so mad, as to renounce the sublime delights that are offered to him by his Saviour ? Alas ! there are many such ; in vain is the everlasting gospel preached to them ; they slumber on, and are unaffected alike by the terrors and the mercies of God. Pity them, Christians ; pray for them ; supplicate God that grace may touch their hearts, before death and judgment, and the quenchless fire, and the never-dying worm, awake them, alas ! too late. By the tests that are contained in this chapter, decide to which of these worlds you are hastening ; have you the impress of God ? Is it pleasant to you to praise the Lamb ? Do you cleave to him, obey him, cheerfully suffer for him, rest on his atonement, and feel his Spirit within you, the seal and the earnest of heaven ? If so, rejoice in the prospects of glory ; tremble not at persecution and danger ; shrink not from death : all your sorrows will soon and gloriously terminate.

But if you have hitherto been careless, I cry to you, immortal souls, to awake ! By the love and agonies of the Lamb that was slain ; by the splendours of that crown which is offered to you ; by all that is touching or terrifying in that book of God which is preached to you ; by the despair, the

shrieks, the execrations, of the lost; by the smoke of their torments ever rising; by the chains of darkness which fetter them; I *entreat*, and in the name of God, and at the peril of your souls, I command you, no longer to sport with your Creator, your Judge, your Redeemer; no longer to trifle with your eternal interests!

SERMON CXXVI,



LECTURES ON THE APOCALYPSE.

No. XIV.



REVELATION, CHAP. XIV. 14—20.

IN the greater part of our lectures on this mystic book, we have found the works of God in providence shedding light on his predictions, and history beautifully commenting on prophesy. This is not the case with the verses which now claim your attention. They relate to events that are still future. All that we can do, is to point out in a general manner the great objects which they announce; leaving to our descendants, who shall live during the time of their fulfilment, a more particular explanation of them. From their position in the series of prophetic visions,

we know that they refer to the destruction of Antichrist, and designate two of the principal means whereby his authority shall be overthrown, and the holy and spiritual kingdom of the Redeemer be universally established. These are compared to a *harvest*, succeeded by a tremendous *vintage*; figures which, as we shall see, are very frequently employed by the sacred writers.

He who produces these great effects, is the Lord Jesus Christ himself, that mighty Redeemer, who is head over all things to his church; who guards its interests; and who regulates the concerns of earth. St. John "*looked, and behold, a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.*" The symbols are all here plain and intelligible: he is on a *cloud*, the chariot of the divinity, the token of his presence when he comes to execute works of power. It is *white*, to express the purity, majesty, and righteousness of his dispensations. Even when he appears terrible to the wicked, bringing calamities and gloom upon them, he is glorious in the view of his church. He who was truly man, who so often styled himself the Son of man, appears to the beloved disciple in the same splendour in which, as Son of man, he was seen by Daniel, in that striking vision contained in his seventh chapter. He wears a *crown*, to denote his sovereign dominion, as Lord of all; not one like that which, in profane mockery, was placed upon his head on earth, but formed of rays of glory infinitely brighter than the lustre of the seraph. This is the manner in which we shall see him, when he shall come in power and glory to judge the world, to judge us: thus shall all behold him at the last great day. Appearing now for a par-

ticular purpose, he has a *sharp sickle*, to indicate that he is going forth to some remarkable harvest.

Then "*another angel came out of the temple,*" from the divine presence, "*crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle and reap ; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle, and the earth was reaped.*" Jesus does every thing according to the will of his Father : he accomplishes the eternal purposes at the period appointed for their fulfilment ; and the angels are joyful ministers, ready to fly to execute the commandments of God.

But what is meant by reaping the harvest ? Is this an act of *vengeance* on the enemies of the Redeemer, preparatory to the dreadful vintage ? or, is it an act of *mercy* to the church, betokening a large accession of converts to the Redeemer ? Both sentiments have been ingeniously maintained ; both have been supported by the natural and proper use of this figure in the scriptures. And why may not both sentiments be united ? Why may not this harvest be at once a work of judgment and mercy, resembling that pillar of fire and cloud, which, though dark and terrible to the Egyptians, was luminous and cheerful to the Israelites ? It is certain that, by the figure of a *harvest*, sometimes judgments on the enemies of God are expressed. Thus the calamities that were to be brought upon Babylon by the armies of Cyrus, are foretold : (Jer. li. 33.) " Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel ; The daughter of Babylon is like a threshing-floor, it is time to thresh her : yet a little while, and the time of her harvest shall come." Thus Joel, (iii. 13.) speaking of terrible punishments to be inflicted on the heathens, says, " Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest

is ripe: come, get ye down; for the press is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great." On the other hand, when Jeremiah says, "The harvest is past, and we are not saved," he evidently means by this term a period of peculiar mercy, and special opportunities of securing salvation. In a very similar sense the figure is used by our blessed Lord, when he says: "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers are few, pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he would send forth labourers into his harvest." And both ideas are explicitly included by our Redeemer in Matt. xiii. when illustrating the parable of the tares: "The harvest is the end of the world, the reapers are the angels, they shall gather the tares to be burned in the fire, and the wheat to be laid up in the heavenly world." This then is the harvest; at once an act of judgment and of mercy. The angel whom we have beheld flying through heaven, shall see the everlasting gospel which he preaches, not to be inefficacious. To some it will prove "the savour of death unto death," and from its neglect, those who despised it, shall sink under judgment. To others, it will be "the savour of life unto life," and they, abandoning errors and superstitions, will cleave to the Redeemer. In both modes, the empire of Antichrist will be shaken, and his fall be hastened.

But the *vintage* that succeeds has no character of mildness; every trait marks terror, and the punishment of the guilty. Those who have not been led to flee from the errors and superstitions of the mystical Babylon; those who have not listened to the monitory voice, "Come out of her, my people, and be ye separate;" shall sink under the divine indignation. The treading of the wine-press has an uni-

form metaphorical meaning in prophetic language. It cannot be better illustrated than by the commencement of the sixty-third chapter of Isaiah, where the Redeemer appears as a mighty conqueror returning from the combat, with garments stained red, as though he had been treading a wine-press. In answer to the question concerning the colour of his garments, he says: "I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury, and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment: for the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth." Such is the uniform representation of a vintage; the execution of the severest judgments of God upon the guilty. This wrath of God is brought upon the enemies of the Redeemer by an angel, to teach us that the Saviour has all these heavenly intelligences at his command; and at the call of another angel "coming out from the altar, who had power over fire"—the fire of the altar; the symbol of divine vengeance, demanding an atonement, and to be satisfied only with it. The vintage was to be full and complete; the vines and the grapes were at once to be cut off. It was "the vine of the earth" that was thus to be cut up; in opposition to that vine which was of the planting of our heavenly Father, and which so often represents the true church. The vineyard comprehends all antichristian nations. The blood coming out of the wine-press to the horses' bridles, represents the slaughter to be made of the enemies of the Redem-

er. It is like a terrible engagement, in which horses wade thus deeply in the blood of the enemies. It is to extend sixteen hundred furlongs; this perhaps is metaphorical; a definite for an indefinite number; although, when we consider the object of this prediction, there is certainly a singular coincidence pointed out by Mede, who shows that the "Stato della Chiesa," the state of the Roman church, or St. Peter's patrimony, contains just two hundred Italian miles, precisely sixteen hundred furlongs.

Here we pause. We have already said, that as these events are future, we wish to give only a general view of them, leaving history more fully to explain them. But the figures that are employed authorize, and even force us to present an important series of reflections for each individual; for every nation and church; for the world itself, there is a period when the harvest is ripe, and when the sickle shall be thrust in.

Let us rapidly illustrate this point; it is connected with our everlasting interests.

1. When are individuals ripe and ready for the harvest? All are preparing for it; every step that they take ripens them for wretchedness or glory; not a day passes over their heads, not an hour wings its flight, in which they are not made more meet for hell or for heaven. Not that all must sink to precisely the same degree of guilt, or rise to the same elevations in holiness before they are removed from the world; this would be inconsistent with all those motives to piety derived from a consideration of the uncertainty of human life. But all live till that particular degree of preparation assigned to each individual is attained; and then, whatever may be the hopes of the person himself, or the expectations of

his friends and the community, the irresistible voice from heaven cries, "Put ye in the sickle; for the harvest is ripe:" he is mown down, and "he goes to his place." But you ask, and you should ask with deep apprehension, and with shuddering solicitude, who is he who appears nearly mature for the harvest of vengeance, almost ripe for eternal misery? That man who has long sinned against conviction; who has often quenched the motions of the Spirit, and resisted the remonstrances of an awakened conscience; who has lightly regarded many means of grace which God afforded him; who can now with indifference indulge in acts at which he once shuddered, and remain insensible in sin. I repeat it, without arriving at this height of wickedness, thou mayest be called to the holy tribunal; but if this be thy character, thou hast cause every day to fear the cry from heaven, "Cut him off, why cumbereth he the ground!" Ripe as thou art for perdition, canst thou suppose that the Intercessor will for ever plead, "Spare him this year also?"

And who is the individual who is ripe for heaven? In one sense the feeblest real believer is prepared for glory; and he who dies when he first flees to the Saviour will be admitted to the joy of his Lord. But ordinarily the children of God are not removed from earth till they attain some maturity of grace, and till they become in some good degree confirmed believers. He who lives by faith; who, superior to the world, believingly and triumphantly anticipates divine joys; who constantly shakes off more and more the fetters of corruption, and has more heavenly aspirations and desires; who shows impressed upon him the image of God, and lives as Jesus lived when on earth; who, like the grain, as it ripens and fills,

bows lower, has more self-denial and humility: this man is ripe for heaven. Oh! why have we not more such characters among us! Much as we should miss them on their departure, greatly as we should lament the loss of their instructions, their example, their prayers, yet we should stand with composure round their open graves, exulting in the assurance that their souls have been gathered into "the garner of the Lord."

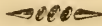
Inquire then, solemnly inquire, my dear brother, to which of these two classes thou belongest? Whether thou thinkest of it or not, thou art continually ripening for one of these two states. As yet, if thou art a sinner, a change is possible; but trifle a little longer, and the sentence will be pronounced, "Let him that is filthy be filthy still." Oh! seek the renewing grace of God before the decisive harvest. And if thou art a child of God, repine not at afflictions, disappointments, woes: these are all means of preparing you for the blessed harvest. The seed, to come to maturity, needs the dark sky, the cloud, and the rain, as well as the sunshine. Rejoice in the providence of Him who is conducting you, and implore from Him the dews of his grace, and the beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Confide in him: in the best mode he is maturing you for heaven.

2. I have not time to insist, as I intended, on this harvest, as it relates to nations or particular churches. I need only remark, that when the iniquity of any community, like that of the Amorites, is full: when they have filled up the measure of their wickedness, then "the sickle shall be thrust in," and all human endeavours to protract or evade the judgments of God, shall be found utterly unavailing.

3. But there is a period when we all must be assembled : when we shall perceive all that is affecting, and all that is awful in the harvest of the earth by our Redeemer. You perceive that I allude to the judgment-day, to which solemn occasion our Saviour applies similar language to that which is employed in the text. Then we shall see him coming in clouds, enthroned in glory inconceivable, bearing at once his divine and mediatorial crown, and attended, not by a single angel, but by all the heavenly host. These are the reapers, enabled to discern the characters of all : to separate the wheat and the tares that were here mingled together in society or the church. Dreadful indeed will be the separation ! All that shall be found tares, all that were profane, formalists, or hypocrites, shall be bound up in bundles, and “ cast into the furnace,” but not to be utterly consumed, the fire is unquenchable : and these wretched beings shall for ever wail and gnash their teeth. “ The wheat,” the pious, shall be received to their eternal home : no longer mingling with the unholy, they shall dwell in the presence of God, and shall be happy, not merely beyond their deserts and hopes, but beyond their highest present conceptions. Brethren, in which of these two classes shall we then be found ? What evidence have we that we shall not be crushed in the wine-press of the wrath of God ? What scriptural proofs, confirmed by the indwelling Spirit, that we are, to use the fine expression of Job, “ like shocks of corn, fully ripe for the harvest ?” And if we ourselves, are safe, oh ! let us look with affection and solicitude to our families and friends. In that day when there shall be so many separations of the dearest connexions, shall we all be united and enter together into glory, and be

“laid up as wheat in the granary of heaven.” Oh! in the prospect of that harvest-day of the world, let us pray God for the wicked before their state is without resource. Let us supplicate more earnestly for ourselves and our friends the influences of heaven to ripen us for glory.

SERMON CXXVII.



LECTURES ON THE APOCALYPSE.

No. XV.



REV. CHAP. XV.

WE have seen the woes that were denounced against the Roman empire under the first six trumpets, and have shown the accomplishment of those events that were foretold. In the last chapter we had a general view of the judgments that shall be inflicted on Antichrist. In this there is presented to us a vision preparatory to the declaration of that series of woes, that shall issue in the destruction of all corruptions, errors, and superstitions in the church; and in the introduction of the pure, the spiritual, and universal kingdom of Messiah.

St. John again stood on the portals of heaven, and beheld a *sign, great in itself, wonderful in his estimation*: “*Seven angels received the seven last plagues, in which is filled up the wrath of God.*” They include the final manifestations of the anger of God against the corrupted church; they are inflicted by *angels*, who no less readily fly to be the executioners of the divine indignation against the guilty, than to cheer, comfort, and animate the real believer; who as readily, when God orders, smite the host of a Sennacherib, as they bear the soul of a Lazarus to glory.

Immediately after beholding these angels, and knowing their commission, the apostle was taught that there were many who, unstained by the corruptions of Antichrist, should not partake of her plagues. “*I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire; and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.*” These constitute that holy, happy company, with whom we hope hereafter to be united: to join with them in the exalted hymn of thankfulness and praise; and with them to bow before “him that sitteth upon the throne, and before the Lamb.” The beast, his image, his mark, and his number, have been explained to you. Without repeating the observations then made, it will be sufficient here to remark, that those who obtained the victory over them, are those who amidst many seductions, maintained the purity of the gospel in faith, in worship, and in conduct; those who are represented in Rev. xii. 11, as having “overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony.” “These have harps,” the

instrument used in the ancient temple, on which to celebrate the praises of God, and from which now resounds the song of the conqueror. But "*what is this sea of glass, mingled with fire?*" There are two principal sentiments, each of which may consistently be maintained. Some persons have imagined that this is the same sea that is represented in the sublime vision contained in the 4th chapter; where (verse 6.) the apostle saw "before the throne a sea of glass like unto crystal." The imagery there is certainly derived from the Jewish temple, and the allusion there is doubtless to the molten sea, in which the priests washed before they offered their sacrifices, and in which the sacrifices themselves were washed before they were presented to God. They both represented, as we showed you, that blood of the Redeemer, without which neither our persons nor our services can be acceptable. To illustrate the purity and sinless worship of heaven, that which John beheld was "clear as crystal." According to many commentators, this is precisely the same scenery, and the blood of the covenant is here exhibited. It is a sea shining with brightness, as white and clear as crystal, but rendered beautiful and apparently mingled with fire, being irradiated from the reflection of the light falling on it from the throne of God: or, according to others, "its waves flash with the flames of divine indignation, shining high to the glory of his justice; and the saints are represented as in union with Christ, both in the merits of his atoning sacrifice, and in the exercise of those judgments that he is about to bring upon those who are not interested in his atonement, and who obey not the gospel."* This interpreta-

* M'Leod.

tion, as I have said, is defensible: it rests upon principles that are correct; it enforces a great and a precious truth, that the redeemed derive their joy, their triumph, and security in heaven, not from their works and sufferings, but from the sacrifice of Immanuel. Nevertheless, I incline to the opinion of those who, because the song of Moses is immediately mentioned, suppose that there is here an allusion to the deliverance of the Israelites, and to the grateful song which burst from their hearts on the borders of the Red Sea. In like manner, these happy spirits, having been delivered from all their enemies and trials; having just passed through the good providence of God, from earth to heaven, stand *at or near* (for so the word *επι* may be translated) the sea that they have crossed, and proclaim the praises of their Deliverer. It is a sea of *glass*, smooth and shining, frail and unsubstantial, as are the enjoyments of earth. But it was to them *mingled with fire*: they had passed through persecutions and calamities to glory; many of them had been baptized by fire, as well as by water; and had from the midst of the flames ascended to the world of felicity.

“They sung the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.” Their hymn was of the same general strain with that of Moses, celebrating the attributes and works of God; but they add the praises of the Redeemer, who had been so much more fully manifested to them than to the ancient church; and they look forward with rapture to the universal triumphs of that Lamb of God, who has justified, sanctified, and saved them. They look at creation, and are filled with wonder at the Almighty power; they look at redemption, and with admiration see justice and truth shining as brightly as do

mercy and grace; they call upon all to fear, to glorify the divine name; and they anticipate the millennial glory that will be introduced by the judgments upon the beast. "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty." Thus they begin their song to God the Father, in almost the same language that we find in the song of Moses; they turn then to the Lamb, to Him who is so frequently called King of Zion, King of his church, King of his people, whom "he has redeemed from all iniquity and purified to himself." "Just and true are all thy ways, thou King of Saints." "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy;" essentially, underivedly, perfectly, communicatively; "for all nations shall come and worship before thee, for thy judgments are made manifest." I give you no long commentary on these words: the pious heart affords the best commentary.

The apostle then beheld "*the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven opened:*" that is, the inmost part of the heavenly temple, corresponding to that part of the Jewish temple where the ark of testimony was deposited, and where God peculiarly dwelt and manifested his glory. There was the throne of God: there were the attending angels, and from their stations these angels came to execute the commands of God. They were *seven*, having the *seven* plagues; seven peculiar dispensations of Divine Providence upon a corrupted church. They appear in the habits of the *high priest*, offering proper sacrifices to God, though thousands fall before them. They are "*in pure and white linen,*" showing the righteousness of the Lord in his judgments. They are "*girded,*" ready with alacrity to execute the

commands of their Lord ; their girdles are “ *golden*,” to denote the excellence of their nature, and the dignity of their office.

From one of the four living creatures, (representatives of the faithful ministers of Christ, whose prayers hasten the latter-day glory, and the destruction of the enemies of the Redeemer,) they receive “ seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.” The original term that we translate *vials*, signifies the cups used at the temple for the purpose of libations. They were *golden*: just, precious, and useful, though their contents were terrible to the enemies of God. They contain the last effusions of the indignation of the Almighty upon the earth; for after them all the beauties of the millennium shall appear. They are the manifestation of the wrath of Him “ *who liveth for ever and ever* :” words which here have a terrible emphasis, and not indistinctly imply that his indignation against his foes shall be as interminable as his duration.

Immediately afterwards, “ the temple was filled with smoke, from the glory of God and from his power, and no man was able to enter into the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.” To understand this verse, you have only to look back to the history of the Old Testament: when the tabernacle was dedicated by Moses, and the temple by Solomon, the glory of God descended in a cloud, which was the symbol of his presence for the protection of his friends and punishment of his foes. The same cloud appeared when Korah and his company were swallowed up, and in other instances. Thus God here displayed his presence in a thick cloud of smoke awfully glorious; and as

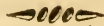
we are told that Moses could not enter into the tabernacle, nor the priests stand to minister in the temple, "while the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord," (Ex. xl. 35. 1 Kings viii. 11.) so no one was permitted to enter into the heavenly temple to entreat that these impending calamities should be prevented, until all the punishments to be inflicted by the seven angels in their order should be fulfilled. The power and wrath of God should without intermission be manifested till Antichrist and all his adherents should be utterly destroyed.

Let us conclude this lecture by a few reflections. What a different aspect has every thing connected with the government and character of God, on the happiness of the wicked and the good! To the enemy of the Redeemer every thing connected with the providence, the judgment, the purity of the Lord, speaks terror and dismay; to the friend of Jesus, the very same truths are sources of the richest comfort. Apply this general remark to two of the great points presented in this chapter—the agency of angels in the concerns of men, and the eternity of God.

Every where in the holy volume we are taught that there is an intimate connexion between the visible and invisible world; that angels are employed to execute the purposes of God to our race; to accomplish his promises and threatenings. And how cheering a truth is this to the believer! Already united to these angels by similarity of character, views, and desires; worshipping the same God, and devoted to the same Redeemer with them; anticipating a perfect union with them in the world of glory: the Christian rejoices that he is ever encompassed by them; that they continually guard, de-

send, direct him; he sees by faith as great a number of them as the servant of Elisha did when his eyes were opened; and he trembles not at danger, knowing that "more are they that are for him than they that are against him;" he knows that sooner than one promise of God should fail, "ten legions of them should be sent from heaven."

SERMON CXXVIII.



LECTURES ON THE APOCALYPSE.

No. XVI.



REVELATION, CHAP. XX. 1—6.

You perceive, my brethren, that in returning to these lectures I have omitted several chapters. I have done so that we might sooner be brought to the consideration of that glorious and happy state of the church which is to succeed to the darkness, the errors, and the guilt, under which the world has so long groaned. The chapters that we have passed over, contain but two principal points; a minute description of Antichrist, and a particular account of the mode of his destruction. The great traits of the former were exhibited when we illustrated the

thirteenth chapter; and on the latter point our descendants will be better commentators than ourselves. The previous part of this book we could readily explain, by taking the works of God in providence to elucidate his predictions in his word; by tracing the concurrence of history and revelation. But the pouring out of the vials is still future: and though their great object is manifest, yet those who live after their effusion can alone with certainty declare what is the precise design of each wo, and where the tremendous field is to be found where the battle of Armageddon shall crush the enemies of the Lord. It is enough for us to know that these events are certain, and that the beast and false prophet, with all the foes of the Redeemer, shall assuredly be overthrown. Immediately after this, the *millennium* (a term formed from two Latin words, and signifying the period of a thousand years) shall bless the church and the world. It is true this event also is future; nevertheless, we may with confidence speak concerning it; for it is not mentioned merely in a single passage of scripture, but is described in both testaments, and is referred to in every portion of the sacred volume. Let us then proceed to a more detailed examination of this subject, which is so associated with the best feelings of the believer. We shall,

I. Explain that portion of scripture on which our lecture is more directly founded; and then

II. Inquire into the nature and the precise period of the commencement and duration of the millennium; and the chief means by which it will be introduced.

I. St. John beholds an angel descending from heaven; he has the emblems of divine authority, and

is evidently the Angel of the covenant; that blessed Redeemer who has the keys of hell and of death;” who “shutteth and openeth” according to his pleasure; who came to “destroy the works,” and to overthrow the kingdom “of the devil.” He has the key of the world of darkness, horror, and despair, in the one hand; and in the other, a chain to bind the criminal opposer of his cause. He seizes him, who in the twelfth chapter has been represented as a great red *dragon*, (xii. 9.) who, in allusion to his temptation of our first parents, is called the old *serpent*, who is the *devil*, or false accuser of the saints; and *Satan*, or the adversary of the pious. This foe of God and holiness is bound for one thousand years; is shut up for this period in the pit of despair; is there secured with the seal of God; is prevented from deceiving the nations, from leading them into error, persecution, and sin; is hindered from going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. “After this, he is to be loosed for a little season.” By the permission of God, to his own confusion, and for the fuller glory of Christ, he will for a short time, after the millennial glory, and just before the consummation of all terrestrial things, exercise his subtlety and malice. The apostle beheld also “thrones, and those who sat upon them, to whom judgment was given.” The church was not only delivered from the assaults of Satan, but those believers who now lived, instead of being persecuted and oppressed, appeared with the highest honour and dignity, as so many judges ruling over their enemies. “And I saw,” adds St. John, “the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus,” for their faithful testimony to Christ as their only Saviour: “and for the word of God,” for their at-

tachment to it as the only rule of faith and practice, “and who had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads or in their hands,” who boldly opposed all antichristian sentiments, and exhibited the purity of the gospel.” And these souls “lived and reigned with Christ one thousand years.” All who had been martyred seemed again to be alive, and were advanced to high honour and felicity in the kingdom of Christ. This is termed “the *first* resurrection,” both previous to and emblematical of the second resurrection. The great question connected with this passage of scripture is this: Does the apostle here speak literally or figuratively? Will those individuals who were martyred actually rise from the dead, and remain upon earth during the millennium? I have been surprised that many wise as well as good men have maintained this sentiment. The nature of the prophetic language concurs with the whole current of scripture in leading to an opposite conclusion. The language of prophesy is highly figurative: even in this very passage, there is no one who supposes that the Saviour will literally bring a key and a chain to confine Satan. His unlimited power and authority are thus strongly expressed; and we should naturally expect that figures would be introduced in another part of the same scene. Besides, there is no instance in the scriptures where a proper resurrection is represented as the reviving of the *souls*, but always of the *bodies*, of the departed. There are many doctrines of the Bible, as well as the general representation of the happiness of the glorified, which oppose the sentiment of those who have maintained that the martyrs in their bodies will

come to dwell upon earth. And finally, for it is unnecessary long to reason on this subject, the strong figure here used by St. John is one that is most frequently found in the holy volume. Thus Elias was said to revive in John the Baptist; thus papal Rome is called Babylon; thus there is said to be a resurrection of the witnesses, not when the same individuals rose from the dead, but when others appeared of the same zeal and faith; thus, in the Old Testament, the restoration of Israel is represented as a resurrection, both by Isaiah (xxvi. 19.) and by Ezekiel (xxxvii.); and thus Paul speaks of the conversion of the Jews to the faith of the gospel, as "life from the dead." (Rom. xi. 15.) There is then nothing forced nor unusual in the figure, and nothing difficult in the meaning of the apostle. The same spirit which the martyrs manifested, will be revived, spread through the world, and appear in all the subjects of the Redeemer; and they shall enjoy the highest degree of glory, victory, and dominion over their enemies; shall wear a wreath as desirable as the crown of the martyr.

"The rest of the dead," continues the apostle, "lived not again until the thousand years were fulfilled:" that is, the enemies of the Redeemer did not revive; there was not, during this period, a succession of persons of their spirit, as there was of those who had the temper of the martyrs. The note of Lowman, that excellent commentator of the Revelation, is perfectly correct: "There is mention in this book of two sorts of dead persons; those who were "slain for the witness of Jesus, and those who were slain by Him that sat on the white horse:" that is, those foes of the gospel that were destroyed by the Redeemer. The persecutors of the church are

called in the last verse of the preceding chapter, the *remnant*, or the *rest*, (for it is the same original word, *οι λοιποι*, that is used there and here.) The meaning then is evident: during the millennium, there shall be no revival of the malicious, persecuting, and active spirit of those enemies of God and holiness who had before oppressed the followers of the Redeemer.

Well does St. John subjoin that those are *blessed* who have a part in this first resurrection; who live in this period of happiness and purity, and in as complete conformity to the image of Christ as can be enjoyed upon earth. They are *holy*, not only from their internal purity, but from their consecration to God and to Christ as priests, and from the spiritual sacrifices which they continually offer: and they "shall reign with Christ;" shall be advanced to a degree of religious dignity and authority with him, that will at once display his grace and their felicity; and this felicity shall be perpetual, for though they, like the generations that are past, shall experience temporal death, yet this last enemy shall be without a sting, and the "second death," the state of misery in the future world, has no power over them.

After this explanation of these verses, I ought now, according to my plan, to enter upon the examination of the great subject here presented to us. But I perceive that I shall not have time for this investigation, and shall therefore reserve it for the next Lord's day. Let us not, however, pause without some inferences from a subject so fruitful in religious instruction.

1. Let the prospect of these happy days that are so rapidly approaching, fill us with a holy joy. Un-

der the cruel bondage of the Egyptians, the Israelites were cheered by their firm belief in the promise that God would deliver them. When they afterwards were seated by the rivers of Babylon, weeping as they remembered Zion, how often were their sighs suppressed, and their tears changed into tears of joy, when they looked forward to the period of deliverance. Like them, amidst the afflictions of the church, and the prevalence of its enemies, we may console ourselves with the assurance of its future victories; with the anticipation of the day when the God whom we love shall no longer be outraged by the works of his hands; when the Saviour shall no longer be neglected by those for whom he bled; when thoughtless mortals will not be perishing, notwithstanding all that infinite love has done for them: of that day when ecstatic gratitude shall swell every heart, and songs of salvation be chanted by every tongue; when the earth shall display the purity and happiness of a renovated Eden, and man again hold high, and holy, and delightful intercourse with God and with his angels. Oh! how cheering to the heart, pained by the follies, the errors, and the crimes that surround us, to rest on this delightful prospect! We who are on the very verge of it, surely should be animated, when even the Old Testament prophets, as they foretold it, appeared to burn with warmer fire, and pour forth more rapturous strains. Who can without emotion observe them introducing the most affecting images, and exhausting the force of language, to describe the magnitude of this event, and its blessed consequences to a world that has so long groaned under crimes and miseries? Let our emotions be the same with theirs; and let us joy-

fully look forward to the time when all adore "one Lord, one Father." Error has no place—

The breath of heav'n has chas'd it; in the heart
 No passion touches a discordant string;
 But all is harmony and love.
 One song employs all nations, and all cry,
 Worthy the Lamb, for he was slain for us!
 The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks
 Shout to each other, and the mountain tops
 From distant regions catch the flying joy,
 Till nation after nation, taught the strain,
 Earth rolls the rapturous Hosanna round.

2. And while anticipating this happy period, inquire whose cause you espouse; whose victories you love; with whose triumphs your happiness is inseparably linked? The cause of Jesus shall assuredly flourish; the gates of hell have not prevailed, can not prevail against it. Strong as Omnipotence, it holds on its steady course, and bears down all opposition. Are your best sympathies and feelings associated with the victories of Immanuel? If so, you shall rejoice in the millennial splendours of his church, whether you still remain on earth, or have entered upon the world of glory. But wo to him, who is merely the pretended friend, or the open enemy, or the careless neglecter of Jesus! From the depths of despair, he shall behold the triumphs of that grace which he once despised, and shall be for ever crushed by that sceptre to which he refused to bend. Oh! let us be careful that all our destinies be united with the kingdom of Christ.

3. Christian, who art lamenting that this day has not arrived, remember that much of its happiness may be experienced by thee, if thou art faithful to thy Redeemer. Cultivate greater holiness; live

nearer to God; rise more above the cares and temptations of the world; cherish more intimate communion with the Redeemer; and thou shalt have more of the temper and joys of those who shall live in these happy days. Be not slothful; strive to extend the cause of Jesus: perhaps thou wilt not live to see the millennial temple raised; but act like David, and lay up materials for that splendid edifice that may be reared in the days of thy son.

SERMON CXXIX.



LECTURES ON THE APOCALYPSE.

No. XVII.



REVELATION, CHAP. XX. 1—6.

IN our last lecture we spoke of the certainty of the millennium; and, while animating Christians to the discharge of their duty, briefly showed the nature of the latter-day glory.

The two points that are now to be examined in the prosecution of our plan, are these:

- I. When will the millennium commence? and,
- II. What will be its duration?

I. When will the millennium commence ?

We remark in general, it is to be at the close of the New Testament dispensation. By it (with the exception of the short interval between its termination and the judgment-day) the purposes of God with respect to the church on earth will be completed. The prophets, therefore, when foretelling these glorious events, declare that they shall take place in "the latter days," or in "the last times." The kingdom of the mountain is the final state, in which the stone cut out without hands is to appear.

We remark again, that there are many circumstances which prove that this blessed period is approaching. The examination of the prophecies in which we have been engaged, shows that there are but few predictions yet to be accomplished, before "the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ." And the general aspect of the Christian world at the present moment, is such as to warrant the most sanguine expectations; for never has there been a period when such exertions were made by the followers of the Redeemer to extend his cause; when so many societies of various kinds were formed to diffuse the light and consolations of the gospel, and when such united and earnest prayer on this subject was poured out before God. We regard all these and similar circumstances as the harbinger of a blessed state for the church. He who has excited and called forth these desires, will not suffer them to be fruitless. He "never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain."

But do you ask, Are there no chronological marks that will enable us to determine with more certainty when the millennium will commence? There are,

both in the Old Testament and the New Daniel and John present two contemporary characters, who are constantly contrasted, and whose duration is exhibited under a variety of forms. These are Antichrist and the true church. The first is represented by the Gentiles, (those nominally Christian, but having the temper and idolatry of the Gentiles,) who trample the sanctuary for forty-two months, and by the beast who is to continue forty-two months. The true church, while contemporary with Antichrist, and not appearing in all its glory, is represented by the witnesses who prophesy in sackcloth for twelve hundred and sixty days, and by the woman in the wilderness who is to remain there a time, times, and half a time. From Daniel, (vii. 25. xii. 7.) we find that, in prophetic chronology, by time is meant a year; by times, two years; and by half a time, or the dividing of time, half a year. These various forms of computation are used, to teach us that they are not to be taken literally, but in the prophetic sense, in which (as we showed you in a former lecture) a day is used for a year. You know also, that instead of the solar year, consisting of three hundred and sixty-five days and some hours, the prophetic year, according to the ancient manner of reckoning, is lunar, consisting of twelve months of thirty days, or three hundred and sixty days. Three and a half such years, or forty-two such months, amount to twelve hundred and sixty days; which, according to the remark that we have just made, and that is confirmed by all the chronological prophecies, denote twelve hundred and sixty years. When Antichrist has endured for this period, he shall be utterly destroyed; the church shall come out of the wilderness, and the witnesses be no longer clothed

in sackcloth. There is no doubt concerning that power that is exhibited as Antichrist. The only difficulty is, to ascertain that period when it so far departed from the purity of the gospel as to receive this appellation, for its corruptions were gradual. Many have supposed that the reign of Antichrist is to be dated from the year 756, when Pepin, the most powerful monarch then living, conferred on the pope a temporal sovereignty. But there appears to me far more probability in the opinion of those who date it from the year 606, when Phocas constituted Boniface III. oecumenical or universal bishop, and required all the churches to acknowledge the papal supremacy. To his usurpation the ten horns, or kingdoms, submitted. He claimed to be the vicar of Christ, and appeared with all the traits of Antichrist. It is a singular coincidence, that in this very year Mahomet began first to propagate his impostures, and to corrupt the churches of the east. If then, to the year 606 we add 1260, we shall have 1866, the year when tyranny and superstition shall for ever be destroyed; when the kingdom of the Redeemer shall appear victorious over all its enemies. But happy as it will then be, glorious as will be this dawn of the millennial day, the world will still for thirty years be improving in knowledge and holiness; and at the end of these thirty years, or in 1896, we shall have reached that period of which Daniel speaks, (xii. 11.): "There shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days;" and, after forty-five years more, or thirteen hundred and thirty-five years after the rise of Antichrist, that is, in A. D. 1941, the full lustre and the perfect glory of the millennium will be seen; for to this Daniel refers (xii. 12.): "Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the

thousand three hundred and five and thirty days!" Happy they who shall live at the very first of these periods! they shall enjoy a degree of felicity and holiness of which we now can but faintly conceive! But thrice happy they who shall live when this millennial kingdom shall be in all its perfection! They will emulate the angels in their purity, their services, and their joys!

I have given you, my brethren, the usual mode of computation. But it is proper to mention, that some of the best interpreters of this book have supposed the period not to be so distant. The difference of five days and a few hours between the solar and the prophetic year, makes, in the long period of twelve hundred and sixty years, a difference of seventeen years, without regarding the fraction. This deducted from twelve hundred and sixty, leaves twelve hundred and forty-three, which they suppose to be the precise time of the reign of Antichrist. His destruction will take place, and the millennium dawn, according to this computation, in 1849; it will have made great advances in 1879; and will be in its perfection in 1924. But, notwithstanding the deserved reputation of many of those who have adopted this mode of interpretation, I doubt its correctness, and do not think that it is conformed to the ordinary mode of prophetic calculations.

Such are my sentiments concerning the period when the millennium shall commence. I do not lay them down as articles of faith, but as probabilities. The event will throw light upon the prediction. Probably, before the advent of Messiah, there were different calculations made concerning the seventy weeks of Daniel. They no longer are obscure; and those who live in the millennial day will find no

difficulty in fixing on the precise point whence the twelve hundred and sixty years are to be calculated. Let it cheer us to reflect, that, according to every system of interpretation, it is near at hand.

II. And how long shall it endure?

On this subject there have been three principal opinions.

1. Some have supposed that the term *one thousand years*, is a definite put for an indefinite number; and that it means only that this happy state of the church shall endure for a long time. But this is utterly improbable. The expression *one thousand years* is repeated in this connexion no less than six times; and there is nothing in the context, nor in the nature of the thing, that requires us to understand it in this indefinite sense.

2. Others have contended, that, as in this book a day is to be taken for a year, the millennium will endure three hundred and sixty thousand years. But this appears to me inconsistent with many passages which speak of the day of judgment, and consummation of all things temporal, as nearer than, on this supposition, it would be; and also with the language of scripture when it represents this world in its general course as evil and wicked; which it would not be, if for so many thousand years it was devoted to God. Besides, the language of prophesy does not lead to this conclusion. It is true that smaller things are symbols of greater, as days of years. But I do not recollect a single instance, in which the term year, the greatest periodical revolution known to the ancients, is not to be interpreted literally.

3. I therefore adopt the sentiment of the vast majority of commentators, that it is literally a thousand years that this happy state is to endure.

Such then are the glorious days that are hastening on! What sentiments are excited by the contemplation of them! Do you regret that you shall not live in this happy period? Rather bless God for the advantages you enjoy over so many who reside in less favoured countries, or who have been born in less interesting times. You have every advantage for securing your own salvation, and heaven is still better than the millennial church. Instead then of indulging regrets; strenuously exert yourselves in the cultivation of your own holiness, and in extending the cause of the Redeemer. In introducing this period, God will use means. Are you members of those societies whose object is to prepare the way of the Lord? Arise, then, my brethren: "the bridegroom cometh." It is "high time to awake out of sleep;" salvation, the salvation of a world, is near! We who are older can depart in peace, hoping, in heaven, soon to hear of the accomplishment of these predictions, and to join in the joy that will there be universally felt. And you that are young, may see the day of which we have beheld the dawn. "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, for they are already white for the harvest."

And what a harvest! Who can imagine the number that then will be saved? Under the peculiar blessing of God, without those judgments which our sins bring upon the world, free from war and those crimes and passions which destroy so many, it is surely to be expected that the inhabitants of the

world will double once in fifty years: I might say in half the time, as has been the case in our own country. But even on the former supposition, you will immediately perceive, if you take your pencil, that at the end of the millennium there would be one million forty-eight thousand five hundred and seventy-six men on the earth, for every individual that was on it at the commencement of this period. Think of these and the intervening generations, and we cannot doubt that there will be hundreds of thousands more saved than has been from the creation of the world! It is emphatically indeed the "day of salvation," of joy to heaven, and blessedness to earth!

SERMON CXXX.



MISCELLANEOUS.

AUTUMN.



ISAIAH lxiv. 6.

We all do fade as a leaf.

THE God of the scriptures is also the God of nature. We are therefore in the holy volume frequently directed for instruction to the works of creation. "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, that the hand of the Lord hath wrought all this." (Job xii. 7—9.) Thus Paul bids us trace the goodness of God in "rain from heaven and fruitful seasons;" thus the Saviour teaches us that the sparrow and the lily of the field proclaim to us the care of providence; and thus, in the text, we are directed to the falling leaf, as an emblem of our feebleness and frailty.

It would be easy to show in how many respects the leaf is emblematical of the life of man. Youth is the opening leaf of the flower in spring; beautiful and lovely, and promising future luxuriance; but, alas! how often is this promise delusive! how often,

instead of arriving at maturity, is it blighted by the insect, crushed or devoured by the beasts of the field, broken down by the storm, or borne away by the wind! Bereaved parents, who, while watching the expanding faculties and the opening virtues of your children, have been overwhelmed with anguish, while your fond anticipations have been buried in their tomb! Youths, who have poured your tears over the tombs of those youthful associates who have been torn from you in the bloom of their years! with what energy will the words of the text strike your hearts; with what deep feeling will you acknowledge its truth. Manhood is the full-grown leaf, or rather the tree, on which all the leaves appear in their maturity. The good man affords to those around him refreshment and nourishment from his shade and from his fruit; while the bad man, like the poisonous manchineel, or the fabled upas, destroys those tender plants over which his influence extends, and diffuses pestilence and death around him. The leaf shaken by every wind, trembling at the gentle whisper of the breeze, well represents the mind of man agitated by anxiety, ruffled by cares, always discomposed and restless.

But leaving these and similar points of resemblance, let us apply the words of our text to the *successive generations of men*, to our *bodies*, and to our *minds*.

I. "We all do fade as a leaf." It is true of *whole generations of men*. These rapidly flit across the surface of the earth, and having acted their parts for a few years, have sunk into the grave, while their places have been occupied by a new generation, as short lived and as transitory as themselves. The earth, on which they indulged their passions, for

which they contended, and which received their ashes, still subsists; but their places know them no more. The sun which enlightened them, shone upon their graves; and, undisturbed by their dissolution, continued its splendid course in the heavens, to publish to their successors the greatness of its Creator. Reflections of this kind, though affecting, are useful; they teach us to make a proper estimate of human life; they show us its littleness in itself, and the wisdom of combining its pursuits with our eternal destination. Ye who are scheming, plotting, contriving, only for this world, look back to past generations, and see how little you will gain, even if all your expectations be accomplished! What those generations now are who forgot God before the flood; or who in after-times reared those pyramids which so long have survived the assaults of time; or who reared or overturned the ancient universal monarchies: what those generations are to us, ours will be to our successors; unloved, seldom thought of, leaving few traces of its existence. The tree will still stand, be covered with new leaves; but we shall have fallen and been forgotten.

II. But we may apply the text not only to generations, but also to every individual; and with respect to *our bodies*, how easy is it to show that “we all do fade as a leaf!”

Mortal man! consider *thy body*, and acknowledge this truth. It is indeed “fearfully and wonderfully made,” and displays the perfections of its Creator. But the very delicacy of its formation renders it more liable to destruction. It is only surprising that a machine so complicated, consisting of so many thousand veins, and nerves, and vessels, and springs, should continue in order for a week or for a day. In

whatever situation we place ourselves, whatever care we take of it, it will gradually decay; nothing can prevent its dissolution: each day of our life is a new combat with death, which, finally victorious, will break down this fabric, and reduce to its first principles this animated dust. To this state we are hourly advancing. As the various tinges of the leaves become imperceptibly stronger and stronger, till they fall; so on us are insensibly impressed indications of the diminution of our vigour and the approaching termination of our days.

But the leaf does not always remain till autumn gradually separates it from the parent tree: often it is nipped off in an instant by a sudden frost, or rudely torn away by the fury of the storm. Like this leaf we too may fall, and never attain the period of old age. How few arrive at the ripeness of age, and sink under the inevitable decays of nature! "Our foundation is in the dust, and we are crushed before the moth." Ten thousand circumstances, which we can neither foresee nor avert, may cut short our days. Every pore affords an avenue to death. Violent disease may in a few hours do the work of years in breaking down the system. The food that we eat, incapable like that of Eden, of rendering us immortal, may lay the foundation of incurable diseases. The air that is necessary for life may be loaded with pestilential vapour, and the next breath that we draw may take in something that no human skill can expel. Every where we are encompassed by so many perils, that we should long since have perished, had not a particular providence watched over us: every where our last hour may sound.

"We all do fade as a leaf." The lives of the antediluvian patriarchs might have been compared to

the tree which endures for centuries : but the longest lives among us are too short to be compared to the more durable productions of nature, or even to the works of art. The oaks which our fathers planted, will afford shade to our descendants after we have perished from the earth. Cities, states, and empires will remain, when those who inhabited them pass away and are forgotten. Nay, the monuments of human power will resist the corrosions of time, when the hands that reared them are dissolved in the grave.

“We all do fade as a leaf.” How loudly is this proclaimed by observation and experience ! Where are those who began with us the career of life ? How many of them have dropped into the dust and are forgotten ? Where are the friends with whom we associated in the morning of our days ? Them we have not forgotten ; but many of them are removed into the eternal world, and we are prosecuting our journey through earth without them. Where are those with whom in past years we associated in scenes of business, of pleasure, or of devotion ? How many whose names are blotted for ever from the list of life ! Yes, recollect how often thou hast been called to mourn ; of how many dear friends and relatives thy bosom has been rifled : recollect that the separations thou hast endured have also been experienced by others : consider that at this moment many tender ties, which have been cemented by years, are dissolving ; many parents gazing on the cold corpses of their children ; many children weeping over the authors of their days ; many wives and husbands torn from the hearts of those who loved them : with these reflections go to the repositories of the dead, and mark how many hillocks rest upon

those bosoms, which lately beat high with life, and hope, and pleasure; but now, frozen by the touch of death, have for ever ceased to palpitate; and then confess with the prophet, that “we all do fade as a leaf.”

III. This is no less true concerning *the faculties of our mind.*

From the intimate and mysterious connexion of the body and the spirit, they mutually and powerfully affect each other; and when the body is debilitated by sickness or by age, the mind also loses its vigour. Few considerations are more humiliating than the assurance that our intellectual powers may thus “fade as a leaf,” and we sink into second childishness. And how many illustrious instances of this kind have occurred! How often is the understanding impaired long before the dissolution of the body! That same Warburton, who astonishes us by his powers, becomes an idiot—

“From Marlborough’s eyes the tears of dotage flow,
“And Swift expires a driveller and a show.”

The *memory* is no more permanent than the understanding. The ideas, as well as the children of our youth, often die before us; and our minds represent to us those tombs to which we are approaching, where, though the brass and marble may remain, yet the inscriptions are often effaced by time, and the imagery worn away. The *imagination* loses its liveliness and vigour, and is incapable of its former flights and transports. The *affections* lose their warmth and vivacity, and the pleasures of sense and science charm not as they once did.

Thus with respect to the whole man, it is true that "we fade as a leaf;" and like it we must soon fall. We shall no longer be seen in our occupations, in our families, nor in the church of God. On our grave-stones, and on the hearts of our friends, this inscription will be imprinted, 'Here he once lived : ' but these memorials are also perishable ; happy for us if, real children of God, our names are registered in the Lamb's book of life, a record that shall never perish. Such are some of the truths of which the fading, falling leaves, that are now scattered in our paths, should remind us. Let us listen to these mute preachers, and properly estimate our earthly state.

My brethren, the truths which have been announced to you in this discourse are so indubitable, and so interesting to us, that one would suppose they never could escape from our minds ; yet, alas ! we seldom seriously think of them ; we crowd our lives with business and pleasure, so as to give no room for the remembrance of death. Let me beseech you at last to awake ! to close your hearts for a time against the noisy, seductive scene around you, and to think seriously of yourselves, of your true situation, and the duties which thence result.

1. Do we fade as a leaf ? Let us then *moderate our desires after the enjoyments, the riches, and honours, of a world* that we may be called to leave to-morrow. Think of the coffin, the worm, and the shroud ; all that will soon be left you of your worldly acquirements ! Think how incapable the objects to which too many give their whole souls, will be to support your fainting spirit amidst the last struggles of labouring nature ! Think how ineffectual they will be to procure you pardon or acceptance at the bar

of God; and acknowledge the necessity of instantly attending to the duties of religion. Waste no more of that time which God has given you: much of it has already been squandered; much of it has silently flowed from you whilst you were little thinking of it, and has rendered up an account of the manner in which it has been spent at the tribunal of the Eternal. Live to God and to your souls; feel that you have higher interests than those of a body that is fading and tending to dissolution; of a body given only as the temporary abode of the immortal spirit.

2. Do the faculties of the soul fade as well as the body? Of what importance then is it for you, who are still in the bloom of life and the vigour of your days, *now* to acquaint yourselves with God; *now* to devote yourselves to him through the Redeemer; now to become acquainted with his precious gospel. Before your understanding is filled with prejudices, corrupted by sinful habits, or weakened by sickness or age, carefully investigate the doctrines, and endeavour to imbibe the spirit, of Christianity. While the memory still is tenacious, store it with useful ideas, and with a profound knowledge of religion. While the affections are yet ardent, direct them to their true object, the glorious God and compassionate Redeemer, and exercise them in devotion, zeal, and benevolence. Happy indeed are they who thus employ their youth! Amidst the decays of nature a sacred peace shall be spread upon his soul; though their minds should lose their vigour, they shall still taste the sweetness of religion; though they may not have, when age has chilled their affections, those high and transporting joys which they felt in youth, yet they shall enjoy what is still more valuable, that

settled and sacred tranquillity of mind, and well-grounded hope of glory, which is the result of much experience and a long walk with God. Oh! what precious cordials are these amidst the dreariness and infirmities of age!

3. Since “we fade as a leaf,” and with us all the transient glories of our present state, let us *fix our thoughts and affections on those things which endure for ever*: on that Saviour who is eternal; that kingdom which cannot be moved; that heavenly inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away. The tree stripped of its leaves in autumn, is in the spring clothed by the God of nature with fresh verdure and beauty, and with leaves more fair and gay than those which fell. Thus, believer, shall it be with thee when the winter of death is past, and the spring of eternal day shall dawn. Thou shalt rise again with an incorruptible body, and more perfect faculties, which shall never grow dim with age. Thou shalt rise in the beauty of holiness, and flourish in immortal bloom in the Paradise of God. To adopt the poetical language of Bishop Horne,

“ On the tree of life eternal,
 Man, let all thy thoughts be stay'd,
 Which alone, for ever vernal,
 Bears those leaves which never fade.”

4. Finally: the consideration that “we all fade as a leaf,” will *give consolation to the child of God* who is languishing in affliction, and contemned by the world. The hand that depressed and wounded can raise and heal. But even if Providence should not ease you of your burden, yet the time of warfare is hastening to its close. The next hour may enlarge

your struggling soul from its earthly prison, and place it in a mansion where there shall be nothing to vex or annoy, and where tears shall be wiped away from your eyes for ever. Or if years are still to be spent by you in sorrow, how soon will they be passed! Every evening sun that goes down, every organ that fails, every flower that droops upon the stalk, every leaf that drops from the tree, are so many warnings of that stroke which is to relieve you from this vain world. Be humble and resigned; and while the storm is loud and boisterous, look forward with patience to that shore where storms shall be at rest for ever.

SERMON CXXXI.



DAY OF PENTECOST.



ACTS ii. 1—4.

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

A FEW Sabbaths since we considered the glorious ascension of our Redeemer. We listened to him while he commanded the disciples to wait at Jerusalem for the promise of the Father, and assured them that not many days hence they should receive power, and be baptized with the Holy Ghost. We beheld him then rising majestically from Olivet, and received into the heavens till the time of the restitution of all things.

For the fulfilment of his promise, for the promulgation of his gospel, for the salvation of men, it was

necessary that the heavens should again be opened, and the Holy Ghost descend, to dispel all prejudice and darkness from the minds of the apostles, to inspire them with invincible courage and zeal, and to bestow upon them those miraculous powers which would be seals of their ministry, and give efficacy to their preaching.

This was done on the feast of Pentecost. It is an event which is this day gratefully commemorated by many Christian churches, and it will not be uninteresting nor useless for us to consider it, and to examine the *time*, the *place*, the *dispositions* of the disciples, the *signal* of the conferment of the Spirit, the *emblem* which denoted his presence, and the *effects* which he produced.

1. The *time* that God chose for the Holy Spirit visibly to descend on the disciples, was the *day of Pentecost*, fifty days after the resurrection of our blessed Saviour, and ten after his ascension. The Jews (as you are taught in the twenty-third chapter of Leviticus) had three solemn festivals, on the recurrence of which all the males of the nation were required to assemble at Jerusalem, there to worship God in his temple. These festivals were the pass-over, the feast of tabernacles, and the feast of weeks. This last was thus called because it occurred when seven times seven days had elapsed after the pass-over; and by the hellenist Jews it was termed pentecost, from a Greek word signifying fifty, because the event which it commemorated took place on the fiftieth day after the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt. There are several reasons which rendered this a peculiarly fit season for this miracle. There were then at Jerusalem many Jews, not only from the various parts of Judea, but also from all

those countries in which they had been dispersed. These strangers, struck with this miracle, would relate it to their fellow-citizens on their return to their respective homes, and thus prepare them for the reception of the gospel whenever it should be preached to them. To this reason we add another: The Jewish dispensation was preparatory to the Christian; and God in his wisdom so ordered events, that the great evangelical blessings should be communicated at the very same times when those blessings of the law, which were the types of them, were observed or commemorated. Thus the true Lamb of God was offered in sacrifice at the very season when the prefigurative passover bled. Thus too, while on the day of pentecost the Jews were offering to God their first-fruits, he, by shedding down his Spirit, enabled the apostles, the chief labourers in the spiritual harvest, to offer the three thousand converts as the glorious first-fruits of the salvation of the nations. This too was precisely the same day on which, nearly fifteen hundred years before, the law was given from Mount Sinai. It was proper that the law of grace should be proclaimed at the same period, and with miracles equally great, though not so terrible: for there the thunder, the lightning, and the darkness, united in inspiring fear; here, in conformity to the law which was now promulgated, every thing was milder and less appalling.

My brethren, the conduct of God, in choosing this day as the season of so many wonders and so many blessings, surely reproveth, in the most powerful manner, the indevotion and guilt of those who neglect it, or pervert it to other ends than those for which it was appointed. Remember, that while thou art profaning the Sabbath of thy God, thou art

not merely neglecting the season instituted to commemorate the wisdom and goodness manifested in creation; thou also neglectest the day when God descended in majesty upon Sinai to rescue the world from idolatry, to give laws to his people, and to point to the Messiah that was to come; the day on which thy Redeemer, having atoned for thy sins by his agonies and blood, arose for thy justification; the day on which the Holy Spirit descended to lay the deep and firm foundations of the church of Christ. Darest thou profane a day, consecrated not only by the command of God, but also by the assemblage and union of so many of the richest blessings of heaven!

2. The *place* where this miracle occurred was Jerusalem, that ungrateful city in which the Saviour had been condemned, the inhabitants of which had exulted in his agonies and death. Would we not have supposed that, as a punishment for their rejection of the Messiah, God would have chosen some other place in which to display his august miracles, in which to lay the foundation of the church, and to commence the preaching of the gospel? Thus, perhaps, man would have acted; but the place, as well as the time, was wisely selected by God. This miracle occurred at Jerusalem, to fulfil the predictions of the ancient prophets, who had pointed it out as the cradle of the church, and the source whence these spiritual gifts and blessings should flow to the nations. They concur in declaring, that from Zion should go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. It was also fit that the same city which had witnessed the profound humiliation of the Son of God, should witness also his glory, his triumph, the riches of his gifts and blessings. It was fit that a renewed offer of mercy should be made to this people, that the terrible severity of the judg-

ments that were about to be poured on those of them who remained impenitent and unbelieving, might be justified in the eyes of all. It was fit that the power of divine grace, and the immensity of divine love, might be manifested, in the conversion, the pardon, the salvation, even of some of the murderers of the Redeemer. His prayer was thus to be accomplished, ("Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,") when the nails with which they had fastened him to the cross pierce their own hearts, and when they flee to that blood which they had lately shed with impious mockery and savage fury, as the only foundation of their hope. Poor penitent! when thou seest such sinners plucked from everlasting misery, needest thou despair if thou hast fled to that cross, through the efficacy of which they are now in glory? Believer, does not thy heart burn with love to thy Redeemer, when thou hearest him, just before his departure from earth, commanding his apostles to preach the gospel to all nations, *beginning at Jerusalem*; at ungrateful, perverse Jerusalem, which still was not beyond the reach of infinite mercy and omnipotent grace?

3. The disciples were all "*with one accord*" in one place. They were united by piety and love. This had not always been the case with the apostles: ambition and jealousy had sometimes led them to dispute who should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven; but other feelings, other thoughts, now entirely occupy them; they are expecting the Comforter who had been promised to them, in whose coming they are all equally interested; and when the time for the fulfilment of this promise arrives, it finds them assembled in perfect union of heart and of mind, employed in the exercises of devotion, animated with the same desires, burning with the same

zeal, disposed to obey faithfully the inspirations of heaven, and to propose to themselves no other end in their ministry than the salvation of souls, and the advancement of the kingdom of their common Master.

Would to God, my brethren, that this disposition always reigned in our religious assemblies! that Christians always felt this spirit of charity and kindness for each other. We should more frequently obtain the blessing which our Saviour has promised to those who make and love peace; we should more frequently feel the cheering influences of the Holy Ghost, who loves to dwell where there are harmony and concord, and who departs from those hearts, those families, and those churches, where divisions, and violence, and bitterness prevail.

4. To prepare the disciples for the miracle which God was about to work, to render them attentive to the visible descent of the Holy Spirit upon them, "there suddenly came a sound from heaven, as of a *rushing mighty wind*, and it filled all the house where they were sitting." It was a sound that came from heaven, to elevate the hearts and minds of the disciples thither where Jesus had ascended, and whence he had promised to send to them the Comforter. It was a natural emblem of the efficacy and rapidity of the preaching of the apostles, the progress of which could no more be arrested by any obstacle than the sound of the wind when it blows with violence.

5. It was immediately succeeded by an appearance of *cloven tongues*, like as of fire, resting upon each of them. The Holy Spirit chose the emblem of fire to represent the force of his operations, and the changes he would produce upon the heart and the mind. The fire which enlightens, which warms, which pu-

rifies, which melts the hardest metals, and changes their form and figure, well represented the action of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles and all who should be converted by their ministry. This is that baptism with the Holy Ghost and with fire, with which the forerunner of Jesus declared that the disciples should be baptized. It was in the form of *tongues*, to show that the same Spirit who formerly spoke by the prophets, was now about to speak by the apostles, and to put in their mouths the oracles of God. These tongues were *cloven*; an appearance beautifully emblematical of the different languages, the knowledge of which was given to the apostles by the Spirit, and perhaps also representing the diversity and abundance of the gifts and graces that he was about to shed on the church. These tongues “*sat upon them.*” They did not resemble the flash of lightning, dazzling, and disappearing in a moment; but remained, to denote the fixed and permanent residence of the Holy Spirit in them.

6. The *effects* of this gift of the Spirit were immediately manifest. Their understandings were suddenly enlightened; they had full and clear views of the nature of the gospel dispensation; the prejudices which, as is evident from the preceding chapter they entertained even after the resurrection of Jesus, were dissipated; a new light was shed upon the prophecies; and those sayings of their Lord which had appeared obscure, were now understood by them. The promise of Jesus was accomplished: John xiv. 26. Their conduct and their character were changed: no longer trembling, weak men, fearful of openly professing the doctrine of their Master; they are henceforth firm, courageous, intrepid, unappalled by any danger. No longer animated by a

false zeal, and ready to call down fire from heaven ; they are meek, patient, loving their enemies, filled with pity for the wandering, labouring with a zeal full of charity to lead sinners to the path which conducts to heaven. No longer attached to the honours of the world, and indulging the chimerical hope of becoming great and rich in the service of Christ, they reject all that the world loves, expose themselves to sufferings, contempt, and persecution, and place all their glory in preaching Jesus Christ, in suffering for Jesus Christ, in dying for Jesus Christ. Such a sudden change of character could be produced only by the Holy Spirit, with which they were filled.

And, finally, they received the power of working the greatest miracles, and of declaring, in their respective languages, to the various nations assembled at Jerusalem, “ the wonderful works of God :” his nature, his salvation, his mercy to the children of men.

1. Thus, my brethren, we have retraced to you the transactions on one of the happiest and most glorious days with which God ever honoured the church. Do any of you, who have hitherto neglected the concerns of your souls, say, ‘ If we had been present at the day of Pentecost, if we had seen this miracle, we should have inquired with the three thousand converts, what we must do to be saved ?’ But you have proofs of this miracle which should as fully convince you as though you had actually beheld it. The speedy and extensive propagation of the gospel by means so inadequate, unless you believe these powers were conferred on the apostles ; the ruin of Jerusalem at the time, and in the manner predicted ; the abolition of the Mosaic wor-

ship; the dispersion of the Jews for so many ages; the prophecies still fulfilled in them; the Holy Spirit still dwelling in the hearts of so many myriads: these are but a few of the proofs of the truth of the gospel, and of the miracle wrought on the day of Pentecost. Add to this, the advantages of a Christian education; the benefit of being born and reared in the bosom of the church; your exemption from those prejudices which hung upon the minds of the Jews: and then say, whether you do not enjoy advantages equal to those with which they were favoured who beheld these miracles? Miracles were necessary to found the church of Christ, but they are no longer necessary now that this church is founded; they are succeeded by a kind of proof addressed to the understanding and the conscience; a proof abundantly satisfactory to every one who has seriously, carefully, and prayerfully examined it, and which cannot be rejected without the destruction of our souls.

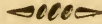
2. "Have ye received the Holy Ghost?" I ask not if you are partakers of his extraordinary gifts; these have ceased in the church; he no longer is conferred to enable us to work miracles; but he is still shed down on all the true disciples of Jesus, to quicken them with spiritual life and to sanctify them. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." And this is more important than the conferment even of miraculous powers; for these were given as the means of attaining this end, and promoting true holiness among mankind. The Spirit might be bestowed on us for miraculous operations and effects, and we be lost for ever; but if given to us as a sanctifier, so that by him "we mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live." Let us not then

be satisfied, as we value our salvation, till we have scriptural evidence that "we are born of the Spirit, and that we walk in the Spirit."

3. Finally: let us remember that this Spirit was bestowed as the consequence of the Saviour's triumph, as the fruit of his intercession, as the proof that all authority is committed to him, and in conformity with the predictions concerning him, that when he had ascended, he would give gifts to men, even to the rebellious. Since therefore he is thus proved to be both Lord and Christ by divine appointment and constitution, let us put our trust in him for the pardon of our sins and reconciliation with God. He offered himself a sacrifice for us, and then went into the holiest of all to appear in God's presence for us, and plead the merit of his sacrifice to obtain pardon and eternal salvation for us. He shows that he has been accepted in this undertaking, by the conferment of the Holy Ghost. Is he not then worthy our highest trust and firmest confidence? May we not hope for justification through his merits, and the remission of our sins for his sake? May we not commit our cause to him, and depend on his pleading it with success? I mean, while our reliance on him is such as is enjoined in the gospel. Surely in this way we may through him be justified and reconciled to God. Nothing can hinder but our unbelief or impenitence, our rejecting his grace, or refusing to part with our sins for his sake. But if we are made truly willing to be saved by him from all our iniquities, and give him the honour of our salvation, we may depend on him for pardon. Nay, if we are truly willing to become penitent, and put ourselves for this purpose into his hands, we may trust him

with the life of our souls; for “he is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins.”

SERMON CXXXII.



CONVICTION OF SIN.



JOHN XVI. 7—11.

Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

[Particularly part of the 8th verse, “And when he is come, he will reprove,” or convince, “the world of sin.”]

THE Redeemer was now about to be offered up a sacrifice for our sins: he had informed his disciples of the death that he was soon to undergo, and of the sufferings that they should experience. No wonder that “sorrow filled their hearts.” He consoles them

in the tenderest manner during the whole of his address; and in this passage assures them that, after the entrance of his human nature into heaven, the Holy Spirit the Comforter, should communicate to them such spiritual light, and grace, and joy, that his departure from them should tend to their benefit. That this Spirit should be sent, it was necessary that Christ should go away; since it was purchased by his death; was procured by his intercession; and was sent down by an act of royalty and power when he was invested in his kingdom and glory. It is true that this Spirit was in the world before the glorification of Jesus, and was the author of the holiness and comfort of the patriarchs and saints of the Old Testament. But as these were saved through the atonement of Jesus, that was to be offered, so they received the Spirit because the Redeemer was to ascend, to intercede, to triumph. Their receiving of the Spirit was as much connected with the Saviour's departure from earth, as their entrance into heaven was with his sacrifice. Besides, though the Holy Spirit had been in the world, yet the full manifestation and display of the office which he sustains in the salvation of man, and the more abundant communication of his influences to the church, were to take place only on the exaltation of Christ.

This Spirit was not only to act as a Comforter to the apostles and the church, but was also to reprove, or rather as the original word *ἐλεγεῖν* signifies, and as it is translated in the margin of your Bibles, and in various other places, *to convince the world*, both of Jews and Gentiles, *of sin*, of their guilt, depravity, and exposure to the wrath of God. He was especially to convince them of the deep guilt of unbelief.

and the inevitable ruin of those who neglect the Saviour. He was to convince them of *righteousness*: of the righteousness of the Redeemer's person and office; of the necessity and perfection of that everlasting righteousness which he wrought out for sinners; and of this he was to give the fullest evidence from the fact that Jesus had gone unto the Father; had gloriously, visibly, triumphantly ascended into heaven; and instead of being seen any more on earth in his state of humiliation, had proved his acceptance with the Father, by sending down the Holy Ghost. The Spirit was also to convince of *judgment*: of the certainty of future judgment, of the designation and authority of Jesus to be the Judge of the world. Of this, proof shall be given in the judgment of Satan, whose kingdom of darkness shall be shaken on the descent of the Holy Spirit; who by the gospel shall be dispossessed of his power over idolatrous nations; and shall be driven from his empire in the hearts of thousands, who had before blindly obeyed him.

Such, my brethren, is the general meaning of this interesting passage of Scripture: you see how many and what important truths are contained in it. I design on the present occasion to consider but one of them: *The work of the Holy Spirit in the conviction of sin.* "He shall convince the world of sin." It is true, as I have already remarked, that the Saviour here speaks particularly of the sin of unbelief; nevertheless it is a general truth that he lays down; and besides, we cannot be convinced of the sinfulness of unbelief, unless we are at the same time convinced of the necessity of faith; and we cannot feel this till we find that we have such a load of guilt

and unworthiness as deprives us of all hope in ourselves.

We are then authorized by the text to treat the subject in all its extent; and I know not any mode of treating it that will be more profitable than the examination of these four questions:

I. What is conviction of sin?

II. Who is the author of this conviction?

III. Do all convictions terminate in true conversion? and,

IV. What are the chief points of distinction between those legal convictions, which have been experienced by many who are lost, and those evangelical convictions that are peculiar to the children of God?

I. *What is conviction of sin?* It is opposed to the *insensibility* of the thoughtless; to the *vain self-flatteries* of those who delude themselves with the hope that it will be well with them, though they are strangers to regenerating grace and unwashed in the blood of atonement; and to the *perilous delays* of those who defer the concerns of their souls to an uncertain future. Unlike all these, he who is under conviction of sin has awaked to an awful sense of the importance of eternity, of the danger of his state, and of the necessity of instant attention to his dearest, his everlasting interests. His carnal security is terminated; he can no longer hide from himself the sad truth that he is guilty, deeply guilty, and in constant danger of perdition. He once, with the mad and ungrateful world around him, could mock at sin; he now has a painful sense of it, and trembles at the threatenings and judgment of God. He grieves at the recollection of his transgressions; he displays his sorrow and his fear in his confessions and in his

prayers; he is diligent in his attendance on the means of grace, anxiously seeking instruction in divine things, and importunately inquiring in what mode he can obtain deliverance. Seeing himself pursued by the curses of the law, and exposed to everlasting agonies, the world diminishes in his esteem; much change is made in his affections, and much reformation in his outward conduct.

Such is conviction of sin; that conviction that was felt by Peter's hearers on the day of Pentecost; by Saul of Tarsus when, "trembling and astonished, he cried, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" by the Philippian jailer, when he "sprang in trembling before Paul and Silas, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Such is the conviction which was once felt by you, children of God, when you were first enlightened to behold your guilt and misery. It is not conversion: it may be found in its highest degree while the soul is yet unrenewed; but it is a preparatory work calculated to strip the sinner of all self-confidence; intended so to show him his perishing need of a Saviour, that he may suitably value the offers of pardon that are made in the gospel. It is the earthquake and the fire which precede the still small voice of God that speaks to the heart.

II. *Who is the author of this conviction of sin?* This question is answered by the text: it is the Holy Spirit of God. He is for this reason termed the *Spirit of bondage*: Rom. viii. 15. "For ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." It is one and the same Spirit there spoken of in respect of two contrary operations. As he testifies to our sonship, he is the Spirit of adoption; as he discovers to us the fetters laid

upon us by sin and Satan, and applies the law as the ministration of death, he is the Spirit of bondage.

To him we are indebted not only for grace, but also for all that is preparatory to the infusion of it into the soul: of this the slightest observation must convince us. Christian! how often, before thou wast brought under conviction, hadst thou with insensibility heard or read those threatenings, which at last were fastened upon thy conscience? How often hadst thou slighted dispensations of providence similar to that by which thou wast at last awakened? When thou wast brought to solemn consideration, how many, who were "in the same condemnation" with thee, and who enjoyed the same means which reached thy soul, still slept on, regardless of their God, their Saviour, and eternity? These and ten thousand similar facts prove to us, that the best means are ineffectual to arouse the sinner, till the Spirit carry them home to the heart.

Let me add, that the great end and design of the gospel rendered it requisite that conviction should be wrought by the Holy Spirit. The gospel is intended to display the riches of divine grace, and to remove all cause of glorying in ourselves: and if we could convince ourselves, make ourselves sensible of sin, though afterwards God should by his power lead us to Christ, yet the glory of the commencement and preparation of the work would belong to ourselves. But in every thing relating to our salvation, the glory must be God's alone; "the hewing of the stone as well as setting it in the building; the preparation of the members as well as uniting them to the head."

It is the Spirit then, who mediately or immediately, by his common or special operations, produces conviction of sin.

III. *Do all convictions terminate in true conversion?* To this question the declarations of the scripture, as well as our own observation, answer, *No*. We are taught that we can “grieve,” can “resist,” can “quench the Spirit” of God. We read of the “striving of the Spirit” in the time of Noah, with those, who in the time of Peter were, and ever will continue, spirits in prison. We are told of the fruitless convictions of a Cain, an Ahab, a Judas, a Felix; of the unavailing tears of an Esau, and the vain cries of the foolish, delaying virgins. In these and similar examples we see that men may be convinced of their guilt and misery, and yet be strangers to regenerating grace.

And, my dear brethren, have such instances never occurred among ourselves? Are there none of you who are awful proofs that the deepest conviction may be felt without true conversion unto God? Have none of you, when lying on a bed of sickness, which you supposed to be the bed of death; when visited by some alarming providence; when hearing God’s holy word announced with energy and faithfulness; when your relatives and friends have abandoned the path of sin in which you walked together, and have fled for salvation to the Redeemer? In these or in other circumstances, have none of you trembled at your guilt, acknowledged your transgressions, cried for mercy unto God, and besought the advice and the prayers of his children? And are there none of you who have withered those hopes of the pious which you had excited; who have fal-

sified those promises which you have made to your God; who have turned back to the paths of vanity and sin. Oh! with what terrible certainty do such prove that conviction does not always terminate in a true conversion!

And suppose not, my brethren, that it is improper to attribute these fading convictions to the Spirit of God. "Wherever they fail," I here use the words of the excellent Dr. Owen,* "Wherever they fail, and come short of that real conversion to which they have a tendency, it is not from any weakness and imperfection in themselves, but from the sins of those in whom they are wrought. Common illumination and conviction of sin have a tendency unto sincere conversion. They have so, in the same kind as the law hath to bring us to Christ. Where this end is not attained, it is always from the interposition of an act of stubbornness and wilfulness in those enlightened and convicted. By a free act of their own will, they refuse the grace which is further tendered to them in the gospel."

IV. What are the chief points of distinction between those legal convictions which have been experienced by many who are lost, and those evangelical convictions that are peculiar to the children of God? A legal conviction arises from a sense of God's justice, and power, and omniscience. He who feels it, cries out, 'I have exasperated that justice which burns to the lowest hell; I have offended that terrible majesty from which I cannot flee; I have sinned before Him who, every where present, has seen and marked all my transgressions.' All this is

* Treat. on Sp. I. 373.

felt by him who is under evangelical conviction ; but his chief sorrow arises from the consideration of other attributes of God : the divine goodness, holiness, and disaffection to sin. He exclaims, ‘I have abused the tenderness of a Father, and outraged infinite goodness ; I have offended purity, which would have sanctified me ; and indulged in that which is the object of God’s displeasure.’ The one traces the malignity of sin principally by its tendency to produce the death of the soul, and in the agonies of the lost ; the other chiefly studies it in the sufferings and death of the Son of God. The one is burdened with the fear of punishment, the other with the sense of his desert of it. The one groans under the presages of wrath, the other at his want of holiness. The one cries, ‘There is not a beam of mercy ;’ the other, ‘There is not a spark of grace.’ The one anxiously looks around for immediate comfort ; sometimes seeking it from the world, sometimes endeavouring to stupify his conscience by sinful diversion, sometimes applying to himself a promise in which he has no concern, and thus extracting poison from a flower of paradise : the other, though he longs for comfort, will receive it only from that Spirit who first convinced him of sin ; smitten by the law, he will be healed only by the gospel ; his eye, like Heman’s, is fixed upon the God of salvation ; the joys of the world cannot satisfy him ; the good opinion of others is insufficient for his peace ; he waits God’s leisure, and carefully examines whether the comfort offered him in the word belongs indeed unto him. The one endures but for a season ; legal conviction is like an earthquake by which the world is shaken for a time, after which it returns to its former stability : the other is perma-

ment. Evangelical conviction never leaves us while we remain upon earth. It shall never leave the Christian till he casts aside the body of flesh, and in heaven sings the praises of his Redeemer.

1. This subject teaches us the deep guilt of those who strive to stifle those convictions of sin that are produced in the hearts of their acquaintance and friends. Such persons "do despite to the Spirit of grace," and unite with the prince of darkness in opposition to God and the souls of men. You may succeed; by derision, by reproach, by seduction, you may quench the light which begins to break upon the soul of your awakened companion; you may lead him to perdition; but you shall have your reward: in the judgment-day his blood shall be required at your hands, and through eternity he will pursue you with his curses for the irreparable injury you have done unto him.

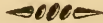
2. This subject tenderly and solemnly admonishes those who have stifled the convictions which they once felt. Unhappy men! you once appeared "not far from the kingdom of heaven; you once excited our expectations that you would abandon your disgraceful servitude to sin and Satan, and devote yourselves to the Lord. But though the Spirit showed a readiness to heal you, you have slighted him; though he spoke to you with authority from heaven, yet you drowned his voice; though he movèd upon your heart, yet you resisted his influences; and you now stand upon your murdered convictions, declaring by your conduct that you will retain your sins, and that you will not regard any thing that God saith against them, though he speak to you in all the majesty of his glory, and appear before you armed with his thunders. Unhappy

men! you have trifled with him through whose influences alone you can be rescued from guilt and misery, and the probability of your final perdition is much greater than it was before you quenched the Holy Spirit.

3. This subject consoles and admonishes those who are under convictions of sin. Fear not the pangs of godly sorrow; it is the Spirit of grace who convinces you, that he may be your Comforter. Though you are pained, it is by him who is love and tenderness: he might have abandoned you to hardness of heart, till you were plunged into despair. The wounds of your heart, and the tears which you shed, are a proof that he has not entirely forsaken you. Feel that your present situation is most solemn: the convictions of the Spirit will end in sound conversion, or a curse. Still wait upon God without murmuring, if he does not immediately bestow comforts; he has long waited upon you. Look to the same kind Spirit who has wounded you to heal you; supplicate for renewing as well as comforting grace: without a divine nature, there will be no divine peace. Beware of false opinions: men in distress of mind, like persons drowning and catching at every thing that promises relief, are ready to embrace sentiments that promise them refreshment, which are unwarranted by the word of God, and which in their cooler moments they would reject. Beware of unbelieving hearts and unbelieving friends; they are, to persons in your situation, evil counsellors and miserable comforters. Beware of the temptations of Satan, who, as he formerly attempted to lull you to security, now will bid you despair. Beware of substituting your performances in the place of the Redeemer, and seeking peace

from a formal round of duties, instead of the blood of atonement. Still persevere, and the Spirit who now applies the law to your conscience, will show you the grace of the gospel.

SERMON CXXXIII.



VOICE FROM THE TOMB.

HEBREWS xi. 4.

He being dead, yet speaketh.

IT is of Abel, the first of the human race who fell beneath the stroke of death, that St. Paul makes this declaration. He was the comfort and the hope of his parents; on him their heart and their expectations were fixed. They fondly believed that he would yet live long upon the earth; that he would cheer them amidst the infirmities of age; that he would watch by them in their closing hours, smooth the pillow of sickness and of pain, and perform for them the last sad offices of affection. But soon were these dear anticipations withered; early were these cheering hopes blasted for ever. For in the bloom of life, in the vigour of his powers, he was torn from their reluctant arms, and they left to bend in anguish

over his corpse. But though dead, he yet spoke : spoke to his surviving parents and the age in which he lived, and still continues to speak unto us. His early and his sudden death teaches us the most solemn and interesting truths ; teaches us the vanity of worldly prospects and pursuits ; teaches us that youth and health cannot secure us against death ; teaches us that the period of our dissolution is uncertain, and that there is not a moment of our lives in which we may not be deprived of existence.

But is Abel the only one of the dead who thus affectingly addresses us ? No : the same lessons are announced to us by the united voices of that vast multitude who, like him, are early and suddenly brought to the tomb. The same lessons are announced (oh, with what force !) to you, young men, by him who so lately was your associate and fellow-student, by him who so lately was seated with you in this sacred place, but on whose cold and unpalpitating breast the dust of the church-yard now presses ; who now lies beneath the earth in a slumber so profound, that he will be waked only by the trump of the archangel.*

Come then, my brethren, and let us listen to these interesting preachers. Let us quit for a little time the commerce of the living, and go to gain instruction from the dead. Let us transport ourselves in imagination to those places where darkness and corruption reign ; to those graves where the worm will perhaps shortly riot on our bodies, and where the corpses of those who have died before us already are deposited. Let us fix our eyes on the cold ashes.

* This discourse was preached at Princeton, occasioned by the death of one of the students of the college.

the dry bones, the frightful skeletons, which are there to be found. In the midst of this gloomy scene a midnight stillness, an appalling silence seems to dwell; but how instructive, how eloquent is this silence! Does not a monitory voice proceed from the bottom of these tombs, and address your heart with an emphasis, with an energy, which the language of the living cannot rival? Let us listen to this voice, and impress its advices deeply on our soul.

The dead then speak to us and teach us,

I. That all those projects and anticipations, those pursuits and enjoyments, which have not a reference to our eternal state, are vain, foolish, and delusive. Whilst we neglect to remember the narrow limits of human life and our approaching dissolution, the prospects, the occupations, and the pleasures of this world appear to have solidity and value, and to be worthy of our cares and desires. But the dead speaking to us, dissipate this illusion, and show us that our earthly projects are buildings raised upon the sand, which can be overthrown not only by storms and tempests, but even by every little gust of wind; that those pleasures and pursuits which are terminated on worldly things, are unworthy the solicitude of him who has an immortal soul to save, and an endless heaven for which to prepare. They show us from their own experience, that all things below the sun are transient and fading; that however closely we embrace them, death will speedily unclasp our arms and tear us from them; that we should therefore not fix our hearts upon them, but attend chiefly to those infinitely more magnificent and durable enjoyments that lie beyond the grave. Is not this, young men, the advice given you by your

former associate? Hark! while he exclaims, 'I have now stood before the tribunal of my Judge, the impartial bar of my God. From that elevated station I looked back upon the concerns of earth, and they dwindled in importance to a point, to a nothing; I looked forward to that eternity which is before me. to that eternity which shall only be commencing when countless millions of years shall have past, and I felt that it alone deserves the pursuit and the labours of man. I looked at my right hand, and beheld the ineffable splendours of that heaven reserved for the children of God, and I wondered at the folly, the blindness, the stupidity, of those who could barter it for the vain and unsatisfactory pleasures of earth; I looked at my left hand, and beheld the unspeakable agonies of the accursed, who are groaning under the pressure of almighty vengeance; I listened to the shrieks, the howlings, the agonized cries which re-echo round their dreary abode, and I shuddered for those wretched mortals who still expose themselves to all these tortures, though God and the Saviour woo them to be happy. You, like me, young men, must stand at this tribunal; you must behold these overpowering spectacles; you must spend an eternity either in the glories of paradise or the tortures of hell! in time then prepare to meet your Judge; learn properly to estimate the concerns of time; let God, and heaven, and eternity, principally engage your affections and desires; live conformably to the sublimity of your destination; live as becomes the heirs of immortality.' Ah! my brethren, can you be insensible to such a call as this? Though you can resist the entreaties of your preachers, can you close your ears against a voice from the dead? Can you be unaffected by the words of one who

once was engaged in the same studies, pursuits, and occupations with you, and who now only entreats you to secure your own felicity.

And do all those of you, my people, whose chief desires are fixed upon the world, who spend your lives in the eager pursuit of its perishable vanities, to the forgetfulness of God and your souls, listen to the dead speaking to you, and suspend those anxious cares, moderate those excessive desires for earth, which now possess you? You, like them, must pass through the valley of death; from your closing eyes the world must recede as it has from theirs; in that eventful moment a sense of the insignificance of earthly things will break in upon your minds like light from heaven, all your worldly acquisitions will be viewed by you with cold contempt, and nothing then will afford you satisfaction and give confidence to your soul in its approaches to God, except the sentiments of religion, and the persuasion of an interest in the Redeemer. Listen then to the voice of the numberless dead, and learn to sit loose to the earth and its enjoyments. Ambitious men! some of these dead cry to you, 'I have been surrounded by that glory which dazzles you; I have possessed those dignities for which you are struggling; I have been eulogized and applauded by men: but whither have all my honours conducted me? To the tomb! Whither will yours conduct you? To the tomb!' Covetous men! listen to what some of these dead cry to you: 'I have accumulated riches; I have heaped treasure upon treasure; I have acquired revenues almost exhaustless. But of them all, what have I carried with me to the grave? A coffin and a shroud! What will you carry with you of the riches that you are amassing? A coffin and a shroud!' Sensualists!

listen to what some of these dead cry to you : ‘ I have indulged myself in every pleasure ; I have refused nothing to my senses ; I have rioted in sensual joys. But where did these joys terminate ? In the tomb, in remorse, in perdition ! What you are, I have been ; what I am, you will shortly be.’ O death ! let thy voice ever echo in our ears ; it is terrible only to those souls that are enslaved to earth, and devoted to the world. Let it often remind us that we are born for immortality, and that an eternity of life and of glory should constantly engage our thoughts, our desires, and our pursuits.

II. The dead speak to us, and declare that life is both short and uncertain. We all of us acknowledge that we must die ; we none of us are so foolish as to hope for an immortality upon earth. But we delude ourselves with the belief that death is yet at a great distance ; that many years will pass before his arrows will pierce our heart. Visit the repositories of the dead, and learn that “ man that is born of a woman, is of few days : that he fleeth as a shadow, and continueth not.” Do you not there hear those who were most advanced in age saying to you : ‘ My associates spoke of the length of my life, of the number of my years, but now that I compare this life with the eternity which for me has swallowed up all time, how does it appear ? Less than an atom, compared to the immensity of the universe ; less than a drop of water, compared to the extended ocean.’ Do you not hear others, and among them him who was so lately taken from us, crying even to the young, ‘ It is but a little time since I was as full of life, of health, of cheerfulness, as you ; and now I afford you a proof of the brevity of human life ? Profit by this instruction before you in your turn shall teach

the same truth to your survivors. Remember that death constantly advances to you; and dare not to defer to a distant period your reconciliation with God, and your preparation for eternity.' Do you not hear others, who exclaim, 'Mortal man, esteem not yourself one moment free from the assaults of death; his arrow often flieth in darkness, and we have no warning of our danger till we feel it at our heart? The angel of destruction often wraps himself in invisibility, and we dream not of our peril till his stroke has laid us in the dust. Thus suddenly were we removed from earth: one moment beheld us secure and thoughtless, the next saw us taking the fearful plunge into eternity, and heard our irrevocable sentence pronounced by our Judge. Be instructed by our fate; for on you also death may suddenly descend like the vulture on his careless and unsuspecting prey; you also may in an instant be carried from the pleasures and pursuits of earth to the tremendous scenes of eternity.' In this manner do the dead preach to us the shortness and uncertainty of life, and a thousand other voices confirm their instructions. Let us listen to some of those other witnesses, and let us strive to feel these salutary lessons, and to repress every sentiment inconsistent with the condition of a transitory, short-lived being.

Open then your scriptures, and see if they do not echo the voice of the dead; see in what terms they speak of that life in which you now exult, and which you fondly hope will be continued yet for a long time? They accumulate image upon image to teach you your frailty and instability; they range through all nature to find similitudes which will impress strongly upon your minds this important conviction. Some-

times they represent to us our days under the emblem of a flower, which has scarcely expanded its leaves before it is withered: the wind blows upon it; it languishes on its stalk and perishes. Elsewhere our days are compared to the grass, verdant in the morning, cut down before the evening, and then destined to the commonest uses; to a shadow without any real substance; to a smoke which is dissipated by the air almost as soon as it rises; to a dream which amuses us for an instant and then is gone. Our days, still cry the scriptures, are swifter than those streams which impetuously roll their waves along, and advance with inconceivable rapidity towards the ocean, there to be swallowed up: they are like the flight of the eagle, when it cleaves the air and descends with rapidity on its prey. In this manner the scriptures speak of the duration of human life; and when you examine your constitution and nature, can you doubt for a moment of the propriety of these representations? Look at yourselves, examine this nice and complicated machine, the human frame; behold the thousand delicate and almost imperceptible springs that are necessary to be continually kept in order, to prevent it from rushing to ruin; consider the almost infinite number of veins, of arteries, of nerves, of vessels, which compose this wonderful fabric, and then instead of expecting for a very long period to protract your days, you will be filled with wonder that you have not long since been laid in the dust. Every pore affords an avenue to death; every member opens him access to the seat of life: the air which you breathe, and which is necessary for the support of life, may carry death to your heart: the seeds of those disorders which may tear and destroy your constitution, were

perhaps sown at your birth, and may be already sprouting: the next breath which heaves your lungs may take in something, which no human skill can expel, and which may suspend for ever the vital functions. Place yourself in what situation you please; use the wisest precautions that the most skilful physicians can devise, yet still your body will be continually tending to dissolution; yet still the perpetual diminution of your strength will not be interrupted; yet still each day in your life will be a new combat with death, which, at length victorious, will exhaust this force, will break these springs, will destroy this machine, and reduce to its first principles this animated dust!

Do you say, Notwithstanding these representations, we see persons who have arrived to an advanced old age, and why may we not hope to attain the same period? I appeal to these very persons to prove the brevity of our lives. Yes, I address myself to you, old men, who wear those honours of the hoary head, which most of us who now throng the lists of life will never attain! Speak, and declare the shortness of human life! When you entered upon the world, and looked to the career that you were just about commencing, there appeared a vast interval between you and advanced age. You have passed over this interval, you have weathered the storms of time for sixty or seventy years; and now, from the elevated point where you stand, review the ground over which you have gone, and tell us whether this career, which at a distance appeared to you so extensive, does not now, that you have examined it more nearly, appear to have diminished to a span? Does it not seem that there is only a very little distance between the moment which

witnessed your birth, and that which is at present flying from you? Does it not appear that you only made one step, and passed from the torpid state of infancy to the vigour and sprightliness of youth? you advanced another step, and the swelling feature, the strengthened muscles, the deepened voice, warned you that you had started into manhood; another step succeeded, and to your astonishment the blossoms of the grave were upon your head, the hand of time impressed upon you the marks of approaching dissolution; and the relaxed nerves, the failing organs, the full feature melted down, showed you that you were in the vale of years! And now, having thus rapidly flown over life, though you may still flatter yourselves that you will remain some period longer upon earth; yet, look! you already touch the tomb—look! there is only an imperceptible line between you and eternity—look! the arrow of death already presses against your heart! What the experience of the aged thus proves, their observation of human life will still more abundantly confirm. Speak again, old men, and tell this people how few of those who set out with you in the morning of life, still accompany you in your journey. Tell them, though your heart must fill at the sad remembrance, that almost all your companions in early days have long since dropped away, and that you are left in a new generation! Tell them how often your bosom has been rifled of its dearest friends, till at last you are left to stand like a solitary pillar in the desert, while those that formerly reared their heads by your side are lying in ruins around you! Go, old men, visit the places of your nativity and childhood; then inform us of the revolutions you have seen, and your artless descriptions

will preach to our hearts the shortness of human life with the most persuasive eloquence. You will tell us, that abodes in which you had once been happy, were now occupied by new inhabitants, whilst their former tenants were lying in the grave. You will tell us, that you every where met with those of whom you had no remembrance; that, although the houses and trees beneath which you once sat with your friends, still remained, more long-lived than man, and recalled to you former scenes, yet the face which used so often to kindle into a smile at your approach, was now disfigured by corruption; and the hand which had so often given to yours the pressure of affection, was cold and motionless. You will tell us that, in inquiring for your former associates, you received as the almost uniform answer, "He is dead, and his body moulders in that grave." You will tell us, that the very few old friends whom you found amidst this scene of anguish, appeared broken down, and changed in every feature, and resembled some aged oaks stripped of all their honours, and ready to yield to the first storm. Such is the account that almost every old man would give us in returning from the scenes of his early life; and does it not most strongly prove the shortness of our abode on earth?

But why need we appeal to the experience of the aged? None of us have been for so short a period in the world, that we have not had opportunity to witness the same truth. Where is the family in which death has never made a fatal breach? Where is the parent or friend who has never had cause to mourn? Where is he who never had those ties which bound him to another rent asunder? Recall, each for yourself, the last tremulous accents, the

final adieus, the parting embraces, which you have beheld, and in which you have borne a part! Remember that husband who possessed your affections, torn for ever from your embraces; that wife, whom you loved, uttering her last sigh in your arms; that child dragged from your agonized bosom; that parent in trembling accents giving you his dying blessing; that friend, to whom your soul was knit, straining upon you his closing eyes! Recall the melancholy dissolution of those ties which had united you to others, and which had been cementing for years. Let these recollections be your preachers; their voice will be impressive, while echoing the accents of the dead they cry, "The days of man are short and uncertain."

And now, my brethren, what effects shall these truths have upon us? Let them inspire us with a resolution instantly to attend to the concerns of our souls: since we must soon die, since we may die every hour, let us instantly seek to acquire that faith, that repentance, that holiness of heart and life, without which our deaths must be full of terror, and our eternity spent in the regions of despair. We have had during the last week solemn and affecting warnings; let us not neglect to profit by them. We know not what a day or an hour may bring forth. In so dreadful an uncertainty, shall we continue careless and indifferent? In so perilous a situation ought we to rest satisfied without the favour of God, and an interest in the Redeemer? Let us all, therefore, devote ourselves to God, and then, however suddenly death shall come, we shall speak to our surviving friends in accents of consolation and joy: we shall say to them, 'Mourn not for me, I have only exchanged earth for heaven; I have entered

upon a felicity unspeakable and boundless: be ye followers of me as I also followed the Saviour; and then you shall again be united to me, never to be separated more.'

God grant that we may all so live, that these accents may be heard from our tombs, for Christ's sake. Amen.

SERMON CXXXIV.



CHRISTIAN MOURNING.*



I THESS. iv. 13, 14.

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. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them which sleep in Jesus shall God bring with him.

IN looking around upon you, my brethren, I see many memorials of the triumphs of death, and of the painful breaches that he has made in this flock for some months past. The mourning garments and the

* This discourse was preached in the month of November, in the cities of Charleston and Savannah, after a season of unusual sickness and mortality.

dejected looks of the bereaved, those vacant seats which lately were occupied by our acquaintance or connexions who are now in the eternal world, are silent, but most eloquent preachers to us. And whose heart does not melt as he contemplates those children of affliction who remain, while their bosoms have been rifled of their dearest earthly treasures? Here sits a widowed mourner, who recalls the tender husband who has expired in her arms; and there a solitary partner, who has seen the wife of his youth, the desire of his eyes, in the convulsive throes and agonies of dissolution! Here a child, who weeps as he recollects the ardent but tremulous benedictions of an expiring parent, which proceeded from the centre of a heart which, though already chilled by the frost of death, still retained its tenderness for him! There a parent, who shudders with involuntary emotion, while there still vibrates on his ear that final groan, at uttering which the soul of his child found itself at the tribunal of God! Here a brother or a sister, who have seen such dear relatives straining upon them their eyes, already overspread by the shades of death! There a friend, who has received for the last time the pressure of affection from the hand of him whom he loved as his own soul! Such afflictive scenes have been too frequent to be disregarded; too recent to be forgotten; and to those persons who have experienced them, this discourse is peculiarly addressed. Pardon me, my dear friends, if for a moment I appear to re-open those wounds of your soul, which have scarcely ceased to bleed. Far from the feelings of my heart is the desire to add to the grief of those who have already been bruised by the rod of the Almighty. But it is my warm wish, my ardent prayer.

that, by these trials and this converse with death in your families, you may be prepared for your own dissolution; that, by seeing the grave thus opened for your relatives, you may be made to die to the world; that, while your heart is made more susceptible of impression, you may direct that love which was engrossed by departed friends, to the blessed God and the compassionate Saviour. I adjure you, then, by the cherished memory of those for whom you weep; by the cold corpses that their bodies now present; by the joyful, tremendous eternity into which they have entered, and to which you are hastening; to listen with solemnity, and with sincere desires that your bereavements may be sanctified.

And you, whose families have been preserved by the good providence of God, who have not been forced to taste that bitter cup of which others have so deeply drunk, do you also listen, that your hearts may expand with gratitude while you press to your bosoms these dear objects of affection, whose society you still enjoy; and that you may prepare for that time which will certainly and soon arrive, when you must bid farewell to them, or they to you.

Three points will claim our attention:

I. What is that sorrow which Christians may lawfully indulge for departed friends?

II. What is that "sorrow without hope," which they are forbidden to exercise? And,

III. What are those considerations which should diminish their sorrow, and mitigate their grief?

I. Feel then your griefs, desolate and bereaved believers; you are permitted to sorrow. Away with the sentiments of those who teach, that, under our afflictions, we should evidence an utter insensibility, a stupid unconcern! Such is not the command of

that God “ who knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust; nor of that Redeemer, who “ in all the afflictions of his people was afflicted.” Look at your scriptures, ye who cruelly chide those tears that relieve the wounded heart, and that are accompanied by resignation and submission. Did Abraham violate his duty when he came to Kirjath-arba, “ to mourn for Sarah, and to weep there?” Was the lustre of Joseph’s character obscured, when he grieved for his father at the threshing-floor of Atad, “ with great and sore lamentation?” Was Jeremiah forgetful of his elevated office, when his prophetic harp breathed such mournful tones over the corpse of the good Josiah? Do we feel less attached to the Christians of Asia, when they wept sore at separating from Paul, “ most of all, because they should see his face no more?” Do we not sympathize with the pious widows who stood by the body of Dorcas weeping, and “ showing the coats and garments which she made for the poor, while she was yet with them?” Were those “ devout men” less devout when “ they carried Stephen to the grave, and made great lamentation?” Is there any thing inconsistent with the high character of that Mary who sat at the feet of Jesus, in the tears which she poured over the grave of her brother? But why do I mention inferior instances? Behold Jesus, our lawgiver and our model, authorizing a submissive grief by his emotion and his tears at the tomb of Lazarus!

Hear the Lord representing an *unlamented* death as a judgment, a curse, and a severe proof of his anger: “ Thus saith the Lord, Enter not into the house of mourning, neither go to lament nor bemoan them: for I have taken away my peace from this

people, saith the Lord, even loving-kindness and mercies. Both the great and the small shall die in this land: they shall not be buried, neither shall men lament for them." (Jer. xvi. 5, 6.) A similar denunciation was pronounced against Jehoiakim: "Thus saith the Lord concerning Jehoiakim, They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah, my brother!" (xxii. 18.) It is mentioned in Job as the peculiar calamity of the profane, that "those that remain of him shall be buried in death, and his widows shall not weep." (xxvii. 15.) And when the psalmist is describing the indignation of the Almighty upon rebellious Israel, he says, "Their priests fell by the sword, and their widows made no lamentation." (lxxviii. 64.)

If there be no sense of the rod, there can be no resignation. We cannot patiently bear what we never feel, nor humbly submit to that hand, the blow of which we do not regard. If we are insensible, the amendment intended by our trials cannot be produced, and we shall never cry with Job, "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me;" nor with the church in her distress, "Let us now search and try our ways."

We are permitted to add to these tears, prayers for comfort and humble groans before God: "Is any one among you afflicted: let him pray. Call upon me in the day of trouble." This is the order of God himself, which is joined to the cry of nature and the emotions of the heart. It is conformable to the practice of the scripture saints, and of believers in every age; for to whom can the soul that is bowed down and overwhelmed, better flee than to its Father? Where can it, in the day of oppression and

despondency, find more support than in the bosom of its God?

We may also express our sorrows to our fellow-men, and seek relief in their sympathy and condolence. Knowing that "a friend is born for adversity," we may cry with the patient patriarch of Uz, "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of the Lord hath touched me!"

Yes, my poor, bereaved brethren; that religion which increases our sensibilities, condescends to the infirmities of our nature. He who was the "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," "who has been touched with a feeling of all our sufferings," is not offended because you weep over departed relatives, provided your tears are not those of murmuring and despair; provided they are tears tempered and softened by religion; tears of a heart penetrated with the most tender affection, but filled also with submission, with faith, and with hope. Religion does not *destroy*, it only *regulates* nature. In giving us a heart, God has permitted us to exercise its emotions; and sensibility, instead of being a weakness in man, is one of his noblest prerogatives, since it is one of the great sources of his virtues. From this pure source springs the grief which is caused by the death of those whom we love. It is the natural and legitimate effect of the love we bore to them, and of the intimate relations which attached us to them; and the tribute of tears that we pay to their memory, honours *us* as much as *them*, since it shows a heart that is affectionate, and formed for happiness. No! it is not the soul of a Christian which can be perfectly callous and insensible while stand-

ing by the corpse or the grave of kind relatives; we recollect every incident in those days of peace, of bliss, of serenity, which we spent in their society: that affection which mitigated our griefs; that tenderness which consoled us in moments of distress; that soothing kindness with which, in hours of sickness, they watched around our bed; that lenient hand which so often supported our languid head, and dispelled the sense of pain; that pious deportment and those holy sentiments which warmed our hearts and inflamed our devotion; those smiles which so often compensated for the frowns of the world, and that steady attachment which supported us amidst its unkindness and ingratitude; while we recollect all the circumstances of the sick chamber, that face overshadowed with the gloom of mortality yet still dear; and those tender adieus, those ardent prayers for us, uttered when the heart had almost ceased to beat, in a moment when their sincerity could not be doubted. No! it is not the heart of a Christian that can be perfectly callous and insensible, when, immediately after the dissolution of beloved, lamented relatives, and friends, we behold numberless memorials of them, but yet no longer hear the voice which cheered us; and find that closet, that place where we together conversed with God, empty and desolate: when we look forward to the future, and see our plans of felicity broken, and ourselves compelled to pursue our journey through life solitary and alone, without those who heightened our pleasures, by sharing them; who diminished our sorrows, by dividing them.

But if we are permitted to sorrow, we are commanded "to sorrow not as those without hope." Let us,

II. Inquire what is prohibited by this command. We “sorrow as those without hope,”

1. When in our hearts, or by our lips, we *murmur against the disposals of God*, and blame him for his cruelty and unkindness to us. In this respect Jacob was faulty, when he exclaimed, on the supposed death of his son, “All these things are against me!” In our severest griefs we must be persuaded that God acts not only with infinite wisdom, but also with infinite goodness; and that not only are his general dispensations merciful, but this particular dispensation which has afflicted us is the fruit of covenant love. The sorrow of the Christian makes God more lovely, while they who have hard thoughts of him in their bereavements, display a temper far different from that of the gospel. The mourning believer, “though his chastening for the present seemeth not joyous, but grievous,” bends with humility without murmuring or repining; and cries, ‘Since it has not been possible, in consistence with thine all-wise predeterminations, to remove this cup of affliction from me, “thy will be done.”’ A beautiful example of this union of deep feeling and unfeigned submission to the will of God, was given by the excellent Fenelon, on the death of his pupil and friend, the duke of Burgundy. On that occasion he exclaimed, “He is gone, who possessed and deserved my warmest love. With him are entombed for ever all my hopes of earthly bliss; yet, could I restore him to life by turning a single straw, for a million of worlds I would not turn that straw.”

2. We “sorrow as those without hope,” when *our grief unfits us for holy duties*, and prevents the exercises of devotion. Ah! brethren, you indeed deserve blame, if these afflictions lead you to inter-

mit the duties of the closet and the sanctuary. What! because you specially need consolation, will you flee from the Fountain and Spring of blessedness? What! because one whom you loved is dead, shall your heart also become dead and lifeless in all spiritual employments, and as cold as is his inanimate body? What! shall your tears be continually flowing over a mouldering corpse, and your affections never be raised to a living God?

3. Our sorrow is criminal, when it *never leads us to inquire what was the design of God in afflicting us.* We violate our duty, if we occupy ourselves merely in venting our sighs and tears, and never inquire what God designs to teach us by this bereavement. Perhaps thou art impenitent, and without an interest in Christ. Oh! then suspend thy tears over a dead friend, and weep over a dead and corrupted soul. Look at him whom thou hast pierced by thine iniquities, and “mourn as one who mourneth for a first-born.” Instead of “refusing to be comforted,” admire the grace of God that he did not smite *thee* when thy friend fell; and since he has kept thee from the grave and from hell, strive to make the death of this lamented object the means of life to thy soul. Or if thou art a child of God, instead of being “swallowed up in overmuch sorrow,” study by this calamity to feel more deeply the vanity of earth, the importance of eternity, the preciousness of Christ; study to be more conformed to God, and more dead to sin.

4. “We sorrow as those without hope,” when *we follow not our departed friends beyond the cold grave, the coffin, and the worm.* When we cry in agony, ‘they are no more,’ and forgetting that their souls exist eternally, seem to imagine that they are plunged in-

to the gloomy gulf of annihilation, and extinguished for ever.

5. We “sorrow as those without hope,” when we *distrust the kindness of God*, and are filled with unbelieving and undutiful fears and apprehensions concerning our future lot in life. Perhaps it was the earthly stay of a family that was removed; a husband to whom his partner and children looked up for support. But let them not be filled with despair, while such precious promises to them are written in the book of God, and while his throne is established in the heavens.

6. We “sorrow as those without hope,” when in the grave of a departed friend *we bury the remembrance of the other mercies which God continues to us*; when, because the wife, the child, the parent, is removed, we become perfectly thankless for that goodness which encompasses us with such numberless and undeserved mercies. Ah! such a temper shows so little benefit from past afflictions, that severer strokes may be expected to teach us the value of those blessings, which we ungratefully despise.

Such is the sorrow for departed friends, which is excessive and forbidden. Let us now,

III. Inquire what are those considerations which are calculated to mitigate our grief, and prevent us from sorrowing as those that have no hope.

The Christian finds sources of consolation, whether he looks to God, to the world, to himself, or to his departed friends.

Look up to God, O Christian mourner! and cease to sorrow as those without hope; it is he who removed your friend. If your bereavement had sprung from a blind chance or a fatal necessity, you might with some reason refuse to be comforted: but you

know that this is not the case; you know that it was dispensed by your Lord and Ruler; by the providence and appointment of Him, without whom not a sparrow falleth to the ground. How resigned, how patient, how humble, should this remembrance make us in our afflictions! Shall we not acquiesce in the disposals of a God infinite in power, in glory, in majesty? of Him who governs, and who deserves to govern, the universe? "Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why doest thou thus?" Shall we presume to teach the All-Wise how to govern the world that he has made, and when to remove his creatures from it? Oh! let us rather cry with Eli, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." Let us bend under his chastening rod, and in the words of our Saviour exclaim, "Not my will, but thine be done."

Christian mourner! "sorrow not without hope," but acquire resignation from the remembrance, not only of the authority and omnipotence, but also of the exhaustless *goodness* and *love* of Him who afflicts you. Those bereavements that distress you, are ordered by the same heart that loves you more than you love yourself—spring from the same rich fountain of mercy that gave the Redeemer to expire for you upon the cross. And shall we complain of the dispensations of Omniscience, guided by paternal affection? Our Redeemer, in the extremity of his agony, cried out, "The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?" In like manner, let the pious, when mourning over deceased friends, exclaim, 'It is our Father, our compassionate, benevolent Father, who giveth us this cup to drink, who visiteth us with this affliction; shall we not receive it from him with resignation and full acquies-

cence of soul?' Father of our Saviour, our covenant Father in Jesus! in the midst of the tears which nature forces from us, we rejoice in thy grace; we bless thy chastening hand; we triumph in our covenant-relation to thee.

2. After looking to God, fix your thoughts upon the *world*, and from a contemplation of it learn to moderate your excessive grief. You exclaim as though your situation were peculiar; but the path in which you walk has been traversed by thousands now in glory; is treading by countless numbers of the children of God. Why should you be exempted from the common lot of mortality? Trace the bloody steps of the apostles and martyrs, and of the Lord and supporter of apostles and martyrs, while they were in this vale of tears, and then say, Who art thou, that the cup of affliction should never touch thy lips? Ah! murmur not, lest thou experience those acuter trials which holier men than thou have endured! Hast thou, like Job, seen all thy family swept away at a single stroke? Or, like Aaron, beheld two sons struck into death in a moment by the indignation of the Almighty? Or, like the mother of the Maccabees, beheld seven children tortured and expiring before thy face, previous to thine own martyrdom? Ah, ungrateful murmurer! think of the agonies that are rushing upon thousands in various parts of the world, and be dumb.

Look again at the world: behold its falsehood and its treachery; see under the roses with which the imagination of youth decks it, thorns which deeply pierce us; calculate the sum of the happiness which it can afford; and then say, whether it is so great a felicity to walk up and down upon it

for a few years, that we should sorrow as without hope for those who have closed their eyes upon it.

3. Look again, bereaved mourner, at thyself! contemplate thy sins, and while thou acknowledgest thou deservest perdition, adore that grace which, instead of bearing thy soul to despair, only laid thy friend in the grave. Look at the mercies he has spared, and which are unmerited. Oh! when thou knowest thine own deserts, thou wilt not repine. Where affliction lieth heavy, sin lieth light. Consider too what benefits these bereavements may produce. Hast thou been careless? These may awake thee, feelingly convince thee of the vanity of the world, and make thee flee to secure an imperishable portion. Art thou a child of God? If sanctified, these afflictions will give an ardency to thy devotions, a fervour to thy prayers, new life to all thy withering graces, tenderness and compassion for others; they will make thee cling closer to God, and pant for that kingdom that cannot be moved.

4. Finally, to prevent you from sorrowing as those without hope, consider the situation of departed believers: their bodies sleep in Jesus, their souls exult in glory.

Is there any one who cries, 'Oh! that I could have this consolatory hope with regard to my departed friends—then I would be calm; but I fear that they died without God and without Christ, and are now in despair.'

God have mercy upon thee, poor mourner! The Father of consolations pour his balm into thy soul! He only can do it, for a sword has indeed pierced through thy heart. An ordinary degree of grace will not uphold thee. But still it is thy duty to submit to Him whose ways are righteous and true; still

he who consoled that afflicted king, who cried, "Oh! Absalom, my son, my son! would God I had died for thee!" can support thee.

But oh, how different is the situation of him who can confidently follow the ascending spirit of his friend to the bosom of his Redeemer! He looks at the inanimate corpse of him whom he loved, and exclaims, 'This insensible mass is not the *person* that engaged my affections; it is only his earthly habitation; the organ which united him to sensible objects; the covering of that spiritual and imperishable germ, upon which death has no power: my friend has dropped this covering, but he still exists; he has only exchanged this valley of tears and misery, this state of trouble and vicissitudes, for a state of peace and felicity. O thou, who wast the charm of my days, how consoling is it to me to remember, that when I reflect on thee amidst the business of the world, and think of thee in the silence of the night, it is not a deceitful phantom which flatters me, a vain remembrance which amuses me; but an object really and truly existing, though separated from me. Yes; and thou existest for me; the farewell thou hast given me was painful, but it is not eternal; thy journey through earth has been some years, perhaps only some months, shorter than mine; thou hast advanced before me to that country to which I aspire, and where I shall also dwell; my faith perceives thee there, though thou art invisible to sense: there I shall rejoin thee, there our hearts shall be re-united; I shall see thee perfect in holiness and love, enjoying a felicity ineffable and eternal. Why then, should I sorrow as those without hope? The moment of thy death has been that of a new existence. Thou art a captive who has bro-

ken his fetters; an exile who has returned to the bosom of his country; a traveller who, after many fatigues, has arrived at home. All that I have loved, all that I have admired in thee, all that has attached me to thee, all thy wisdom, and all thy tenderness, still exist; but freed from weakness and infirmity, clothed with immortality. I see thee not in the tomb, which contains only the spoils of mortality, but in heaven, encompassed with glory. I see thee, not in this state where thy mind was bounded and thy heart checked in its impulses; but in the world of light, where the eyes of thy understanding, renewed and fortified, are fixed upon the Sun of truth; where thy heart, purified from all its blemishes, delivered from all its cares, experiences continually the most sublime and touching emotions. I see thee united to that God who gave thee being, and whose power accomplishes in all their extent those promises which his goodness had made to thee. My tears then shall be dried, or if I still shed any, they shall be tears of tenderness at the view of thy happiness.'

SERMON CXXXV.



CHOICE OF DAVID UNDER ANTICIPATED JUDGMENTS.



1 CHRONICLES xxi. 13.

Let me fall now into the hand of the Lord, for very great are his mercies; but let me not fall into the hand of man.

“IT is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” We cannot, my brethren, have this declaration of the apostle too deeply impressed upon our mind whenever we are called to decide whether we shall obey God or man, whether we shall incur the anger of the Eternal or of the world. If looking beyond the present life, we think of the great day of retribution, in which the Judge of all the earth will avenge upon impenitent sinners his outraged justice and mercy; if we put in the balance the power of God and that of man, we cannot hesitate a moment on the choice that we ought to make. Ah, rather a thousand times fall into the hands of men than into those of this Almighty Judge! Rather a thousand times be the victims of their anger, than expose ourselves to his! Rather have the whole world, than God

alone for our enemy! What comparison is there between the evils that mortal creatures can inflict upon us, and those which we have to fear from a God immortal and omnipotent? What comparison between those who kill the body, and after that have nothing else that they can do, and him who can cast both body and soul into hell? But, my brethren, if changing our point of view, we consider not everlasting miseries, but the woes of the present life, if we compare the compassions of God with those of men, his goodness with their wickedness, the wisdom and equity of his ways with the injustice and irregularity of theirs, then we must change our language, and the penitent sinner, even at the moment when he sees heaven angry for his crimes, will exclaim, "Let me fall into the hands of the Lord, for very great are his mercies, but let me not fall into the hands of men." These are implacable in their hatred; their vengeance knows no bounds; their weak goodness is soon exhausted. But God, though angry with us, is yet our father; his mercy is felt through his severest chastisements; and "though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion." It was the deep conviction of this truth that led David to adopt the words of the text.

Let us, in order to feel the force of his expressions, rapidly review those circumstances which induced the king of Israel to adopt them. David, distrusting the promises of God, or actuated by secret pride and ambition, ordered Joab to take an exact account of the number of all his subjects. This act was probably connected with some circumstances of which we are ignorant, which marked it as manifestly criminal, since Joab strongly remonstrated against it. His remonstrances, however, were vain.

and the prince persisted in his design. His conscience being at last aroused, he felt and confessed his guilt, and importunately deprecated the divine wrath. While thus humbled, the prophet Gad went to him by revelation, to inform him of the Lord's anger, and determination to punish him; at the same time referring it to his choice whether he and his people should suffer by famine, by war, or by pestilence. In the meek and submissive language of the text, David chooses the last, because it proceeds more immediately from the hand of God.

But, you ask, did David reason justly? When we are suffering under war, or any other calamity whatever, are we not in the hands of God? Are not the different agents of the universe, men, angels, elements, equally the ministers of *his* justice, or of *his* mercy? Yes; and no one more fully or explicitly acknowledged this universality of Providence than did David. He always, without justifying the wickedness of the instruments, bowed submissively to the disposals of God in all his persecutions. When Shimei breathed out his execrations against him, David meekly replied, "The Lord hath said unto him, Curse David;" that is, the Most High, in the adorable course of his providence, has permitted it.

But still, my brethren, there is a wide difference between those afflictions which come to us directly from the hand of God, and those which come by the intervention of men. Ah, how sensibly does the pious heart feel this difference! When men are the immediate authors of our sorrows, though it is always true that it is God who permits them; that it depends only upon his pleasure to arrest them: still in the sufferings which they cause us to endure, it is they whom we first behold; it is their unkindness or

enmity which first strikes us ; and this view irritates the wounds of our souls, and agitates our afflicted hearts. It is often with difficulty that we elevate our eyes to the Supreme Governor of all, to acknowledge his sovereign justice in those same sufferings that are unjustly inflicted by our fellow-men.

Besides, the malignity of the principle whence our woes proceed, when they come from men, permits us to hope neither for bounds nor mitigation to them, because the hatred and passions which produced them still may continue. The heart then feels the present with bitterness, while it beholds no resource in the future. All these visible causes affect our senses and our mind, and hide from us more or less the invisible hand of God. What a difference when our afflictions proceed immediately from heaven ! Then the believing soul sees only its God ; it adores with submission the paternal hand which chastens it. Through his just anger, it discerns his infinite goodness. It doubts not, since " very great are his mercies," that they will temper, mitigate, arrest finally the chastisement. In these calamities, the first emotion of a child of God is to cast himself into the arms of his heavenly Father. Though this Father be angry, though he be armed with thunders, though he appear ready to inflict the severest punishment, yet his child, full of love, abandons himself to him with confidence. He knows what is the design of these chastisements. He knows that this God is " merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin ;" and that an humble penitent always has access unto him. Happy in his bitterest woes that nothing interposes between his God and him ; that no other object intercepts his view, he opens an asylum in the bosom of divine mercy against the

strokes of justice. He cries, "Though thou slay me, yet will I trust in thee! O let me fall into the hands of the Lord, for very great are his mercies, but let me not fall into the hands of men." Such were the sentiments of David, and his hope was not deceived; since on the evening of the same day God, listening to his humble prayer, caused the exterminating angel to stay his arm.

Penitent sinner! how many motives are there to induce you to adopt this language, and imitate this example! Cry, "Let me fall into the hands of God," for he is my owner and proprietor; to him I unreservedly belong; he has power over me as a potter over the clay; he cannot transcend his right in the exercise of his sovereignty; and under the severest strokes of his rod, I can never without presumption say unto him, Why doest thou thus? But "let me not fall into the hands of men:" of men who so often encroach upon the authority of God; who so often forget that divine warning, "Who art thou that judgest another's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth!" who so often without authority from the Sovereign of the universe, and regardless of his solemn declaration, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord," erect tribunals where they pronounce anathemas and condemnation.

"Let me fall into the hands of the Lord," because mercy is his darling attribute: he loves to glorify it in the forgiveness of the penitent; he marks the groans of an Ephraim; he pities the repentant tears of a Mary; he opens his arms to the returning prodigal; he is moved by the humble confession of a self-loathing publican; he comforts those that evangelically mourn, and "casts their iniquities into the depth of the sea, never more to be mentioned against

them." But "let me not fall into the hands of men;" of men who, so often forgetting that mercy is their only plea, and that without the exercise of infinite grace they must be for ever undone, are pitiless and cruel; who, instead of imitating that Redeemer who rejected not the chief of sinners that penitently approached him, cry with pharisaical elation of heart, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men;" and treat those at whose repentance heaven has rejoiced, with deep aversion and supercilious contempt; who remain perfectly unmoved by that awful denunciation, "He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy!"

"Let me fall into the hands of the Lord," because he reads my heart. He has beheld my secret groans, and prayers, and tears. He has witnessed my penitent review of my offences; he has seen my soul, humbled at its offences, yet fleeing to the blood of Jesus; pleading the sacrifice of Calvary, and strengthened and purified by the Spirit of grace. But "let me not fall into the hands of men," who, notwithstanding their ignorance, so often attempt to judge the heart; so often, of different motives to an act that may be assigned, select the most odious.

"Let me fall into the hands of God," because he mingles with the strokes of his rod the consolations of grace, and chastens as a Father; but "let me not fall into the hands of men," who present the unmingled cup of bitterness, and repine if the object of their hatred taste aught except the wormwood and the gall.

"Let me fall into the hands of God," for the design of his chastisements is merciful; they are intended not to destroy, but to benefit; to make us conformed to his holiness; to cause us to produce

the peaceable fruits of righteousness. But “let me not fall into the hands of men,” who so often endeavour utterly to crush those who have offended them; who steadfastly pursue the object of their fury, and abandon not their victims till they have been cheered by their expiring groans.

“Let me fall into the hands of God,” from reflecting on the advantages that myself, that thousands of the redeemed, have experienced from his chastisements. How many that encircle the throne of the Redeemer bless that rod, that affliction, that bereavement, dispensed by the Almighty, which weaned them more from earth, and made them more willing to live upon their God! But “let me not fall into the hands of men,” whose unkindness and cruelty, while it adds to their own offences, is so apt to stir up the corruptions of *their* hearts who are the objects of it.

Let such, my dear brethren, be your language and your feelings, when penetrated by a sense of guilt. Bend to that hand which supports while it smites. Flee to him who, in the midst of the inflictions of his justice, will permit you to behold his divine compassions. Cast yourselves in his paternal arms and cry, “O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.” Listen to the invitation of his word, while it addresses you, “Come and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn and he will heal us; he hath smitten and he will bind us up, that we may live in his sight.”

1. This subject, in connexion with the history of which our text is a part, teaches us that sin may be pardoned, and yet punished with temporal afflictions. David had repented, and was forgiven; but

yet he was not free from chastisement. This is very often the course of God's proceedings. Even though the sinner is awakened to a sense of his unworthiness, is humbled, and implores pardon through the Redeemer. God, to strengthen his repentance, and radically to cure the malady of his heart, visits him with chastisements. "Thou wast a God that forgavest them," says the psalmist, speaking of the children of Israel in the wilderness, "thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions." He observes this course of conduct, even to the penitent, that he may prevent the abuse of his covenant mercy. The price of redemption and pardon cost too much to have the blessing of it esteemed common. In the best of saints there remains much corruption; and too often abounding grace has given occasion to some to have light thoughts of their sins, and the freedom of access which believers have to God through Christ, has degenerated into presumptuous boldness. God then so deals with his people, that "their own wickedness shall correct them, and their own backslidings shall reprove them;" and that they may read in their punishment the greatness of their sin, and tremble to abuse covenant mercy. God punishes, though he pardons, in order that he may manifest the holiness of his nature and his law, even while he indulges all his tenderness and love. God punishes, though he pardons, in order to produce watchfulness and circumspection in our future walk; that our frame may be more humble, and our fellowship more strict. If such be the course of God's proceedings, let us tremble at sin; let us neither wonder nor murmur at any of our afflictions.

2. This subject should excite in us the tenderest love to God. We may well cry with the prophet, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." Goodness is allied to greatness; it is because he is the Omnipotent, that he is also the Most Merciful. He shows the immensity of his power in restraining the strokes of his justice, and dealing tenderly with the penitent. For this reason Moses prays, "Let the *power* of my Lord be great, according as thou hast declared, The Lord merciful and gracious, slow to anger, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin." And does not such a God deserve our hearts? Will not the sweetest satisfaction result from fellowship with him? We are too apt, my brethren, to consider the obligations of religion *merely* as awful duties which must be performed, or we be for ever lost. We should also consider them as the source of felicity; as the only stable prop to the weakness of humanity; as the only unfailing spring of consolation amidst the troubles of earth. In this manner contemplate that religion which God, in infinite mercy, hath given to man. Dwell on the loveliness and perfections of our Heavenly Father, and rejoice that you are in the hands of such a God. Instead of murmuring because he requires your supreme affection, you will then bless him that he permits you to devote your hearts unto him; and in reviewing his conduct to you, you will cry, "Verily, O Lord God, this is not the manner of mortal men; it is because thou art God, and not man, that we are not consumed."

3. This subject teaches us where the soul may find a refuge from the unkindness and cruelties of

men. Whither, in such circumstances, should the child of God flee, but to the bosom of his Father? There, by the consolations of grace, by the beams of spiritual joy, by the comforts of the Holy Ghost, he will be compensated for the bitterness and frowns of the world. There, tasting the mercy of his God, he will pity, forgive, and intercede for those who wound him. There, resting in the embraces of the Most Merciful, he will love and adore; there, as in a sanctuary and asylum, his soul will peacefully repose amidst the reproaches and persecutions of his foes; and when the hour of his dissolution arrives, he will cry, with holy confidence, ‘Father, whose tenderness I have so often experienced, Father of that Saviour to whom I have fled for refuge, and in him my covenant God and Father, into thine hands I commend my spirit: thou wilt receive it, O God of my salvation!’”

SERMON CXXXVI.*



THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE.



HAGGAI ii. 9.

The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts.

FROM the earliest period of time, particular places were set apart for the peculiar worship of God. Such was, probably, that "presence of the Lord;" a consecrated spot where the divine glory was manifested; from which Cain departed. The first act of Noah, when he came from the ark, was to rear an altar to his Preserver. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in all their journeyings, constantly set apart a particular spot for worship.

The shady grove and the elevated mountain were at first chosen by most nations, as places of devotion. But after the recess of the grove, and the height of the mountain had been used by the Gentiles for the exercise of the most obscene, cruel, and

* Preached at the dedication of the New Independent Presbyterian Church in Savannah, May 9, 1819.

impious rites, God prohibited his people from worshipping in them, lest they should be seduced into the idolatrous practices of other nations. He commanded the tabernacle to be reared: to it all offerings were ordered to be brought; from it alone the smoke of sacrifice was to rise; and to it the people were to approach, when they would meet with God. It stood four hundred and seventy-nine years, when it was succeeded by the temple.

It was David, who first formed the design of building the temple. Having finished his own palace, he was pained by comparing its splendour with the tabernacle, in which the ark, the august symbol of the divine presence, was contained; and resolved to dedicate a magnificent temple to the God of Israel, the ruler of the world. "The king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth in curtains." (2 Sam. vii. 2.) When Nathan, commending him for his motives, informed him that the honour of rearing this building was reserved for his pacific successor, he submitted to the heavenly order; but made vast collections for the future temple, and strongly exhorted his son not to neglect this pious work. It was reared on the place where Abraham had prepared to slay his son, and where David offered a sacrifice to stay the progress of the exterminating angel. In seven years and a half it was finished. Of its unparalleled splendour it is unnecessary for me to speak. It was then solemnly consecrated to God. The ark of the covenant, and the tent in which it was kept, were brought from Gibeon, and placed in the apartments of the temple: the cloud, the symbol of the divine presence, descended and filled the house: Solomon, animated by this token of acceptance, surrounded

by the priests, the levites, and the people, poured out before God his petitions and thanksgivings: numerous victims bled; while the choirs, as well with their instruments as their voices, made the air resound with the praises of God. The Lord had already shown his acceptance of the temple by the cloud that filled it; but he displayed it still more sensibly by the fire which descended from heaven to consume the victims. So soon as the surprise occasioned by this new declaration of the divine favour was past, the priests, the levites, the people, and the king, bending to the earth, cried in the accents of joy and gratitude, "Praise the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever!"

Such was the dedication of the temple. It would always have continued glorious, and its duration would have equalled that of the levitical economy, if the Jewish people had remained faithful to their vows, and had not profaned it. But when they became corrupted, God gave victory to the arms of Nebuchadnezzar, who destroyed the city, and burnt the temple to the ground, four hundred and twenty-four years and three months after its foundation had been laid by Solomon.

The second temple was commenced in the second year after the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity. The young, who had not seen the splendour of the first structure, uttered cries of joy; but the old men, remembering the magnificence of the former temple, wept with sorrow. Haggai and Zechariah were sent to cheer them, by an assurance that, notwithstanding it was in so many respects inferior, there should be in it a brighter glory than was in the temple of Solomon. It indeed wanted the external magnificence and grandeur of the first

building: the shechinah, the bright cloud of glory, the symbol of the divine presence, which had rested between the cherubim, was removed; the urim and thummim, by which God had manifested his will, no longer adorned the breast of the high-priest, and announced the divine commands; the ark of the covenant, the tables of the law written by God himself, the pot of manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, these memorials of the miracles and mercies of God, were gone; the fire which descended from heaven had been extinguished. Yet still "the glory of the latter house was greater than that of the former;" for into it, "the Desire of all nations came, and filled it with glory." It is to this presence of Christ in it, which more than compensated for the want of other things, that the prophet refers in the text. There he was received in the arms of Simeon, and beheld with rapture by Anna; there he often dispensed the most sublime instructions, and most precious consolations; there he announced "peace, good-will to man;" there he proclaimed himself the water of life, and invited all thirsty, fainting, perishing souls, to come to him and drink and live for ever. There he more than supplied the want of those things which were enjoyed under the first temple. Why should they regret the shechinah, when with them there was Immanuel, God incarnate? Why should they weep for the urim and thummim, when they had this divine prophet to instruct them, with infinitely greater clearness and force? Why should they mourn for the ark and its contents, when in Jesus they had the true ark, the mercy-seat, through which alone our offering could be accepted and our sins forgiven; when he gave laws full of mercy, and brought the memo-

rials of God's ancient, eternal goodness? Why should they lament the sacrificial fire, since the one offering of the Redeemer was about to render all other sacrifices unnecessary, and since he would baptize all his disciples with the Holy Ghost, and with celestial fire, that consumes not inanimate victims, but our sins and corruptions. Behold the Saviour standing in the temple: the object of the Father's everlasting love; the source of felicity to angels; the "light to lighten the Gentiles, and glory of his people Israel;" the victim appointed from eternity to atone for the sins of man, and acknowledge that "the glory of the latter house was greater than that of the former!"

You perceive then the great truth contained in these words: it is, that the presence of Christ constitutes the chief glory of any church. Without this the utmost external pomp and splendour are in vain; without this, the towering spire, the decorated ceiling, or the massy column, are viewed with disregard by all the inhabitants of heaven; without this, the most regular attention to the exteriors of religion, the eloquent address and the harmonious hymn, are only "a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal." Brethren, you have felt with David, that while your own habitations are increasing in splendour, so should the house of God—you have therefore reared this building. In thus acting you have done well. But be not satisfied with this; unless Jesus be in this temple, its most important, its spiritual glory will be wanting.

Do you ask, How his presence in a church is displayed, and the building rendered glorious by this presence?

1. By the *faithful preaching, and the cordial reception, of his gospel.*

Believing it to be the word of eternal life, *we* must announce it plainly and fully; we must continually exhibit to you its essential and peculiar doctrines; those doctrines which Jesus came from heaven to reveal. If instead of this, we present you with disquisitions that have little reference to the Redeemer, or urge you to the practice of morality from motives that have no connexion with the gospel, we are traitors to our Redeemer, our ministry will be unfruitful; and however we may amuse you, on the walls of the sanctuary we may write "*Ichabod*," the glory is departed. The apostle Paul cries to the Galatians, "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you, let him be accursed." And in like manner we cry, Wo to that man who shall ever stand in this desk, and attempt to lay any other foundation than that which is laid in Zion, Jesus Christ; that shall present any other ground of a sinner's acceptance with God, than the atoning blood and justifying righteousness of Immanuel; that shall attempt to derogate from the essential glories and mediatorial perfections of the Son of God! Should such an one ever stand here, and under the garb of a minister of the Redeemer assail those great truths which are our only hope, accursed be the eloquence or ingenuity that he may employ to diminish our attachment to the cross of Christ! I cite against him you, my brethren, who have reared this house for the propagation of the pure unadulterated gospel; I cite against him our pious ancestors, who have died in that faith in which we hope to triumph in our last hours; I cite against him the departed pastors of this congregation, from Zubly down to Kerr, who have taught the same doctrines; I cite against him thee, Son of God, to whose honour we raise this

church; whom we here will bless, and love, and worship! Should such an one ever occupy this desk, whatever may be his talents or his acquirements, the powers of his mind, or the graces of his manner, the true glory of the church will have vanished! Should such an one ever occupy this desk, I repeat, accursed be his doctrines; may they be rejected with abhorrence; but may he himself be brought to the acknowledgment of the truth as it is in Jesus!

But if we would desire that this house should be glorious, it is not enough that we should preach those plain truths of the gospel which God has always blessed; by which, you, believers, were converted; by which you have been so often consoled; in listening to which you have felt Jesus near to you: it is also requisite that to this faithful preaching be joined your constant attendance. Our duties are reciprocal: if we are bound to announce the gospel, you are bound to hear it; and for every unnecessary absence from the house of God, you must answer to him. Hope not that this temple will be glorious, unless we see the seats constantly occupied by worshippers whenever divine service is here performed. And think it not enough to come merely with your bodies, your souls must be engaged; the principles of religion must not only be received by the understanding, but cherished by the heart, and displaying their influence on the life. Let the church ever be filled with such constant, devout worshippers, and this house will be glorious.

2. This effect will be produced also, if *the ordinances of religion be here regularly administered, and properly prized.*

Here the infant, just opening his eyes upon the world, is to be brought to the holy baptismal font, and dedicated to the God of his fathers. Here the seal of Jehovah is to be impressed upon his forehead. If parents observe this, not as a bare empty ceremony, but as a dear pledge of the kindness of God to their child, and of his readiness to receive and bless him; if they esteem as a precious privilege, the seal of the promise of the covenant, the sign of the grace of the Spirit, the initiating ordinance of the church; if they bring up their offspring in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; we may hope that this house will be glorious, not only in our days, but in those of our descendants also.

Here the sacramental table is to be spread, and the emblems of the Redeemer's sufferings to be exhibited. If the holy festival is attended by numerous and sincere disciples, ardently desirous of communion with the Saviour, Jesus will, according to his promise, be in the midst of us, and render this house glorious.

3. The presence of Jesus is manifested, and his temple rendered glorious, wherever *the professors of his religion are distinguished for holiness and spiritual joy, and where sinners are converted.*

If all among us who have sworn over the symbols of his broken body and shed blood, to devote ourselves to him, should be distinguished by sanctity, by benevolence, by brotherly love, by zeal, by superiority to the world, by the spirit of prayer; if we should value and experience those pure delights which flow from communion with the Redeemer, which remorse never embitters, which are the foretaste of heaven; if among the crowd who have hitherto been careless and insensible, the voice of the

Saviour should be heard, and his power felt, and many of them added to the church: this house will have a spiritual glory infinitely transcending the most splendid external decorations.

You see then, my brethren, the great objects which we should desire, for which we should fervently pray; you see the purposes for which this house is built; it is devoted to God. It never should, I trust and believe that it never will, be employed for any secular concerns. In the tablet placed over the door, you declare that it is sacred to divine worship alone.* Let it be a spot to which we never bring the cares of earth, the occupations of the world: into which we never enter without thinking of God and our Redeemer. It is true, the walls and stones have no inherent holiness, unconnected with the pure worship of God in this place; but we cry with the Psalmist, "Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever." We are followers of that Redeemer who with indignation cast out from the temple those who employed it for secular and worldly purposes.

Brethren, there is something unspeakably solemn in the consideration of the effects that will follow the erection of a temple to God. From it every regular member of this congregation will be raised to higher glory, or sunk in deeper despair. To each one of us, the gospel here preached will prove either a saviour

* The inscription on the tablet to which the author alludes, is the following:—

Jehova
Patri, Filio, Spirituique Sancto
Hanc ædem, cultui divino sacram, fundatam A. D. MDCCCXVII.
Absolutam A. D. MDCCCXIX.
Cives Savanensis sub cura pastorali Henrici Kollock, D. D.
Sancte dedicant.

of life unto life, or of death unto death. Improve the ordinances of religion, and you will bless God when from heaven you look back upon this house; neglect them, and they will plead against you at the holy tribunal. Oh! it will be melancholy to have assisted in building this house; to have heard in it the offers of salvation; and then to be excluded from "that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens!" Be not satisfied, till you yourselves are living temples, in which God is both resident and adored.

But this is not all: in a few years this congregation will have entirely changed its appearance; other persons will occupy your seats; other preachers will address you from this desk. In the next generation, some will here be born to God; and some live and die without an interest in the Redeemer, who will here be offered to them. Generation will succeed generation before this building will be destroyed; and thousands through eternity will sing a more rapturous song of praise, from the remembrance of the blessings received in this place; and thousands utter a groan of deeper anguish when in the world of horrors they recall the salvation that was here urged upon them, but ungratefully, madly, refused by them. "How dreadful" then, and yet how lovely, "is this place!"

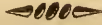
Young persons! this church must soon be resigned into your hands: we always look on you with peculiar sensibility. There are some of you, (we testify it with delight,) whose early years are sanctified by vital piety; some, the hope of this flock, and the future pillars of this church, who under the influences of the Spirit are preparing for usefulness when the heads of the older followers of Jesus shall be moul-

dering in the dust. On you may the dearest blessings of God Most High ever rest! May you enjoy the peculiar benediction of that Saviour who delights in the early convert! May your number be augmented, and your graces increased! and may you in the next generation be able to do more, far more for God than we have performed!

And now, most glorious God! we look to thee: to thee, the great Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, we solemnly consecrate this house, and dedicate and set it apart for the pure preaching of thy word; for the administration of the sacraments; for the praises of our God; for prayer, for supplication, and for all the offices of devotion. May it be rendered glorious by the perpetual presence of Immanuel. May the fire of thy love descend from heaven, that all our sacrifices here offered may be accepted! Here may the thunders of thy word awake the careless; here may the balm of Gilead be applied to the wounded conscience; here may the blushing prodigal, penitent for his wanderings, be folded in the embraces of his Father; here may the believer enjoy communion, and feel the consolations, of the Holy Spirit! Let all dissention and hatred ever be excluded; and may this be the house of love and peace as well as holiness; may there be a long succession of faithful, wise, pious pastors; and may many, very many, be here born to God, and trained up for eternal life!

“This is now the house of God, and the gate of heaven: the Lord is here, and we know it.”

SERMON CXXXVII.*



AVARICE OF NABAL.



1 SAMUEL XXV. 10, 11.

And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants now-a-days that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be?

SUCH is still the language of the avaricious man; such are still the excuses made by the insensible heart, when it seeks some pretexts to exempt it from relieving the wants of the unhappy. When we plead for the afflicted, Nabals are still to be found, who reply only by words of railing and contempt against the children of sorrow; only by representing the conferment of alms, and the support of charitable institutions, as an encouragement to indolence and vice; only by reminding us, that their wealth is their

* This Sermon was preached for the benefit of the Savannah Orphan Asylum.

own, and that they have a right to dispose of it according to their pleasure. To show you the baseness and criminality of such characters, to answer the excuses which they make against the exercise of benevolence, and to urge you to the performance of the opposite virtues, is the design of the ensuing discourse.

Say not that this is an unnecessary subject; that there are few Nabals among you; few that can close their hearts against the cries of distress, and the tears of helpless infancy: we know it; with delight we speak of your generosity. These children before me, fed, clothed, instructed by your bounty, are a living proof that you have hearts that can feel for others.

But, brethren! though we doubt not your benevolence, the subject will not be useless: it will confirm in their laudable conduct those whose kindness to the poor and the unhappy we have often experienced; it will guard our youth against the indulgence of that cruel, covetous spirit, which would render them curses to society, rob them of the esteem of the community, and deprive them of the sweetest enjoyments; and should there be a single Nabal present, perhaps, through the influence of the Spirit of grace and of love, his heart of stone may be taken from him, and a heart of flesh bestowed, which will induce him liberally to contribute to this important and interesting institution.

Before entering on the immediate subject of this discourse, it will be proper to give a brief view of the history with which the text is connected. David, at this period of his life, was pursued by Saul, who, from jealousy and envy, ardently wished his destruction. Wandering, a poor distressed exile,

among mountains, caves, and wildernesses, he was often reduced to the want of the necessaries of life. On such an occasion, he sent some of his followers to the wealthy Nabal, and in terms the most courteous and gentle, entreated his kindness. To this kindness he had indeed a just claim, since he had carefully protected the flocks and possessions of Nabal from the injurious assaults of others. But, instead of giving any assistance, instead of sparing to David a small portion of that expensive feast with which he was at this time gratifying his vanity and his appetite, Nabal only answered in the contemptuous and reproachful words of the text. "Who is David, and who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants now-a-days that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men whom I know not whence they be?" Let us consider the frivolity of these his excuses.

I. Excuse made by Nabal: *My possessions are strictly and properly my own, and I have a right to employ them as I please.* "Shall I take my bread, and my water, and my flesh." This is also an excuse that we still hear daily presented by the covetous and uncharitable.

But common as is this excuse, it is not only demonstrably false, but also awfully impious, and strikes directly at the providence, the government, and the sovereignty of the Most High God, No! Your wealth is not your own: natural, as well as revealed religion, declares that you are only stewards, to whom God has given a certain portion of wealth and talents to be employed for him, and according to his pleasure, and for your use, of which you must

render an account to him at the judgment-day. He has laid down rules for your observance, and if you transgress these rules, it is at the peril of your souls! Among these rules, none are more explicit than those which relate to the distressed and the needy. If at any time God appears to renounce a right to your riches, it is only when he transfers this right to the poor. If you refuse to assist them, you are now at the bar of conscience, and you will hereafter be found at the bar of the Holy God, wrongful usurpers, retaining what is theirs by the allotment of the Almighty. You will then find, whatever you now imagine, that it is the bread of the needy which you have hoarded, that it is the gold of the perishing, which has been hidden in your coffers, that it is the silver of the orphan and the fatherless with which you have refused to part, and for which you must render a strict—oh, how strict an account!

Brethren, these are solemn truths! Look then, at these poor orphans; and let conscience declare, in the presence of the Searcher of hearts, whether you do not believe they are among that number whom the Bestower and Owner of your wealth, your Ruler and your Judge, requires you to relieve? If they are, by withholding your charity from them, you either challenge the authority of the God of heaven, or else wilfully resist his commands. Ah, for this will he hold you guiltless!

II. Excuse of Nabal: *The supposed inferiority of those for whom his assistance was solicited, and his want of relationship to him.* “Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants now-a-days that break away every man from his master.” This excuse also is still daily presented, when we plead for the distressed.

There can be little doubt, that the ignorance of Nabal was only pretended, that he might render his reply more contemptuous. He well knew the valour and reputation of David; he knew that when a stripling he had overcome the gigantic champion of Gath, and had often since smitten the Philistines; that he was nearly allied to Saul, and cruelly and unjustly persecuted. But even if his ignorance had been real; nay, had he certainly known that the situation of David was most abject, his excuse would have been frivolous. For, my brethren, when we look with contempt upon the poor, and refuse to assist them because of any real or imagined inferiority, we look with contempt on that God whose image they bear, on that Jesus, who died for them as well as for the opulent and distinguished; and who has declared that they are his representatives on earth, and that he considers as done to himself what we perform to them. Yes, let every sentiment of contempt for them be stifled in thy breast, when thou rememberest, that all thy hopes of salvation are founded on our blessed Redeemer's voluntary assumption of that poverty which thou scornest or neglectest. When thou despisest the poor, thou despisest the holy and adorable Jesus, our Lord, our Redeemer, and our Judge, "who though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor."

Do you add, with Nabal, "Who is David?" "Who are these poor orphans? What relationship have they to me, that I should assist them?" They have descended from the same parent with you; their origin is your own; the blood which flows in their veins is that which Adam has transmitted to you; they like you have a body organized and fashioned

by the hand of God; they walk under the same heaven with you, and the same earth sustains them: like you they bear the sacred impression of the image of God; an image, it is true, greatly obscured and disfigured by sin; an image nevertheless of which sufficient traits remain, to cause you to respect them for this august impression. In them as well as you, there is a soul endued with wonderful faculties; a soul destined to endless happiness or eternal misery. On these orphans, as well as on yourselves, is the aspersion of the blood of Jesus; for them he spared not his life: will you withhold from them your benevolence?

III. Excuse of Nabal: *His unwillingness to encourage vice or indolence.* "There be many servants now-a-days that break away every man from his master!" This excuse too we often hear when we ask relief for the distressed.

Brethren, I am not commending a blind and indiscriminate charity. It is necessary at times to refuse the wicked and the idle, that we may have resources for the relief of the deserving poor; of those who, through disease or decrepitude, through the adverse dispensations of Providence or the villany of others; through the weakness of infancy or the feebleness of age, are unable to provide for themselves. But were Nabal to revive among us, with all his avarice, would he dare to say that, by contributing to this institution, he was encouraging vice? No! it is one of the most important and interesting circumstances in this establishment, that it saves destitute children not only from ignorance and want, but probably from iniquity. Were they to grow up, with minds uninformed, uninstructed in the principles of religion, exposed to the contagion of evil example, and ex-

perienicing the pressure of calamity; who can tell what scourges they would be to the community? But on the contrary, by your benevolent exertions, they are placed in a situation where the religion of Jesus is taught to them; where they are instructed in useful knowledge; where the principles of virtue are early inculcated; where they are trained to habits of industry; where they are shielded from that penury which might have led to their ruin; where, under the constant care and vigilant inspection of prudent and pious females, they are preparing to become useful members of society; and to increase the sum of virtue, and not of vice.

Having thus considered the excuses of Nabal, let us answer the question which he proposes, "Shall I give unto those I know not?" and at the same time reply to the similar inquiry which you may be proposing to yourselves, "Shall I give for the support of this institution?"

Yes! give, if you would not be *unkind* to the Most Merciful; for he has declared that he is the friend, the patron, the protector, of the poor and the fatherless, and that he regards what is bestowed upon them, from correct principles, as conferred upon himself.

Give, if you would not be *ungrateful* to God. What multiplied benefits has he conferred upon us! Our lives, our health, our reason, our wealth and prosperity, our spiritual privileges, our hopes of glory! Do we feel no thankfulness for these benefits? We are then worse than brutes. Do we feel gratitude? We can express it only by giving to the poor and necessitous. Without this, both scripture and reason declare that our praising God with our lips, and blessing him for his mercy, is a dreadful mockery, a horrible hypo-

crisy. Without this, all acts of devotion are unavailing. The cries and complaints of the afflicted will drown their noise; the sighs and groans of the orphan will obstruct their passage to the ears of God.

Give, if you *believe* God; for otherwise, whatever may be your pretences, you are infidels; else the promises and threatenings, the joys and the torments, announced to the charitable and uncharitable, must affect you.

Give, if you *love* God; for if your heart beats with affection to him, it is impossible that you should be unwilling to part with a little gold and silver for his sake and at his command, that we should prize it beyond his favour and friendship.

Give, if you desire to *have the impress of God upon you*. Mercy, compassion, and benevolence, are his peculiar properties, displayed in nature, providence, and grace. "But there is nothing so distant from God, so opposite to him, as a griping, covetous man. Hell is scarcely so contrary to heaven, as such a man's disposition to the nature of God: for it is goodness which sits gloriously triumphant in the height of heaven, and uncharitableness lies groveling under the bottom of hell; heaven descends from the one as its principal cause, hell is built upon the other as its main foundation. The one approximates the blessed angels to God, and beatifies them: the other removes the accursed fiends to such a distance from the All-compassionate, and from happiness. Not to wish, not to do, any good, renders them at once so wicked and so wretched;" and he who in his practice and feelings corresponds with them, prefers the image of the devil before that of God. Oh! had Nabal looked up to the Source and Pattern of excellence, he could not have hesitated how

to act; and if you are properly impressed with a view of your Father, we shall not plead in vain for these orphans.

But other motives should affect you, as they ought to have done this covetous man. "Shall I give?" Yes: because of the *instability of all earthly things*, the great uncertainty of riches, you should devote a portion of your wealth to this benevolent purpose, that you may by charity secure some of your possessions beyond the possibility of losing them. Ah! how many instances have you seen which prove, that to-day we may have the wealth of Job, and to-morrow need all his patience; that to-day we may exult in boundless wealth, which to-morrow may vanish, and leave nothing but melancholy, disappointment, and remorse? We can give permanence and security to these fugitive blessings only by employing them in acts of charity. Thus they are placed out of the reach of the spoiler, and secured from accident or danger. What we give to the poor, we deliver and intrust into the hands of God, from which no force can wrest it, and no artifices withdraw it. It is laid up in heaven, whither no thief can climb, and where no moth or rust can consume. Thus it becomes a source of felicity, even when we no longer have it in possession.

Do you still ask with Nabal, "Shall I give?" Yes; consider *the day of trouble*, and bestow your benefaction. In a short time the shadow of death shall encompass you about, the vanities of life shall fade away, and the comforts of the world shall vanish. Your riches and your possessions, your pomp and your magnificence, your sports and pastimes; the companions of your pleasure, the admirers of your fortune, the flatterers of your vices, must be torn

from you: desolate and unattended, you must go down to the chambers of darkness. This period may be near you: as in the case of Nabal, it may be only ten days before the Lord may smite you; and smite you perhaps as he was smitten, for your illiberality. What do I say? Perhaps in the midst of your dreams of long life, your "soul may this night be required of you; and then whose shall those things be which you possess?" Then will you not acknowledge, that to have preserved and increased your wealth by illiberality and want of mercy, will only render your account more difficult, and inflame your future reckoning; that all your treasures, instead of procuring you any favour, or bribing any advocate in the impartial world of eternity, shall "be a swift witness against you," and press you deeper into perdition? How much happier in the hour of dissolution is he, who from Christian principles, has "rescued sickness from the grave, and poverty from the dungeon; who has heard the groans of the aged struggling with misfortune, and the cries of infants languishing with hunger! His recompense shall flow from the Fountain of mercy; he shall stand without fear on the brink of life, and pass into eternity with an humble confidence of finding through the Redeemer that mercy he has never denied." (Taylor.)

"Shall I give?" Yes; if you wish *your memory to be cherished by your survivors*. As to the uncharitable person, "men," says Job, "shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place." Having lived but for himself, no tears are shed over his corpse; his possessions are pointed at as marks of obloquy, and monuments of infamy upon his memory. Who mourns for Nabal? who regrets his departure

from the earth, to which he was a burden? not one. Whilst with regard to a Dorias, with regard to all the benevolent, the unbought burst of sorrow from the widow and the orphan, declares the loss the children of misfortune have sustained; their memorial is gratefully recorded on the fleshly tables of the heart; and at the mouth of the grave is disclosed a part of that beneficence which their modesty when living had concealed, but of which the smallest circumstance shall never be erased from the records of eternity.

“ Shall I give?” Yes! for *the judgment-day* is approaching: and then, what unutterable anguish, what agonizing horror, shall convulse the heart of him who “ shall receive judgment without mercy, because he hath showed no mercy!” While those who, from a sincere love to Jesus, have clothed the naked, consoled the afflicted, and caused the heart of the disconsolate to sing for joy, shall hear the transporting declaration of their beloved and almighty Redeemer, “ Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these, ye did it unto me.” Read the account of the transactions of that day in Matthew xxv. and if you then dare act uncharitably, you are either sworn enemies to your own felicity, or you have renounced your God, your religion, your Redeemer. your everlasting hopes.

Brethren, it is unnecessary for me to proceed further. You well know the value of the institution for which your benefactions are solicited.

Rich men, we call upon you for your contributions. Present not the excuses of a Nabal; weigh the motives which have been urged upon you; remember that the eye of Jesus, who solicits you in the person of these children, is fixed upon you; and that

at his bar you are to give an account of that wealth with which he has intrusted you.

Poor men, be not discouraged because you can give but little; your Redeemer accepted the mite of the widow; and has declared that the poor man, who gives a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, shall not lose his reward.

Mothers, whose hearts fill with joy as you think of the fair prospects of your children sporting around you, your hands will be stretched out liberally to relieve these children of sorrow, who were born to poverty, and “baptized in tears.”

Ye widows, who are blest with outward comforts, which cannot, however, expel the aching remembrance of the loved relatives you have lost, you will sympathize with those who are “widows indeed;” who are left with children, poor and helpless, desolate and friendless, bereft of partners on whose bosoms they may recline their throbbing heads, and who will divide their griefs.

Ye who in early life became orphans, ye will look back with a sympathizing heart upon those who follow in the same dark, defenceless path; and remembering with gratitude the friends Providence raised up for you, will emulate and exceed their benevolence.

Christians, in the house of the God of mercy, on the day when Jesus rose to seal your immortal hopes, you will rejoice in the opportunity of showing your attachment to the Redeemer, by befriending the friendless and proving the orphan’s stay.

I proceed no further: you have seen your duty; I confidently leave the result to your hearts, your consciences, and your God; and I pray this God to accept the willing contributions which you are about to bestow.

SERMON CXXXVIII.*



THE SAVIOUR'S TENDERNESS TO LITTLE CHILDREN.



MATTHEW xviii. 10, 11. 14. 5.

Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones: for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me.

IN the preceding chapter, the evangelist exhibits his Lord transfigured upon Tabor. There was exhibited the brightest scene ever beheld upon earth; there was a glorious conjunction of heaven and earth, the law and the gospel, the church triumphant and the church militant, the chief of the prophets and the chief of the apostles, while Jesus stood decked in robes of celestial splendour, as the glo-

* This Sermon was preached for the benefit of the Savannah Orphan Asylum.

rious head and union of them both, and the illustrious testimony from the Father resounded on the mount. In this chapter we perceive the feelings of the Redeemer after this splendid scene. A mere man would have been elated by it, and filled with pride: even the greatest of the apostles, after he had been caught up for a short time to heaven, needed "a thorn in the flesh," lest he should be "exalted above measure." But in Jesus, immediately after this manifestation of his glory, we behold the same gentleness and mildness, the same overflowing benevolence which always marked his character. He who had just been conversing with prophets and apostles upon Tabor, immediately utters the language of the most melting tenderness towards the feeble child.

The apostles for a long time could not renounce the favourite opinion of their countrymen, that Messiah was to erect a temporal kingdom, and to be surrounded with worldly splendour and glory. Jesus frequently had combated this delusion; yet they still disputed who should be greatest in this temporal kingdom. To eradicate this prejudice from their minds, the Saviour took a little child, and placed him in the midst of them, and said, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." After this solemn injunction, he addressed them in the words of our text.

Although the opinion of those commentators is probably correct, who suppose that, by "*these little ones*," may be figuratively meant believers resembling these children in meekness, humility, contentedness, and indifference to the world; yet the whole tenour of the history shows that Jesus spoke prima-

rily of those who are children in age. In this sense we shall consider the words in the ensuing discourse.

“Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones.”

We violate this command of Jesus, when we treat children with scorn or neglect, because of their feebleness, their ignorance, or their poverty; when we consider their temporal welfare and their eternal salvation as below our regard and unworthy our attention; when we are unwilling, by our active exertions and our pecuniary contributions, to rescue them from temporal distress, and to promote their best and everlasting interests. The word, “*to despise,*” is used in this extensive sense in numerous passages of holy scripture. “He that despiseth his neighbour, sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he:” (Prov. xiv. 21.) a text which evidently shows, that he who does not exercise mercy to the afflicted, in the estimation of God, despises him; a text from which we may plainly infer that those who do not display by actions as well as by words, compassion to little ones, violates the solemn command of Jesus.

Brethren! I come to you to-day to try the sincerity of your regard to the authority of Jesus. The great design of the Society in whose behalf I solicit you, is to benefit those little ones, in whose welfare the Redeemer takes so tender an interest. If the covetous man, when we speak to him of the wants of these poor orphans, cries, with the hateful spirit of Cain, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” If the insensible soul, that is unaffected by a Saviour’s love, and bears no impression of his benevolence, cries with his crucifiers, when we urge upon him the necessities of these children, “What is that to us? see

ye to that!" yet you, children of benevolence and children of God, will show your abhorrence of such a temper, and will prove by your actions that ye "despise not these little ones."

Nothing can be more tender or affecting than the *motives* by which your Saviour urges your attention to the temporal and spiritual welfare of these children.

1. He tells you, that with whatever contempt they may be treated by the world, *angels do not despise them*, but joyfully guard and watch over them, and minister unto them. These exalted spirits think it no diminution of their dignity to protect and hover round these little ones. In these feeble children they see the heirs of immortality, and they delight to cherish, to prevent from being quenched in everlasting darkness, that divine spark within them, which may hereafter mingle its flames with those of the burning and adoring seraphs before the throne of God. Imitate, then, these angels! like them condescend to those of feeble age and of low estate. You constantly pray that you may perform the will of God on earth as it is done by the angels of heaven; show, by emulating these blessed spirits in their offices of love to these little ones, that you do not mock the living God every time that you present this petition unto him. When you see children, like that of Hagar, ready to perish, fly as did the consolatory angel to this desolate mother, and open, by your charity, streams in the wilderness for their relief. The Saviour has promised to his followers, that in the world to come "they shall be like the angels of God:" but in vain do you hope that you are interested in this promise; in vain do you expect hereafter to share their glory, unless you now possess

their temper, and delight to sooth the anguish of those who are struggling with misfortune, and to snatch from wretchedness those "little ones," who are languishing in want, and who are ready to sink in ignorance and vice.

This motive receives new strength from the consideration, that not merely inferior angels, but the *highest orders* of them minister to children. The scriptures teach us that there are various ranks among these blessed spirits; there are angels and archangels, "thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers." What is the precise distinction between these different orders, we know not; but when our Saviour teaches us, that the angels who minister to "little ones," behold the face of our Father who is in heaven," he shows us that they are the highest rank of celestial intelligences. The phrase is an allusion to the custom of earthly kings, "upon whom not all their servants, but the chief of the nobility do more immediately attend, and stand continually in their presence; for to *behold the face of the king*, and to *stand in his presence*, are phrases used in scripture to signify immediate attendance upon his person."* Our Lord therefore assures us, that the care of these little ones engages even the chief of the angels, those who more immediately attend upon the great King of the universe. Think then for a moment of the dignity and elevation of these spirits; of their power, their purity, and their wisdom; and say, are they not models worthy of your imitation? Is it not more honourable to be like them than to have the selfish and obdurate spirit of hell? If they, though of a different and more exalted nature, tenderly regard these

* Tillotson's Sermons.

“ little ones,” who art thou, worm of the dust, child of corruption, that thou shouldst despise or neglect them!

2. The Redeemer presents to us another and still more powerful motive in the following verse, Despise not these little ones, for they are not despised by Him whom all the angels worship, even the eternal Son of God: “ For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.” The connexion renders these words most impressive. It is as though Jesus had said, ‘ Think not that they are too insignificant for the guardianship of angels; for it was to save such as them, to save the feeble and the fallen, that the Son of God came from heaven.’ The whole history of Jesus proves that he regards children with tenderness; and those therefore who “ despise these little ones,” contemn the Redeemer. When he came into the world, he appeared not, like the first Adam, in the maturity of his powers, but became the babe of Bethlehem. When he entered upon his ministry, he often addressed them in the language of tenderness and affection. He cannot despise them, who cried, “ Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” In the hour of his agony and of his death, he remembered little ones as well as adults, and endured for them sufferings infinitely greater than the tenderest earthly parents could endure. He instituted a precious sacrament, the ordinance of baptism, to be a standing, visible token of his regard to children as long as his church should endure. He forgets them not now that he is seated upon the throne of glory, but communicates many blessings to them on earth, and has borne many thousands of them

to the Paradise of God, where they flourish, beautiful and immortal.—

“ Death may the bands of life unloose,
But can't dissolve his love :
Millions of infant souls compose
The family above.”

Let your sentiments and conduct be conformed to those of the Redeemer. Like him, pity, love, and relieve these little ones. Can you have a safer guide than He, who came down from heaven to teach you the path to immortal glory? Can you have a more illustrious model than that of the adorable Son of God?

3. Jesus presents you with another motive: Despise not these little ones, for the *everlasting Father* does not despise them: “ It is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.” He is their merciful Creator, and from the feelings that he has implanted in the bosoms of earthly parents, he permits us to judge of his own. “ If ye, being evil,” said Jesus to his disciples, “ know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him?” words authorizing us to attribute to God an affection for his offspring as far exceeding that of mortals, as in his nature he is elevated above them. Behold then the tenderness of the mother for her child; and God, who inspired the mother with this tenderness: God, whose benevolence and mercy are as unlimited as his nature; God, who by the precepts of his religion, and the influences of his Spirit, gives greater warmth and deeper energy to those parental feelings which he originally interwove in the very constitution

of man; can *he* despise these little ones? He is not only their Creator, he has also purchased them by that victim of infinite value whom he himself provided: can he then despise them? His goodness has not only brought them into being, but his providence and his angels have watched over them since their first breath. He offers them immortal glory: so soon as they are capable of understanding, he beseeches them to love him and be happy in him; and even if they unkindly, ungratefully, and foolishly reject his invitations and wander from him, still entreats them to return. All the attributes of his nature, all the declarations of his word, all the course of his providence, prove the kindness and the care with which he watches over them. Concur then with your heavenly Father, since it is not his will that any of these little ones should perish, endeavour to pluck them from temporal and from everlasting ruin.

4. “Despise not these little ones;” pity, assist, support them, for (it is the last motive which your Saviour presents to you in the text,) “*whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me.*” ‘Whoso shall be kind to these children from regard to my authority and from love to me, shall be regarded by me as though I myself had received that kindness.’ Is your heart unmoved by this motive? Notwithstanding this declaration of Jesus, can you still treat these little ones with cruelty and disregard? Then, whatever may be your professions and your hopes, you are totally destitute of love to the Redeemer. Christians, you have often thought of the felicity of those happy persons who ministered to the wants of the Saviour while he was upon earth; you have often imagined what would have been your joy

if, with the happy family at Bethany, you could have received him; you have to-day an opportunity of thus ministering to him; he descends from his throne and comes to you as a suppliant in the person of these little ones: He asks; it is man who bestows. Oh, think what he has given to you! He left his heaven, he veiled his glory, he expired on the cross for you; every temporal enjoyment, every spiritual privilege, every eternal hope, comes to you dyed with his blood. Having conferred such infinite obligations on you, he cries to you, "Whosoever shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me:" and can you, dare you, close your hearts against your Saviour, who in them implores your beneficence? If you can, add not to your guilt by impiously mocking him, and crying "Lord, Lord!" if you can, outrage him not, by saying that you are his disciple; if you can, insult him not by pretending to value his atoning blood and his infinite grace; if you can, openly acknowledge that you utterly disregard the transactions of that great day, when all shall be banished to agony unutterable to whom the Redeemer shall say, "Inasmuch as ye did it not," exercised not charity, "to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me!"

I pause, my brethren, and will no longer prevent you from exercising your willing benevolence. I could easily present new motives for kindness to these little ones, but it is unnecessary. There are few among you, (I love to declare it,) whose hearts are so obdurate, that you can behold poverty and distress without a wish to relieve them. Whenever I preach to you on charity, I always preach with the fullest confidence. I know that you will cheer-

fully assist in “enlightening ignorance, and relieving poverty, in implanting virtue in the mind of these little ones, and in warding off the blasts of indigence that might destroy it in the bloom.”

SERMON CXXXIX.



THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

Preached for the benefit of the Savannah Union Society.*

LUKE X. 29—34.

But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? And Jesus answering, said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

THIS parable was originally addressed by our Saviour to a teacher of the law with whom he was conversing, in order to prove to him that true charity

* This society was instituted about seventeen years after the establishment of the colony of Georgia. Its object is the education of orphans, and other helpless children whose parents are unable to support them. The good that it has done and is still doing to the community, is incalculable.

demanded much more than he imagined. But its use is more extensive: it is admirably calculated to teach all men the nature, the extent, and the obligation of benevolence. For this reason we have chosen it on the present occasion.

A teacher of the law inquired of our Redeemer, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus Christ, in reply, asked him what the law which he taught declared on this point: "He said unto him, What is written in the law, how readest thou?" The man replied, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself." Our Saviour commended him for the answer: "Thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt live." But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, "Who is my neighbour?" *Willing to justify himself!* As to his love to God, this "blind teacher of the blind" supposed there could be no doubt; because he had abstained from apostacy and idolatry, and had observed the Jewish ritual, he imagined that he had kept this commandment. But he was conscious that his justification as to the performance of the social and benevolent duties depended upon the sense that should be given to the term *neighbour*: he therefore makes this inquiry, hoping that the answer of Jesus would correspond with the opinion of the Jews, who considered as their neighbours those only who were of their religion, or who were contained within the limits of Palestine. Jesus Christ might in a single sentence have told him, that all men, whatever their character, situation, or religion, are comprehended among those neighbours whom we are bound to love; but knowing that this teacher of the law would not acquiesce in this decision, he

presents to him this parable, in which this truth is clothed in images so striking, that it is impossible not to acknowledge it.

“ A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.” This unhappy man was extended along the road, when *by chance* a priest came that way. If the unfortunate traveller retained any knowledge, he certainly could not doubt, on seeing a man of his nation, and that man a priest, that he was about to receive all the succour of which he had need. It was not necessary that he should solicit the charity of him who was approaching : his situation spoke for him ; his deadly paleness, his shed blood, his open wounds, pleaded in his behalf. He perhaps already inwardly blessed Providence for taking pity on him, and conducting on this road a man whom his nation, his religion, his character, engaged to succour him ; but he was deceived in expecting succour from a heart more hard and inhuman than that of the thieves who had wounded him. Yes ! this action of the priest is more cruel than that of these murderers. They, hardened in guilt, inured to blood and crime, and desirous of gain, acted in consistence with their character. But the priest, born and educated at the foot of the altar ; the minister of a God who is the Father and Creator of all men ; professing and perhaps boasting of his inviolable attachment to religion ; is insensible to the emotions of nature, and passes on the other side of the way. Barbarian ! whither goest thou ? Darest thou take another road than that into which God has led thee for thy happiness, and for the consolation of the unhappy object that lies before

thee? Is there any excuse, any pretext, that thou canst plead for neglecting him? Dost thou fear to be surprised in this office of charity, and treated in the same manner with this unhappy person? But couldst thou shed thy blood in a situation more honourable or more acceptable to God, than while stanching that of thy brother? Hast thou any pressing business which admits of no delay? But there is no occupation which can be put in parallel with this. Wert thou even about to perform the functions of thine office, and going to offer some sacrifice to the Lord, this afflictive spectacle dispenses thee from it, for "mercy is better than sacrifice." But why do I speak? He has departed, and is already lost from our view. Another person appears: perhaps he will be more charitable.

It is a Levite who approaches, but who, following the footsteps of the priest, is careful not to approach too near. As soon as he perceives this wounded body, he flies from it with more rapidity than if it exhaled the strongest infection! He also passed on the other side. It must be confessed, my brethren, that the choice which the Saviour makes of two ecclesiastics, to serve as examples of the want of charity, is not honourable to the Jewish clergy. It is certain that, while the Redeemer was upon earth, the ministers of religion were hard-hearted, vindictive, and sanguinary. Were there no other proof of this than their persecutions of Jesus, this alone would be sufficient. The excesses and cruelties which were committed at the last siege of Jerusalem, had, in part, for their authors, people of the sacerdotal race. Careless, except of the exterior of religion; reducing all piety to certain ceremonials; tything, with scrupulous accuracy, the mint, annise, and

cummin; the great and solid virtues, and especially charity, were esteemed of no consequence: for these reasons, the Saviour embraced every opportunity of reproaching them for their odious conduct. But let us return to the dying traveller, and see whence he will receive that succour so long and so vainly expected.

“ A certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came that way.” What a painful spectacle to the dying man! A Samaritan! Does he come to insult the misery of the Jew? Does he come to feast his eyes with the sight of an expiring enemy? Ah! why have not the thieves rather consummated their crime, than left this business to one so execrable as a Samaritan? Such were probably the thoughts, and perhaps the expressions, of the prejudiced teacher whom Jesus addressed. The reciprocal enmity between the Samaritans and the Jews, is well known. It appears from the whole history of Josephus, and from various parts of the New Testament. The evangelists tell us that they had no intercourse together. The Samaritan woman at Sichem expressed her surprise that Jesus Christ should ask of her water to drink. The Jews, offended at the Redeemer, called him a Samaritan, not being able to use any term more reproachful. The Son of God chose then a Samaritan, rather than any other stranger, because, if he could force the Jew to grant that the Samaritan, whom he considered as his greatest enemy, could, nevertheless, be his neighbour, it would follow, that much more ought the rest of men to be so esteemed.

The Samaritan approaches, and “ hath compassion on him.” The emotions of humanity are manifested where they were least expected. This compassionate stranger cannot, with a dry eye and

a cold indifference, view the distresses, even of an enemy. But it is not merely a mechanical impression, which is derived from the senses, and which is dissipated in a moment, that is felt by this benevolent man. The duration and the efficacy of his compassion are the traits which entitle it to our praise. It is not sufficient externally to be moved at the view of the miseries of others; this is only the preliminary, the commencement of charity. Useless comforters, who come with a sympathizing countenance, with weeping eyes, and perhaps with an affected heart, to soften our sorrows, who even assure us that you divide them with us, have you no succours that are more real to bestow upon us? "And he went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and sat him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him." This is true charity; this is real consolation; where actions as well as words attest the sincerity of our feelings.

This is not all; the beneficence of the Samaritan is not bounded to the present; he is not contented with having plucked the Jew from the arms of death, he resolves to finish his benevolent work, by procuring his perfect restoration; and, being obliged to continue his journey, he says to the host, "Take care of him, and whatever thou spendest, when I come again I will pay thee." This foresight and attention to the future, consummates his generosity. By desisting from any thing which we have commenced, we lose all the fruit of what we have done. This is peculiarly the case with charity. In numberless cases we might as well do nothing, as to do good by halves; yet this defect is found in the alms of very many persons. A pressing necessity

will draw from them some little aid; but, as soon as the urgency of this necessity has passed, they discontinue their benevolence. Then the arid earth, the surface of which they had scarcely watered, is immediately dried up and parched. Generous benefactors! who are not satisfied till you have perfectly finished your benevolent designs; you alone act like the Samaritan!

Jesus, having finished the parable, inquires of the teacher of the law, "Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go and do thou likewise."

From this parable, and the direction with which the Saviour concludes it, we are taught two important lessons:

I. That all men, without exception, are our neighbours, and, as such, have a claim to our love.

II. That all who are in need should experience from us a charity similar to that of the Samaritan.

The first of these points we shall now omit, and request your attention only to the second.

The miserable and unhappy ought to feel the effects of our charity. *Go*, says the Saviour, *and do likewise*; that is, take for your model the charitable conduct of the Samaritan, and let no prejudice or inconvenience prevent you from succouring and relieving the unhappy. To render this truth more distinct, it will be proper for us to attend to these two points:

I. For what reason must we do good to the miserable? And,

II. In what manner must we perform this duty?

1. In the world we see many benefits conferred; but if we examine the different motives from which they spring, we shall find few that arise from Christian charity. Some of these motives are vicious; others, though good in themselves, are insufficient.

To give through ostentation, and in order to appear generous and beneficent, is to perform an action which cannot be good, because it proceeds from an evil principle. The most beautiful appearances of compassion are of no avail, if they spring from pride. Men may be dazzled by them, but God cannot be deceived. The action of the Samaritan is of a different kind. He expected no eulogium; he thought not of increasing his reputation by what he did; God alone was the witness of it; and this action would never have come to the knowledge of men, if Jesus had not revealed it. Happy they, whose good deeds are apparently buried in oblivion: the Supreme Judge will at last draw them from this oblivion in the presence of the universe.

Sometimes persons give through interested motives. They see a man in misery, but they know also that he has resources which will enable him to rise above this misery; they therefore bestow something upon him, with the hope of being hereafter abundantly recompensed. Such persons do not imitate the Samaritan: he delivers from death a man from whom he could expect nothing; and no sooner sees him in safety, than he continues his course, without making himself known.

There are motives more noble, I mean those of blood and friendship, which yet are insufficient to constitute Christian charity. For those who possess our afflictions, we will make great sacrifices; we will use every exertion to succour them in dis-

ress, and relieve them in affliction. But laudable as is such conduct, something more is necessary, if we would act like the Samaritan. He is not impelled by the ties of blood; he does good to a Jew, to one with whom his nation never would contract any alliance whence consanguinity could result. It is not friendship which incites him: on the contrary, he sees before him a mortal enemy, one who detests him and his people. Nobody would have been surprised, if, like the priest and the levite, he had continued his course; and (what would have weighed strongly with many men,) nobody would have known it. Undeceive yourselves then, all those of you who applaud yourselves inwardly for having relieved this or that unhappy person; if you discover in your heart only some of the motives that I have mentioned, your charity is very far from equalling that of the Samaritan. But what then were his principles and motives? How must we act to "do likewise?" When you perform acts of charity, you must do them from a love to God, and a love to your neighbour. These are the two great foundations upon which our benevolent deeds must be supported, if we wish them to be acceptable to God.

A love to God ought to guide and determine us in the assistance which we afford to the miserable. He has most clearly declared, that he is pleased in seeing creatures reciprocally aiding each other: and to what higher happiness can a creature aspire, than to please this Supreme Being? To do good to others is to be in our measure on earth, the image of that merciful Creator and Benefactor of men, who continually showers down his blessings upon us. How glorious a conformity! Is there any thing which we shall not sacrifice to attain to it? Is there

any thing more worthy of the cares and solicitude of man, than to resemble God in one of his principal and most endearing attributes? Besides, is it not the property of God that we distribute? Does it belong to us by any other title than that of stewards? And is it not confided to us that we may distribute part of it to the indigent and afflicted? Do we make too great a sacrifice to God when we give for his sake what properly does not belong to us? And is it not the richest grace in him, that he condescends to accept this sacrifice when we make it with cheerfulness, and from a principle of love to him? Oh, how powerful is this motive of love to God! If our hearts were thoroughly penetrated by it, so many objects of charity would not in vain solicit our aid.

Another foundation of Christian charity, another motive to gospel benevolence, is the *love of our neighbour*. But if it be our duty to love them, we cannot refuse to them the assistance which they need. Works of beneficence and charity are not arbitrary; they are debts which we pay. Learn this, you who boast to the unhappy of the services which you render to them. Know, that you do but your duty; a duty that the Saviour recalls to you in those forcible words, "Go, and do likewise;" a duty that is taught us by every thing that surrounds us; by the need which we have of the constant grace and benediction of God, of the succour and assistance of other men. Nature, reason, religion, every thing concurs to show that misery has a lawful claim upon us. I know that it does not become the wretched to urge this claim, since God calls them to patience and humility. But still their condition speaks for them, and threatens with a condemnation without mercy those who show no mercy to them. To be true imi-

tators of the Samaritan, then, we must act from love to God and love to our neighbour.

2. There still remain to be considered the principal rules of beneficence, and *the manner of exercising it.*

We can grant to the wretched three principal kinds of aid: assisting them with our counsels, with our property, and with our personal services. I shall consider only the two last, because the conduct of the Samaritan furnishes us with a model of them. To relieve the Jew, he exposes himself, by stopping in a dangerous place; with his own hands he stanches his blood, binds up his wounds, and places him upon his beast. These are personal succours. He gives money for his support, and promises more if necessary. These are pecuniary succours.

To follow the precept of Jesus Christ, and the example of this charitable traveller, we should be always ready to bestow part of our wealth on the unhappy. In making these gifts, we should use promptitude and gentleness. To give *promptly*, highly increases the value of the gift. There are extremities so great, that if we delay our aid, it comes too late. If the Samaritan had paused to consider the Jew weltering in his blood, if he had hesitated some time whether to approach him, he would probably have found him without motion or life. In similar cases, we are responsible for the accidents caused by our delay, and all our subsequent efforts to repair them are vain. Besides, by giving promptly, we save the wretched from one of the greatest pains of their situation, that of pressing, urging, and soliciting. How pleasant is it to them, to see their desires anticipated, or to feel the effects

of a charity scarcely implored ! What more mortifying to them than to be obliged again and again to display their misery ; to recount all the circumstances of it ; and to endeavour to place it in such a light as to soften an obdurate heart !

To give with *gentleness*, is a characteristic not less essential. The air and the manner often oblige more than the gift, however valuable it may be. It is inconceivable that people who give, who give largely, who give even with joy, should poison their favours by a haughtiness, and rudeness of manner which deeply wounds the soul of the unhappy. Yet such instances are every day seen. If you would imitate the Samaritan, avoid this defect, and give with cheerfulness, with mildness, and affection.

I need say but one word on personal services, because most of the remarks which have been made will apply to them. Like the Samaritan be ready, not only to relieve the indigent with your fortune, but to perform also those offices of kindness, which will comfort the sick, encourage the desponding, and sooth the afflicted : thus will you obey the command of your Saviour, "*Go and do likewise.*"

I might now safely leave it to yourselves to apply the foregoing discourse to the present occasion, for I am well persuaded that there is no necessity to importune you to give liberally for the support of this valuable institution. It rose in the midst of you. Charity reared it—charity has supported it—and charity will still sustain it. To give to such an establishment is disinterested benevolence, since these children can make you no return but thanks and good wishes. It is real benevolence : those poor children who are maintained by the asylum are friendless and helpless ; they are poor orphans,

since if they have parents, these parents cannot support them. These children ask of you assistance; deny them not their supplication, and they in their turn will raise their little hands to heaven, and will solicit in your behalf the divine benediction. God will hear their prayer, and shed down his blessings upon you.

Yes, my dear children! this is your duty, a duty which I trust you will never forget. Pray God for your generous benefactors; cherish an eternal gratitude for them; let them not be disappointed in the wishes and hopes which they form, that you will one day be useful members of society, and disposed to do for others what they now do for you, "Fear and love God, and keep his commandments." Thus shall you be happy in life, and through eternity.

For you, my brethren, who are about to exercise your charity, we pray God to recompense you an hundred fold; and to grant, that, if by any of those unexpected reverses of fortune, which we daily witness, you, or your children, or your children's children, should be reduced to distress, you may never want active and benevolent friends; you may never need some charitable Samaritan to bind up the wounds of your soul, and relieve your distresses.

SERMON CXL.



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION.



EPHESIANS VI. 4.

And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

WHEN in any churches where pure religion has once flourished, we behold corrupt manners and licentious sentiments, a diminution in the zeal and number of the disciples of Jesus, and an augmentation of the votaries of vanity and sin; we shall generally find that this lamentable degeneracy has been caused in a great degree by a neglect of Christian education. If in such places we would wish to restore the holiness and fervour of former times, perhaps no single means can be employed, that is so efficacious, as a strict and faithful regard to this duty.

A subject of such consequence deserves our serious consideration. Favour us then with your attention while we inquire,

I. What is implied in a Christian education; and

II. What are those motives which should excite parents to bestow it upon their children.

The nature of this duty, and the inducements which should urge us to comply with it, form then the whole division of the ensuing discourse.

I. What then is implied in a Christian education? What is that duty to which St. Paul exhorts parents, when he charges them “not to provoke their children to wrath, but to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?” This Christian education, this sacred duty, includes these four things: *wise discipline, salutary instruction, holy example, fervent prayer.*

1. *A wise discipline* is essential to a Christian education. In vain will you hope to lead your children in the ways of piety, if you do not begin while they are yet young, to exercise over them a strict but affectionate discipline; if you do not teach them from the very cradle, that instead of acting according to their own wayward fancies, they are to be regulated by the will of God, and their parents. Give the reins to their inclinations, suffer them to act as they please, let them have no other restraint than their own wishes and desires, and they are in the direct road to misery, to vice, and to perdition: they will perhaps live to curse that weak fondness, which strengthened vicious habits, and plunged them into guilt; to execrate those criminal compliances which have laid the foundation of their unhappiness, by cherishing furious passions, and incapacitating them to bear with disappointment. Govern them then with a firm and steady hand. Begin to bend the twig while it is yet flexible; in a few years it will become a sturdy oak, and resist all your efforts. The vicious propensities of children, the fruit of

their original corruption, are early to be discerned. On their first appearance, endeavour to extirpate them, and exercise your authority to prevent the formation of criminal habits. Keep a watch over their tongues. Do not, like so many injudicious parents, encourage lying or ill-nature, by smiling at a false or malignant expression, if it have some degree of smartness. Do not nourish their pride by excessive commendation and flattery, by loading them with pageantry and gorgeous ornaments. Do not cultivate their revenge, by teaching them to direct their feeble yet malicious strokes, against the persons or things that have injured them. Do not inspire a relentless and tyrannical disposition, by permitting them to torture various species of animals. Do not encourage a worldly spirit, by continually proposing the riches or honours of earth, as the recompense which they may expect for their goodness, while the favour of God is scarcely ever mentioned as an object worthy to be aspired after. Do not suffer them to be exposed to unnecessary temptations, which, while their judgment is immature, and their reason without the aids of experience, will almost inevitably plunge them into sin. But, on the contrary, by a steady exercise of discipline, accustom them to the utmost sincerity, justice, and benevolence in their intercourse with their companions. Habituate them to control their passions and wishes. Accustom them to value time, and to flee from indolence, that canker of virtue and destroyer of the soul. Teach them to be modest, to be humble, and exemplary in their deportment; to reverence the ordinances and institutions of religion; and to pray constantly to their Heavenly Father. Thus strive, by an unintermitted course of discipline, to implant vir-

tuous habits, to prevent Satan from gaining new authority in their souls, and to regulate their outward conduct; and you have great ground to hope that whilst you are thus employed, God will shed down his Holy Spirit to bless your exertions, and to change the hearts of your offspring.

When I speak of the necessity of discipline, I am not recommending an inhuman severity. This will "provoke them to wrath," and irritate instead of reforming them. Let your government be like that of our Father in heaven; mild, gentle, affectionate, springing from love and exercised in mercy; yet not weakly withholding reproof and chastisement when they are necessary. In inflicting this punishment, however, be careful to make your children feel that you do it in the name of God, from a hatred of sin, and for their good. Be firm, but not furious; let your eye melt with sorrow, but not sparkle with rage; let your tongue express your regret and pity, but not pour out bitter and passionate reproaches. If your children perceive that you are influenced by passion, and not by reason and religion, your authority will become odious or contemptible.

Let your discipline be just and equal; make no invidious distinctions between your children; indulge no partial affection for one child in preference to another equally deserving. Let punishment be proportioned to faults; punish those sins that are immediately against God, more severely than those that are against you. Let wilful and habitual vices be treated with greater severity than those that are more unintentional and rare. Preserve this family-justice, or your punishments will harden, instead of amending your children.

Finally: study carefully the tempers of your children, and diversify your discipline according to the diversity of their tempers. Let it be more mild or rigorous, according as the gentleness or stubbornness of their dispositions requires one or the other of these modes of treatment.

This is the first thing that is included in a Christian education: a wise discipline.

2. A Christian education requires the diligent *instruction* of children in the principles of our holy religion. It is possible that a person may know the doctrines of Christianity and yet be unholy; but it is impossible that he should be entirely ignorant of them, and yet be holy. The illumination of the mind always must and does precede the sanctification of the heart. Be careful then to give your offspring that knowledge and information which they must have before they can understandingly embrace the offers of salvation, and become the children of God; and if in discharging this duty you are animated by proper motives, you have reason to hope for the accompanying influences of the Holy Spirit to bring them "from darkness into marvellous light." And even though this great effect should not immediately be produced, yet still your labours are not in vain. That religious knowledge, with which you store their minds, will be a powerful guard against temptation, a strong incentive to duty, a means which God may hereafter employ for their conversion. Though they now neglect your instructions, yet they will not be able entirely to efface them. They may hereafter be forcibly brought to their remembrance by the Holy Ghost, and produce a saving conversion. It is a just observation of a pious and

judicious writer,* that “ conversions in advanced life are most commonly the resurrection of those seeds which were sown in infancy, but had long been stifled by the violence of youthful passions, or the pursuits of ambition, and the hurry of an active life.”

Parents, it is not left to your choice whether or not you will afford this instruction to your children. God in innumerable places enjoins it upon you. “ These my words ye shall teach unto your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way ; when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.” (Deut. xi. 18, 19.) “ God hath established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers that they should make them known to their children ; that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children, that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.” (Psalm lxxviii. 5. 4. 7.)

If then you would “ bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,” you must afford them religious instructions, before their minds are pre-occupied by errors and prejudices. Early teach them their miserable and corrupted state by nature. When their little limbs are afflicted with pain, when sorrow forces tears from their eyes, when any distress assails them, tell them that this pain, this sorrow, this distress, are the fruits and the chastisements of sin. Tell them how odious this sin is to God, point them to the flames of the abyss which it has kindled. Reveal to them also the abounding

* Dr. Witherspoon.

grace of God; show them how he has given us his Son to save us from hell, and raise us to glory; and declare to them the splendours of that crown which he will give to all that love and serve him. Let these and similar truths be proposed to them in their tenderest years; not as subjects of discussion, but as historic facts; not as points that they are immediately to examine and understand, but as the testimony of God, which is to be received by them with full belief.

Be careful that in this first period of their life, you do not give them a disgust to religion, by inculcating it in a gloomy and injudicious manner. Proportion your instructions to their capacities. In their earliest years they will be unable to understand your abstract reasonings or your subtle explanations of doctrinal points. By forcing them frequently to attend to these reasonings and explanations, at that period when your words are to them unintelligible sounds which excite no clear ideas, you render piety dry and wearisome; you make it a task and a burden, from which they rejoice to be released. Leave then this mode of instruction till they are able to comprehend you; and begin by recounting to them those interesting histories on which our religion is founded, and which are level to the weakest capacities. If you would give them striking ideas of the greatness, the mercy, and justice of God, do not enter into a laboured philosophical discussion, but relate to them some of the impressive events which illustrate these perfections. If you would give them a just representation of virtue, and an inclination to practise it, enter into no toilsome analysis, but present to them some touching incidents in the lives of the saints. Dwell fre-

quently on the actions of our divine Saviour, on his birth, his sufferings, his death, his resurrection, and ascension. This picture will display, infinitely better than all your profound reasoning, the holiness and tender mercies of God; this will be the most perfect and admirable model of obedience to God, of charity to a guilty world, of humility, of self-denial, of resignation, of magnanimity under sufferings and persecutions. These histories properly related, will awaken the attention and feeling of your offspring, and will make the profoundest impression upon their mind and heart. You will behold them moved even to tears; their little hearts will glow with gratitude and love; their tongues will lisp forth the praises of their gracious Creator and blessed Saviour; and their feeble hands be lifted up to the throne of their heavenly Friend.

As the understandings of your children are developed, and as their minds expand, teach them, or cause them to be taught, the proofs of those sentiments which they had received as facts, revealed by God, and the doctrines which grow out of those histories in which they have been instructed. Teach them, or cause them to be taught, the reasons why we receive our religion as divine; and show them how superficial and ungrounded, are the objections of its adversaries. Teach them, or cause them to be taught, the high and sublime doctrines of this religion; show them, that though the utmost penetration of the human mind cannot fully comprehend or explain many of these doctrines, yet nevertheless, the utmost subtlety of the human mind cannot find any thing in them contradictory to reason. Teach them, or cause them to be taught, what are the particular tenets embraced by that communion in which

they were born, and the reasons which lead you to suppose that they are the tenets inculcated by the word of God. In one word, instruct them in every thing that is connected with Christianity, so that they may be ready to "give a reason of the hope that is in them."

Thus educated, they will be able to enter the world with little danger of being seduced into error; they will be able to repel the assaults of the infidel and the fallacies of the enthusiast; they will, by the blessing of God, become firm and rational believers, and pillars of the church.

Ah! my brethren, is this the manner in which you educate your children? Do you not strive more to teach them how to attain to opulence and dignity in the world, than how to obtain the heavenly inheritance? Do you not instruct them in almost every other science with greater care, than in the science of salvation? You spare no pains nor expense, that your sons may be made acquainted with languages, arts, or professions; and can you be indifferent, in the mean time, whether they speak the language of heaven or hell; whether or not they are initiated in the art of holy living; whether they have the profession of a Christian soldier, or a slave of Satan? You instruct your daughters in the regulation of domestic economy, or in the gayer and more light accomplishments of the age. Ah! while they are so "careful about many things," why will you not teach them that "one thing is needful?" Why will you not show them how to obtain that greatest and most solid of accomplishments, the image of God, the impress of heaven? This is the second thing that is included in a Christian education: Salutory Instruction.

3. In a Christian education, it is necessary for parents to illustrate their precepts by *personal example*. Example has at all times an astonishing influence upon us; but in our early years, when we have no fixed habits, when we are incapable of discerning the intrinsic propriety of actions, we are formed almost entirely by imitation. This is our preceptor before we can reason, nay, before we can speak. If your own practice be inconsistent with religion, the remonstrances of conscience will prevent you from faithfully reproofing in your children, those vices of which you are guilty; and a wish to palliate your own corruptions, will hinder you from advising them with impartiality. And even if this effect be not produced, even if your reproofs be faithful, and your advices impartial, yet while your conduct contradicts them, you induce your offspring to question the sincerity of your assertions, or to doubt of the possibility of complying with your directions; you lead them to suppose that religion consists, not in a steady and uniform practice of its duties, but in frequently conversing of its doctrines and obligations. While your language and life are thus contradictory, as a Scotch divine forcibly observes, “you point them with your finger on the road to heaven; you take them by the hand, and lead them to that of hell.” No, no, miserable mother! you may give your children the most wise and pious instructions, but you have no reason to hope that these instructions will be blest, while your whole behaviour proves that you despise and scorn them. What though you tell your offspring that God is supremely to be loved, that the salvation of their soul should be their chief concern, will they not esteem these teachings to be unmeaning and hypocritical

cant, whilst they see you careless of God, neglectful of the concerns of your soul, inordinately attached to the world, and pursuing with shameful avidity, its vanities, its pleasures, and its riches? No, no, wretched father! whilst you are profane, licentious, immoral, neglectful of family prayer or private devotion, you need not expect that your cold advices will lead your children to holiness and to God. Deriving their character from surrounding objects, they will not fail to imitate you to whom they are so strictly united, whom from motives so various, they are led to resemble. They will not long resist the seductions of vice, when you go before them in iniquity, and tempt them to plunge into the fearful abyss. This is the third thing that is included in a Christian education: Holy Example.

4. Finally, all your exertions will be in vain, unless you frequently *pray* to God for his direction, assistance, and blessing. So many virtues are requisite for the proper discharge of this duty, that if we rely upon our own sufficiency, we shall certainly fail. We shall relax in that prudence, that diligence, that affection, without which our labours will be useless. And even though this were not the case, even though we could do every thing that we ought to do, without calling down God to our aid; yet still in vain should we plant and water, except he gave the increase; and he has not engaged to give it to us, except as an answer to our prayers. Frequently, then, pour out your petitions to that God who pitieth us as a father pitieth his children; and who alone "maketh wise the simple." Beseech him to teach you how to discharge your duty to your children, and to "direct the hearts of your children in the ways of his laws and the works of his command-

ments." Do not content yourself with making these supplications in the family and closet, but at particular times take your children apart: tell them the importance and necessity of religion; tell them how it would cheer your hearts to see them walk in the ways of godliness; and then in their presence and their behalf, pour out before God the tender and impassioned wishes of your heart, the ardent desires of your affectionate soul.

Thus let your prayers continually ascend: God will answer them in mercy, and you will find that your "labours have not been in vain in the Lord."

This is the last thing included in a Christian education: Fervent Prayers.

Parents, it is no easy matter to discharge these weighty duties. Thus to "bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," requires constant care, persevering diligence, unremitting attention. Yet do not, on this account, desist from your labours. The task is difficult, but the motives to enforce it are impressive. We are, in the

Ild. Division of our discourse, to present you with a few of these motives.

1. Are you *zealous for the prosperity of Zion*? Have you any regard for the interests of the Saviour? Be careful then to confer a pious education upon your children. Reflect what you are doing, while you suffer them to grow up in ignorance and in vice. You are preparing them to dishonour God, to wound the hearts of the pious, to strengthen the cause of irreligion. You are preparing them as fit instruments in the hands of Satan, to cast reproach upon piety, and to assail the kingdom of the blessed Saviour. Ah! could you with prophetic vision look forward into futurity, what would you behold? You would

see that son, whose passions you now suffer to be uncontrolled, whose mind you now suffer to be unstored with religious knowledge; you would see him a hardened sinner, encouraging others in guilt, perhaps scoffing at the name of the Redeemer, and trampling upon his cross. You would see that daughter, whom you educate in carelessness and folly, absorbed by the vanities of the world, neglectful of God and her soul, a determined opposer to a holy life. Ah, slothful father, hypocritical mother! dare you pretend that you are the friends of Jesus, whilst you are thus careless of advancing his interests; whilst you are educating your offspring to become his enemies? Go, leave the camp of Israel! Fight openly, as you do in reality, under the banner of the adversaries of Jesus: do not deceitfully pretend that you are submissive to the Captain of our salvation, whilst you are secretly strengthening the cause of his enemies!

On the contrary, what an encouragement is it to diligence in this duty to reflect, that, through the efficacious grace of God, your labours may be blest, so as to promote the good of the church, and the glory of the Redeemer. That son, over whom you now watch with such anxiety, whose passions you constantly strive to regulate, whose mind you endeavour to inform with the truths of God, whose wants and necessities you unceasingly spread before your heavenly Father, whom you by faith give up, and dedicate to the Lord; this son may, through the divine blessing upon your virtuous exertions, become "a burning and a shining light;" an eminent servant of the Lord, an intrepid soldier of the cross. If he remain a private Christian, his example, his instructions, and his prayers, will prove a blessing to his

neighbours and friends; will be influential in "rearing Zion from the dust," and in advancing the glory of the blessed Saviour. If he be called to assume the sacred office, his labours may be blest to the conversion and edification of numerous souls; the blessings of many that were ready to perish, but whom God by him plucked from the burning, and made to exalt his infinite glories and perfections, shall descend upon the head of you, the faithful father or the pious mother, who "brought up this child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." "Many a congregation," says the excellent Baxter, "that is happily fed with the bread of life, may thank God for the endeavours of some poor man or woman, that trained up a child in the ways of God, to become their holy and faithful teacher."

That daughter also, over whom you watch with parental fondness and with Christian care; in whose breast you early strive to implant holy habits and virtuous desires; whose warm affections and lively passions, you endeavour to direct towards their true objects, the blessed God and compassionate Saviour; whose mind you store with the principles of virtue and religion; for whom your fervent prayers daily rise up before Almighty God; the name of this daughter may be joined with those of the numberless female worthies, who by their mild and gentle persuasions, and their excellent examples, have strengthened the cause of the Redeemer, encouraged the saints, and brought sinners to reflection. Her conduct as a child, as a wife, and a mother, may afford a living proof of the excellency of the religion of Christ, and may eminently tend to strengthen his cause. I ask you then again, are you zealous for the prosperity of Zion? Have you any regard for

the interests of Jesus? "Bring up your children in his nurture and admonition," that they may be the instruments of glorifying him, and promoting his kingdom in the world.

2. Perhaps there are some of you who feel little affected by this motive; let me then urge you by another consideration: Have you any regard to the public prosperity, to the honour and interest of your country? In order to promote this prosperity, to advance this honour and interest, "bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." If you leave a pious generation to succeed you, the blessing of God will rest upon the land which they inhabit; their "righteousness will exalt the nation," (Prov. xiv. 34.) and "no weapon formed against it shall prosper." (Is. liv. 17.) But if, on the contrary, you suffer those who are to take your place in the state when your head is laid in the dust, to grow up in carelessness and irreligion, their "sin will be the reproach of this people;" (Prov. xiv. 34.) their sin will call down the judgments of God upon it. If your offspring be pious, they will discharge the duties that belong to the station which they shall occupy, in such a manner as to promote the public tranquillity and happiness. Acting under the eye of the Judge of all the earth, and in the prospect of that account which they must render unto him, they will, whether as rulers or as subjects, endeavour to promote the public felicity, and to be blessings in their day and generation. But if your offspring have not these restraints; if you have never laboured to inspire them with sincere love to God, and warm charity to man; if you have never striven to implant in their hearts the sentiments of virtue, and to control the fury of their passions: is there not cause to

fear that they may be the scourges of their country ; that they may be regardless of every thing but their own gratification ; that they may be incendiaries, or disturbers of the public peace ? Is there not cause to fear, that the curses of a bleeding country, made unhappy, immediately by their means, but ultimately by you, will pursue you even to the grave ? Do you then love your country, and wish for its prosperity ? Give to your children a pious education ; lay upon them early the restraints of religion ; and then, when you lie down in the grave, and they become the rulers, the legislators, and citizens of the nation, they will be animated by proper motives ; they will conscientiously aim at the public weal, and the blessing of God Most High will crown their efforts with success.

3. Do you *shudder at the crime of perjury* ? Do you tremble at the dreadful guilt, the overwhelming punishment, of that man who dares to sport with the solemn sanctions of an oath ? Parents, you have bound your souls by a sacred oath ; whether you have fulfilled it, the Searcher of hearts well knoweth, and all mankind will know in the day of judgment. When you offered your child to God in the holy ordinance of baptism, you then solemnly vowed and swore, that you would bring it up in the “nurture and admonition of the Lord ;” and you invoked this great God to witness your vow, and to punish the violation of it. Dare you wilfully and habitually violate these obligations ? Can you be careless of the pious education of your children, and yet fail to tremble at that vengeance which shall weigh down the perjured soul to deep perdition ? When you suffer weeks and months to pass without affording pious instructions and advices to your offspring,

without offering your prayers to God, in their presence and in their behalf, without showing them the example of a holy life; does not conscience sometimes cry to you, 'Is it thus that you fulfil your baptismal vow? Is it thus that you perform that solemn oath, taken in the presence of God, of angels, and of men? Is it thus that you execute your engagement to that Lord, who hath recorded your promises in the book of remembrance, and will produce them to you in the day of retribution?' Do you then tremble at perjury? Give to your children a pious education, and thus fulfil your oath.

4. Let me urge you to this duty, from a *regard to the temporal and eternal welfare of your children*. The temporal happiness of your offspring depends, in a great degree, upon their pious education. Unless their minds are fortified by holy instructions, and their hearts impressed with religious sentiments, they will run heedlessly on in the paths of folly and vice, strangers to those high joys which flow from an approving conscience, from communion with God, and from a foretaste of heaven. And besides all this, there is great danger that they indulge those gross and abominable crimes, which will bring down upon them, not only the vengeance of God, but also the execration of their fellow-men. Unrestrained by sentiments of piety, uncontrolled by a conscience which has never been enlightened; what is to prevent them from being plunged into infamy by their unbridled passions? Examine the registers of guilt, read the lives of those men who by a public execution have expiated for their violation of the laws; do you not find numbers of them cursing their parents for bringing them to this state, by neglecting to give them a pious education? And with respect to the

other sex, who are the females whose polluted courses have covered their families with ignominy, and themselves with contempt? Are they not those who were not taught in youth to reverence the God of purity? And even if your children should all be saved (as we fervently desire and pray that they all may be saved) from these dreadful excesses, yet still they may, by the habitual indulgence of other sins less odious in themselves, procure for themselves misery and shame. I beseech you to look around you in the world; attend to the lives of those persons who are most loaded with the contempt and the disdain of society. Are they not most generally those who have been sent into the world by their parents unprotected by pious habits and religious precepts? Ye fathers! whose love for your children is warm and disinterested; ye mothers! whose felicity is intimately connected with their happiness, can you be so blind and so cruel to them, as to expose your beloved offspring to so deplorable a state?

But, supposing that none of these fears should ever be realized; supposing that your children, who are thus neglected by you, should live caressed and applauded by men, the favourites of the world; yet still death will, by and by, approach them; death, for which you never taught them to prepare; death, which spares not the favourites of earth; which is the entrance into eternal torments for all that are not interested in Jesus Christ. Come then, careless and neglectful parents, who are indulging in your children a thoughtlessness and inattention to the concerns of their souls; come and let us view your children contending with death; let us see what happiness you have secured for them. Behold them weighed down by infirmities of body, harassed by

anxieties of mind, lashed by the stings of conscience. They look back upon the past with confusion; they tremble to remember "that they glorified not God, in whom their breath was, and whose are all their ways." (Dan. v. 23.) They cast their eyes towards the future, and see nothing but images of horror. Whilst shuddering and affrighted at beholding the depth of the gulf into which they are about to plunge, they cast looks of reproach and anguish upon you. 'Of what avail,' they cry to you, 'of what avail are now all the riches, the honours, and pleasures of the world, which you were anxious to procure for me; why did you not tell me that a single Christ was better than all earthly friends? Why did you not tell me of the importance of eternal things? I now see all their consequence; but I see it too late. Fool that I was, to be blinded and rendered careless by you! but my self-reproaches are now unavailing: the earth vanishes; the frowning Judge appears; hell opens to receive me.'

Thus they die in horror, and driven for ever from the presence of God, "lift up their eyes, being in torments." Parents, can any of you be so inhuman, so barbarous, so monstrous, as to neglect your children, and prepare for them this fearful doom?

Let me hope better things of you; let me hope that you will strive to lead them early to God; be faithful, and God has promised to bless your exertions. Then your children cannot fail to be happy; they will have the Lord as their friend, their guard, and protector; and Jesus Christ as their high-priest, their advocate, and redeemer. They will have those true riches which endure for ever; those durable honours which eternity will not impair; those ravishing pleasures which flow at God's

right hand. In life, they will be honoured and respected by the wise and good: in death, they will be tranquil and serene; for they will be supported by those sentiments of religion which were early felt by them, and upheld by that Saviour to whom you early directed their thoughts, and their desires. And beyond the grave they shall be ever with the Lord; ever undefiled by sin, and unassailed by grief. Do you then love your children? "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" and thus you will secure for them a happy life, a joyous death, and a triumphant eternity.

5. Finally, do you love yourselves? Do you wish to obtain the highest pleasures, and avoid the severest pains? Give your children a pious education. If the blessing of God on your tender care, render your offspring virtuous and holy, what pure delights will you experience! Their amiable and devout conduct will be a cordial to your soul, amidst the pains and decrepitude of years; the applause bestowed upon them, will afford joy to you; they will never slight, disregard, nor dishonour you; but will strive, by every grateful and delicate attention, by every expression of filial love, ennobled by religion, to gild the evening of your days. "Happy parent! your years shall be prolonged, not, as it often happens, to see your comforts fall from you one by one, and to become at once old and destitute; but to taste a new pleasure, not to be found among the pleasures of youth, reserved for your age; to reap the harvest of your labours, in the duty, affection, and felicity of your dear children." [Ogden.]

But if, on the contrary, you refuse to bring up your children in the fear of the Lord, is there not cause to apprehend, that they who are suffered to

slight and neglect God, should also slight and neglect you? Is there not cause to apprehend, that their passions may lead them into misery and guilt, which will embitter all your pleasures, and poison all your enjoyments? Is there not cause to apprehend, that the time may come, when like unhappy David, you will in vain seek for joy from the pomps and honours of the world, but must sorrowfully retire to your chamber, weeping for the irregularities of your child, and exclaiming in the bitterness of your soul, "Oh, Absalom! my son, my son?"

Remember too, that having lived for a short time in this mortal state, you will at last arrive at its close, and be stretched upon your bed of death. Think what delightful sensations, or what terrible pains, will then be experienced by you, according as you have performed or neglected this duty. Shall you have given your children a pious education, and seen them walking in the paths of truth and godliness, you will then be enabled to leave them without regret, and to bid them farewell with calmness; you will be able to commit them with confidence to the Father of the fatherless, knowing that they shall rest with safety under the shadow of the Almighty. You will be armed against the terrors of the approaching separation, by remembering that you have performed your duty to them, though imperfectly, yet sincerely; and by anticipating that period when you shall again be united before the throne of God. "Though such a parent die," says the wise son of Sirach, "yet he is as though he were not dead; for he hath left one behind him that is like himself. While he lived, he saw and rejoiced in him; and when he died, he was not sorrowful." (Ecclesiasticus xxx. 4. 6.)

Shall you, on the contrary, at the hour of death, be forced to remember that you have neglected your children, and by your carelessness destroyed their souls? Ah, this reflection will kindle a hell in your bosom, will give double terrors to death. ‘God gave me children,’ you will cry in agony: ‘God gave me children, committed to me the care of their immortal souls, and ordered me to bring them up in his fear. At the period of their baptism, I vowed thus to do; but I have slighted my vows, and forgotten my engagements; I have been careful of their temporal interests, and anxious for their outward welfare, but have been careless of the state of their souls; I have sold them to sin and to Satan; I have been the instrument of their perdition: they are lost; but their blood is about to be required at my hands.’ Parents, are you desirous that these should not be your feelings on the bed of death? Begin then instantly to bring up your children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

Remember, finally, that the day of judgment is approaching: death shall lay your bodies and the bodies of your children in the dust; but at the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, you shall wake from the long slumbers of the grave to receive your final doom. Oh! what joy shall swell the heart of the godly parent, when the voice of the archangel shall cry, ‘arise, thou pious father, thou holy mother! arise and re-embrace those righteous children whom death tore from your arms; arise, open your eyes upon your dear children who closed them when you expired; arise, press to your parental bosom these your descendants whom you early dedicated to God, and educated in his fear; go before them to the throne of the Judge, and exclaim in humble tri-

umph, "behold us, O God, and the children whom thou hast given us." (Isaiah v. 18.) "Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost." (John xvii. 12.) He will give you the crown of righteousness; he will cause you never more to be separated from each other, nor from him.'

But, O criminal parent! these joys are not for you; for you are reserved tortures, which the heart in vain attempts to conceive. That son, that daughter, whom you are leading to perdition, will descry you amongst the assembled crowd: as they sink in the flames, they will imprecate the vengeance of God upon your head; they will cry to you in a voice that will rend your heart; 'wretched parent! it is you that have brought us hither! it is you who communicated to us a corrupted nature, and were careless of leading us to God, and inspiring us with holy sentiments: wretch! why didst thou call us into being? why didst thou plunge us into hell? our doom is remediless; but we will become thy tormentors! we will for ever present ourselves to thee, surrounded by those flames which consume us, weighed down by those chains of darkness with which we are bound; we will cry to thee, *behold thy work!* The groans, the shrieks, the howlings, which we shall through eternity pour forth, will vibrate in thine ear, will reproach thee for our misery and thy guilt, will kindle a hell within thee more intolerable than the flames in which thou shalt be enwrapped.'

But I forbear. This picture is too appalling. If the mere anticipation of such a scene freezes the blood, what, oh what, must be its reality!

SERMON CXLI.



EARLY PIETY.



2 CHRONICLES XXXIV. 3.

While he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father.

AN earthly panegyrist, in giving the character of a celebrated king, would have talked much of the extent of his dominions, the power of his arms, the splendour of his court; but the Spirit of God, overlooking these objects as unworthy of attention, mentions as the most glorious characteristic of the king of Judah, that, "while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father." How much more honourable to Josiah is this eulogium, than the most brilliant description of his dignities and wealth could have been! His dignities and wealth could not have accompanied him beyond the grave; his palace has long since fallen to the dust; his throne has crumbled to ruins; his crown has lost its lustre; but his early piety has followed him into the unseen world, where he dwells in the palace of the King of kings, seated on a durable throne, and having his brows encircled by a crown which shall never fade away. My young friends!

this palace of God, this throne in the heavens, this crown of immortality, are offered to you as well as to Josiah. His example will teach you in what manner to attain them. Imitate his early piety, and you shall partake of his recompense. Like him, while yet young, seek the God of your fathers, and this God will confer upon you a felicity and honour, infinite in degree, eternal in duration.

My sole design, on the present occasion, is to persuade you thus to act, by presenting you with a variety of motives, to induce you early to consecrate yourselves to God. And do thou, merciful Father, accompany this discourse by the almighty energy of thy spirit, and the omnipotent efficacy of thy grace, so that these youth may be converted from the error of their ways.

From the variety of motives which immediately occur to my mind, I find it difficult to select those that are most impressive. I shall confine myself, however, to the illustration of these few ideas :

I. *Nothing is more amiable in itself, or more pleasing to God, than early piety.*

Early piety, though not so venerable as aged virtue, is yet equally attractive and interesting. To see good principles thoroughly governing the whole conduct ; to see them prevail over all youthful levities and follies ; to see passions at a time of life when usually most ungovernable, yet subjected to reason and conscience ; to see the spirit and vanity of the world despised and trampled under foot ; to see constancy, steadiness, and uniformity of life, at a season when irresolution and the caprice of fancy frequently prevail ; to see a person while yet in the morn of life, with the sentiments of a virtuous old

age, is surely in itself a desirable and interesting spectacle.

And this conduct, so agreeable in itself, is likewise *most pleasing to God*. Read your scriptures; you will there find God frequently and affectionately calling upon you, to "remember your Creator in the days of your youth;" (Eccles. xii. 1.) assuring you, that "if you seek him early, you shall find him;" (Prov. viii. 17.) and confirming the sincerity of these calls, the truth of these assurances, by examples of the especial favour with which he ever regarded early converts. God has then clearly expressed his desire, that you should turn unto him; and shall this consideration have no influence upon you? Methinks if no other argument could be offered for youthful piety but this, *it is pleasing to God*, a reasonable being ought not to hesitate how to act. Consider for a moment who is this God, who thus importunately urges you to seek after him. He is the *all-perfect God*, and therefore infinitely worthy of the service of a whole life, deserving of the attachment of our youthful hearts, as well as of our aged souls. He is the *eternally blessed God*, and can, therefore, from the exhaustless source of his all-sufficiency, shed down upon us those streams of benedictions and favours which will satisfy our souls, and abundantly recompense us for those trifling gratifications that we relinquish for him. He is the *creating God*, and shall we, his offspring, rise in rebellion against him, and ungratefully use the faculties he has given us, in opposition to him? He is the *preserving God*, without whose constant influence and support we should be blotted from existence. Every pulse that beats, every moment that flies, is a new gift of his tender love, a new effect of his infinite power. If

our first years flowed from a different source from our last, we might be excused for not consecrating them to him; but since he gives you all your life, what right have you to rob him of the period of youth? He is the *Redeemer God*, and he adjures you, by the agonies of the garden, and the blood of the cross, to devote yourselves to him. Of what must your hearts be made, if they can resist pleas so tender? He is the *kindest of fathers*, the best of friends, the most munificent of benefactors. He has already conferred upon you countless favours; and are you not dreadfully ungrateful, if, in the midst of these favours, you refuse to comply with his affectionate commands?

God calls you then to cultivate early piety, and it is infinitely fit that you obey his will.

II. *Youth is a season in which you have the greatest advantages for cultivating the principles of piety, and the greatest need of religion, as a defence from temptation and dangers.*

The greatest advantages. It is true that you find, even in this age, the principles of sin in your hearts; but these principles have not yet been so fortified by repeatedly impelling to action, nor by reiterated actions become such powerful habits, as they will be at any future time. You have not yet so connected your iniquities with all your pursuits, and made them so to mingle with all your occupations, as you will hereafter have done. Your mind is now open for the reception of truth; in a great degree uncorrupted by prejudices; at least, unattached to them from long possession; having a docility and teachableness of disposition, from a conviction of your inexperience, the principles of piety may more easily be implanted, and having fewer obstacles to

oppose them, will take firmer root. Your heart is now warm and tender; unchilled by the commerce of the world; free from the callousness of age; its native emotions glowing with all their force, it is more easily moved by the love of its God, by the mercy of its Redeemer, by all those tender incitements to duty, which the gospel presents to it. Your passions, though more ardent, are, notwithstanding, more manageable, more easily turned from improper objects, than they will be when inveterate and confirmed habits have been formed. As yet, the sentiments of modesty and propriety, a regard to the opinions of others, make you blush for your acts of vice, and endeavour to conceal them from the world. In riper years you will assume a boldness in iniquity; disregard the censures of others; cease to be restrained by them, till, at last, you may come to "glory in your shame." (Phil. iii. 19.) As yet you are not entangled in the business, the follies, the tumult of the world, which so often engross all the affections and thoughts of riper years; you are not yet entirely occupied with prosecuting the schemes of ambition, or amassing heaps of treasure, but have full time for meditating on the concerns of a better state. As yet, conscience has not been often stifled and deeply corrupted; it still preserves, if I may speak so, its tremulous delicacy and nice sensibility; it still elevates its warning voice, and strongly remonstrates at your deviation from virtue: but, in the aged sinner, weary of useless reproof, it is almost silent; or, if it still speak, it is almost always disregarded. As yet, you have an ardour and fervency, most remote from the timid prudence of age, and most favourable to a thorough conversion. Disdaining all resistance, ambitious of high achieve-

ments, leaping over opposing obstacles, youth flies to the goal; whilst age, creeping fearfully along, clinging still to the enjoyments of earth, discouraged by every difficulty, will scarcely ever attain it. Like the wife of Lot, it may proceed a small distance from the city, doomed to destruction, but devoid of alacrity and vigour, it will seldom reach the Zoar, the place of safety. It must be evident to you, my brethren, that these dispositions and sentiments are, from their nature, calculated to advance you in the Christian course; of themselves, they are not sufficient to make you holy; but when grace sanctifies them, and directs them to proper objects, they must render your progress in religion more rapid and more delightful. And remember too, that this inciting grace is given you in greater measure in youth than in advanced life; that God, by his Spirit, now beseeches and importunes you to turn and live, more frequently and forcibly than he will hereafter. I appeal to you, aged sinners, for the truth of this representation. Are there none of you who often, in early life, felt the attractions and suggestions of the Holy Ghost, which "almost persuaded you to be Christians;" (Acts xxvi. 28.) but who, now that you have advanced in life, and are nearer to perdition, scarcely ever think of the destiny that awaits you; scarcely ever are induced to meditate seriously on the means to avoid it? You see then, my young friends, that whether you consider your own disposition, or the conduct of God, you find advantages for progressing in piety which you will not have at any other period of your lives. If then you have not renounced all hope and desire for salvation; (and surely none of you can be so mad, as deliberately to sacrifice the pleasures of heaven, and embrace the tortures of

hell;) if you wish to apply the most suitable means for the attainment of this salvation, (and you are not reasonable creatures, if you do not wish it,) will you not imitate the example of the pious king of Judah, and “begin while yet young, to seek after the God of your fathers.”

And if the advantages which you now enjoy for the cultivation of religion, form a strong inducement to you to attend to the concerns of piety, so also do the *dangers* and *temptations* to which you are now exposed. Every other period of life has some salutary restraints and guards which are denied to youth. *Childhood* is weak and feeble, without power or temptation to commit many sins, and subjected to the visitant control of parents. *Manhood* is occupied by business and avocations; and, in pursuit of honours and emoluments, finds it necessary by at least an appearance of virtue, to conciliate the esteem and respect of the world. *Old age* has the lessons of experience, is impotent to do evil, and beholds death, judgment, eternity, nearly approaching. But *youth* is left without any of these powerful restraints, these salutary guards. The world, whose treachery and falsehood it has not yet known, spreads before it a thousand gay and alluring scenes, to draw it aside from virtue. Every thing is novel; every thing is captivating. The blood courses with impetuosity through the veins; passion and appetite are in their full vigour; objects to excite them are each moment presented; judgment is immature; reason without the aids of experience; the imagination active in creating illusions; the heart sensible to pleasure, easily inflamed, lively and impetuous in its desires. Ah! in so perilous a situation, what but the sacred guidance of religion can pre-

serve us? A young person without this guidance, resembles a vessel without rudder and without pilot, tossed on an agitated ocean in the midst of an obscure night, conflicting with violent storms, dashing frequently against quicksands and rocks, liable each moment to be shivered into pieces, or to sink into the abyss.

Stop then for a moment, my young friends, think of your danger, and in order to avoid it, "begin" with Josiah "to seek after the God of your fathers."

III. *By early piety, you will prepare tranquillity and joy for old age, should you arrive unto it; whilst by an opposite conduct you will fill it with remorse and fears.*

An old man, who has forgotten God in his youth, is seldom converted; and if he is not, how wretched must he be in that period of weakness and debility, when supports and consolation are so much needed; since his views of the past, the present, and the future, bring with them nothing but grief and anguish? He contemplates the past; he sees a whole life given him to prepare for eternity, squandered in vanity and sin; he sees a wide and dreary waste, where the eye is relieved by no monuments of virtue and piety; he considers the present, and is filled with confusion; he turns towards the future, and with gloom and distress, beholds death for which he has not prepared, pressing upon him; beholds a tribunal where he can hope for no acquittal, already erected; beholds an eternity of joys which he would fain possess, but which he has bartered for those pleasures of which nothing remains but an insipid or painful remembrance; beholds an eternity of torments, which he has merited by his sins and iniquities. The ghosts of departed joys flit before him, and point to those regions of wo whither sinful delights

conduct. Such is the old age of those who remember not God in their youth, and then remain, as they almost always do, at a distance from him during the whole course of their lives. Even if (to make the most favourable supposition, and a supposition which is seldom verified,) even if called at the eleventh hour, this aged man has truly turned unto the Lord, how far will he be from enjoying the same pleasure as the early convert! He will almost certainly be subject at times to painful apprehensions and doubts; to fears that he forsakes the world, only because he can no longer retain it; that he renounces the enjoyments of earth, only because from the decay of his body, from the feebleness of his mind, and the weakness of his fancy, he is unable to indulge in them. These, and a thousand other similar fears, generally occasion in the mind of him who is converted in old age, a painful hesitancy concerning the security of his state, prevent him from going on his way rejoicing, and cloud that prospect of immortality which would be a stay to his soul.

How much more consolatory and cheering are the meditations of the aged Christian, who remembered his Creator in the days of his youth! He is solaced in reviewing his conduct, to find the brightest evidences of his sincerity; for he forsook the world when it appeared in its most alluring garb, and spread its most glittering snares to entangle him: he forsook it when his ardent passions and vigorous powers enabled him to participate in its pleasures with the greatest gust; he has long and successfully warred under the banner of the Captain of his salvation: he has resisted the most violent temptations of hope or fear, which would have drawn him from his duty. The perplexing doubts which harass the

pious but unexperienced, concerning their steadfastness and perseverance in the ways of religion, are for him past, and his mind is serene as the regions of heaven. In reviewing the past, he sees the long interval between the season of youth and the furrowed countenance and hoary head of age, filled up in some good degree with works of devotion, righteousness, and benevolence; whereby he has glorified God, benefited his brother, and made provision that his memory should always be precious; and the recollection of them makes him re-enjoy the scenes through which he has passed. Ah! what can be more delightful than to remember how early he was enabled to devote himself to God; how frequently he has conflicted with difficulties and trials for his sake; how rich has been his experience of the providential care and protection of his Heavenly Father; how often he has enjoyed communion with his God; lifted up his desires to him, and poured out before him the warm effusions of his soul! And if from the past, he turns and contemplates the future, views the most animating are presented to him; he fixes a steady eye upon those glories in which he knows he is interested; he rejoices that he almost touches the object of all his hopes and desires; that he will shortly be admitted into the presence of that God whom he has so long loved, and be delivered from a combat which has so long endured.

Surely an old age thus placid and venerable, is an object worthy of our desires: surely these peaceful recollections, these sublime prospects, amidst the dreariness of age, are deserving our exertions. Do you wish to attain them? "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth; then no evil days

shall come ; no years draw nigh in which you shall say, I have no pleasure in them." (Eccles. xii. 1, 2.)

IV. *A regard to the feelings of all the pious persons in the church universal, a respect to the happiness of your parents, should induce you early to devote yourselves to God.*

You know not, my young friends, the severe pain which is felt by all true Christians, in beholding unconverted youth. As the ancient and honourable pillars of the temple fall one by one ; as the aged persons who have been zealous and faithful soldiers of Christ, pass in succession from the church militant to the church triumphant, we look around with anxiety upon the rising generation, to see who will supply their places, who will wield the weapons which have fallen from their hands, who will in their stead direct and encourage the body of the faithful. And if, instead of the piety which distinguished these holy Christians, we see in their progeny a disregard of God and his ordinances, an enmity and distaste to a holy life, a worldly and careless spirit ; oh ! you know not the grief which such prospects excite in the hearts of all who sincerely love the Lord. Young men, amongst this pious band whom your inconsiderate conduct thus deeply wounds, there are numbers whom you are bound to honour and revere, numbers for whom you express high esteem and regard. Will you not be sufficiently generous and affectionate to pause and attend to the things which belong to your eternal peace, in order to give happiness and joy to so many of your fellow-men ?

Or, if this consideration be too general to affect you, think for a moment how deeply the felicity of your *parents* depends upon your early piety. This is a motive which Solomon often addresses to youth.

“A wise son,” (you know that in the scriptures *wise* and *pious* are used as synonymous expressions, because piety is the only true wisdom :) “A wise son maketh a glad father, but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.” (Prov. x. 1.) And elsewhere, “A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him.” (Prov. xvii. 25.) And again he affectionately urges, “My son, be wise and make my heart glad, that I may answer him that reproacheth me.” (Prov. xxvii. 11.) These and numerous other exhortations of the same import made by Solomon, were dictated by his experience. He had seen how his own pious conduct in early life had cheered the heart of his father David, amidst the infirmities and sorrows of age; he himself had felt, from the conduct of Rehoboam, pains so deep, that they could not be effaced by the splendour of royalty, the pomp of power, the respect and veneration which the people entertained for him. All the other enjoyments of life were embittered and rendered tasteless by the wanderings of an irreligious son. My young friends, if your parents are sincerely pious, they feel a regret equal to that of Solomon, at your neglect of God, and forgetfulness of your eternal destination. Nature and grace have taught them to love you as themselves, and if all the pleasures which the earth can afford were heaped upon them, they would still be unhappy, if their child were the slave of Satan and the heir of eternal sorrow. Believe me, I do not exaggerate their feelings. I have witnessed in my parochial visits, every minister has witnessed in his parochial visits, more than once, this anguish of a tender father, these tears of a loving mother; anguish, tears, which were rendered still more bitter by the reflection, that they were caused

by those who should have consoled and cheered their declining years. And I have, on the contrary, seen the eye of the aged parent lighted up with joy, and heard him pour forth his thanksgivings to God, at beholding his offspring walking in the path of goodness and religion. When he beheld the morn of their life thus hallowed and consecrated to God, the afflictions of life lost their sting, and his soul was filled with transport.

And as by your pious or irreligious conduct you thus affect the feelings of your parents during the whole course of their lives, so do you especially prepare for them sources of inexpressible delight or misery, at the moment when death shall separate you from them. If you should enter before them into the unseen world, they can part from you without regret, if you are truly devoted to God. They know that this separation is not final; they know that they shall meet you in a better world: The view of that glory in which you are interested will enable them to say to you with Christian resignation, 'Farewell, our dear child; we had hoped that thou wouldst have remained to have closed our eyes and received our last breath; but God calls thee before us; go then and receive the crown of glory; go and rest in the embraces of thy Saviour; we will shortly follow thee; we will meet thee again before the throne of God; and there we shall form ties more tender and more strict than those which united us on earth; there we shall enjoy a felicity pure as the eternal mind, and durable as the existence of God! Go then, dear child; thy Saviour beckons thee to come; the angels are waiting to convey thy soul unto him; adieu, but not for ever.' O my brethren! what powerful consolations are these to a believer.

when his offspring are torn from him by death; how different are these feelings from those which wring the hearts of parents as they hang over the death-bed of an *irreligious* child. In trembling anxiety they mark the approach of his dissolution; his closing eye, his livid mouth, the death-like paleness spread over his whole countenance, teach them that in a few moments more, his destiny will be fixed for ever. They look to the future, but no cheering ray consoles them; all is dark, dismal, and afflictive: they behold their child torn from their embraces; seized by the fiends, and sentenced to that abyss whence “the smoke of his torments shall ascend for ever and ever.” Thus keenly oppressed, they lean over his corpse, and exclaim with a heart almost broken with anguish, “O Absalom, my son, my son! would God I had died for thee!” Merciful God! be present to such mourners, for thy consolations alone can prevent their gray hairs from descending in sorrow to the grave!

The feelings of your parents are of the same force, if, as is the common order of nature, they finish their lives before you. If you are truly pious, they can leave you with confidence to the protection of your heavenly friend: upheld by the hope that you will be honoured and respected by men, and at last acknowledged and received by the Lord. Animated by this hope, they will be serene and happy till the final pulse of their heart, and the last trembling accents that they utter, shall bless you for that ineffable pleasure which your pious conduct affords to them. But if, when you surround your dying parents, you are still in your sins, you will disturb the tranquillity of their closing hours, and prevent them from giving up their souls to God with that se-

renity and triumph, which they might otherwise feel. Afflicted at the apprehension of your future destiny, fearful that you will plunge still more deeply into sin, when you shall no longer be restrained by their tender counsels and pious admonitions, they will be tortured by *you*, by their child: you, whose whole study and occupation it should be to render their dying hours pleasant and happy, will pierce their bosoms with sorrows more excruciating than those that were caused by their bitterest enemies. O Saviour! thou, who when about to re-assume thy glory, wept at the prospect of the sins and perdition of thy much beloved Jerusalem; how often hast thou seen poor afflicted parents about to receive the crown of immortality, yet having their souls racked at beholding their unholy posterity! Ah! perhaps there are such at this moment somewhere stretched on the bed of languishment! O Saviour, haste to their succour, lest they be driven by the keenness of their tortures to revolt and to murmur at thy holy will!

My brethren, these scenes are not too highly coloured. They have often been presented to those of you who are in the habit of attending the death-bed of the saints. And what effect shall they have upon you, my young friends? Will you fail to be moved by the sighs and distresses of a tender father, by the anguish and tears of the mother that bore you? Will you still delight in grieving, in stabbing them to the heart? If so, pretend not to the sentiments of humanity; if so, renounce the name of man, which you so much dishonour. But if, as I love to believe, you have acted thus through inconsiderateness and want of reflection, pause instantly; and even though you are so foolish as to trifle and sport with endless perdition, be not so brutal as to trifle and sport with the feelings of your parents; and for their

sakes, if not for your own, begin to seek early the God of your fathers.

My brethren, will any of you say, in order to avoid the force of this appeal to the best feelings of your nature: ‘All this, though true, is not applicable to me; my parents themselves are unconverted, and have not these feelings?’ Wo, wo, to such criminal parents! they shall answer not only for their own souls; the blood of their children also shall be required at their hands! But leaving them to their Judge, let us inquire whether filial affection will not powerfully urge you also to seek the Lord, although your parents are, as you say, unconverted. Yes, if you will turn unto the Lord, you will save them from accumulated misery. Their punishment, though it be *solitary*, will be inconceivably severe, when they are enwrapped in the flames of the abyss. But oh! if they meet you there, it will be tenfold more ex-cruciating. The sight of you will kindle in their breasts an inward hell. At sight of you, conscience will speak to them in a voice of thunder, and re-proach them, that, worse than the worshippers of Moloch, they have not been contented with their own perdition, unless they could also sacrifice their child to Satan, and devote him to the flames. Oh! flee in time then to Jesus, that you may not bring down this *additional* punishment on the heads of your parents. Oh! flee in time to Jesus, and you may perhaps be made the instruments of saving your parents from *all* these horrors! I recollect that it is remarked by the pious Baxter, that “at Kidderminster, where God most blest his labours, his first and greatest success was amongst the youth; and that when God had touched their hearts, the parents and grand-parents, who had grown old in an ignorant,

worldly state, were many of them savingly converted unto the Lord." Many others, besides Baxter, have seen divine mercy operating in a similar manner. Oh! my brethren, what a powerful inducement is this! Your parents gave you animal life; you, by attending to the concerns of piety, may perhaps be made the instruments of their spiritual life: Your parents have brought you into this fading world; you may perhaps be made the instruments of raising them to that world of light, where there are pleasures for evermore. Oh, if you really love these parents, turn, turn unto the Lord, that he may have mercy upon *you*, and that he may, through you, "pluck *them* as brands from the burning."

Are there any amongst you who say, this motive still does not address me; my parents have left this earth, and their destinies are already fixed and immutable? Still this motive does address you, and address you with force. Are your parents lost and undone? We have already told you, that you will increase their torments by descending to join them. From the bosom of the pit the ungodly rich man cried out, "I pray thee, father Abraham, to send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brethren, lest they also come into this place of torment." (Luke xvi. 28.) If your parents are the companions of this rich man, they also supplicate you to avoid their lot; to come not thither to aggravate their sufferings. Are your parents among the blest? Remember how Jesus hath told you, that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth:" (Luke xv. 10.) and if your parents are amongst these angels, they surely, in an eminent degree, participate in this joy. Think then, that perhaps the spirit of thy father, of thy mother,

is at this moment regarding thee with tender solicitude; is watching whether all the advices they have given to thee, all the prayers they have offered for thee, all the sighs and tears which thou hast forced from them, shall be of no avail; whether thou wilt not, by turning unto the Lord, bestow on them a new sensation of joy, even in the midst of paradise; give them liberty to entertain the hope again to join you, when you enter into the kingdom of God, and to exclaim with transport, "Return my child; return to my parental embraces!"

V. Finally, (for although I fear I have already exhausted your patience, yet I cannot resolve to leave you without urging one more motive :) Finally, *on your conduct in youth, your salvation or perdition, almost infallibly depend.* I can conceive no consideration more impressive than this: listen, if you please, to its proof and illustration.

If you do not in your youth seek the God of your fathers, a *prolongation of your life* will be indispensably necessary to repair this neglect. Are you certain that your life will be thus prolonged? Have you not seen thousands whose health was as firm, whose prospects as fair as yours, cut off in their bloom, and summoned to meet their Judge in the midst of their schemes of future amendment? You act as though you were assured that this would not be your lot; but whence have you derived this assurance? Have you ascended into the heavens, and there penetrated into the counsels of that God, "who holdeth in his hands the keys of life and of death;" who hath appointed the number of your days, beyond which you cannot pass? Or have you fettered the hands of the Almighty, so that he cannot snatch you hence before your repentance? Have you, if I

may borrow the strong language of Isaiah, have you “made a covenant with death,” that he shall not yet smite you; “an agreement with hell,” (Isaiah xxviii. 15.) that it shall not yet swallow you up? No, no; you, like the rest of men, are ignorant of the duration of your life: you know not whether this sun that enlightens you, shall not, before it sets, behold you a corpse; you are not sure but that the angel of death has already received his commission, and is already winging his flight to tear your unwilling soul from its body, and bear it to the tribunal of God, to sustain there all the holiness, the purity, the strictness of his judgment. And yet in so perilous a state, you are cool and tranquil; and yet in so dreadful an uncertainty, you can be sportive and gay! When your body is attacked by a disorder, you think not of deferring till to-morrow the remedies which may immediately be applied; when your house is enwrapped in flames, you endeavour without delay to extinguish them; but when your soul is stricken by the mortal malady of sin, when you are burning with unholy desires, and preparing to be consumed in the flames of the abyss, you cry, that at some more convenient season you will attend to these matters, but that there is no need of instant anxiety and attention! God of our lives! thou only knowest whether they will not be in the eternal world before this anticipated period arrives!

Let us however suppose for a moment, that some friendly hand had lifted for you the veil of futurity, and removed all its uncertainty; let us suppose that God had revealed to you that you should yet live fifty, a hundred, or a thousand years, if you please; still *it is by no means probable that at the expiration of this term you would be willing to seek the Lord and re-*

nounce your sin. Sin will then have become deeply habitual; its chains will have not only the strength, but also the brilliant lustre of the adamant. Your criminal inclinations will be fortified by frequent exercise and by guilty example; will mingle in the whole course of your life, and become incorporated into your very essence; your understanding will be obscured by your guilt, and those false reasonings which you shall have so often used to quiet your fears, will appear to you irrefragable arguments; your conscience, whose monitions you shall so often have rejected, will be almost silent, and will reserve its testimony to be given in at the bar of your Judge; your heart corrupted by sin, will be devoid of all taste for pure and holy pleasures; your imagination whose endless illusions you shall have experienced, will occupy itself in mustering up the images of past pleasures, to furnish new aliment to the flame that devours you, and to re-animate dying passions. Is it conceivable that in such a situation you will be willing and disposed to forsake your sins and seek the Lord; to do what you are unwilling to do now, while sin is less habitual and less endeared? Is it not probable that, a slave in the fetters which your own hands shall have forged, you will not even make one struggle to deliver yourself from them? If unconvinced by this reflection, go and consult experience. How few do you find among real Christians; how few pious persons in this assembly who do not date the period of their conversion from their youth; how few are there in the number of those who hear my voice, who, after neglecting to seek God in their youth, have since become his true disciples? How many aged sinners, who see all the consequences of their iniquities, who know the perdition which awaits

them, yet still love their crimes, cling to them, refuse to separate from them. Will not this probably be your lot also, my young friends, if you longer neglect to seek the God of your fathers?

Will you say, 'All this is true; of ourselves we shall not be able to turn to God; nevertheless, his grace will be sufficient to dispose and enable us to do it; there is no resistance which it cannot overcome.' God forbid that a minister of Christ should deny the omnipotence of grace, or bound the power of the Most High. We know that, if he pleases, "he can of the stones raise up children to Abraham." (Mat. iii. 9.) We know that he can convert the most hardened sinners, if he undertake to do it, if he interpose in their behalf; but will he thus undertake, will he thus interpose, if you now in your youth neglect to seek after him? This is the question which concerns you; let us examine what answer we must make to it.

Grace then is necessary for our conversion. Nevertheless, scripture and reason concur in teaching us that God, in righteous judgment, withholds the internal influences of this grace from certain persons, who have previously abused and neglected it. Grace then being necessary for conversion, and this grace being withheld from these sinners, it is indubitable that they must be sealed up in judicial hardness, and remain for ever unconverted. My brethren, I view this as the most awful truth of our religion; I stop not to prove it; it has more than once been established from this sacred desk; let us apply it to our subject. The just and sovereign Jehovah then will not for ever bestow the secret inspirations of his grace to be despised, contemned, and rejected; those who now impiously refuse it, and con-

temptuously neglect it, may hereafter seek for it in vain. And say, young men, have you not cause to fear that this will be your destiny, if, notwithstanding the warnings that are given you, notwithstanding the conviction of your mind, the inward solicitations of your conscience, the suggestions of the Holy Spirit, you form the frightful resolution to give the strength of your years to Satan and the world, contemptuously to reject God, and to bring to him at last the dregs of a life exhausted in the service of his enemies? Have you not cause to fear, that when you shall have acted conformably to these resolutions, and shall at last come to offer to God a heart infected with vices, a body worn out in crime, a mind filled with false sentiments; have you not cause to fear that he will then refuse you the riches of his grace, and, denying you every mercy, send you back to your first masters whom you have always served? That he will say to you, ‘Go to that world to which you have consecrated your youth; let it rescue you from the grave and from perdition, and give you eternal felicity. Go to Sin, your tyrant: let him give you the wages due unto his slaves, *death*, which is the recompense that he pays to those that serve him. Go to the prince of darkness, to whom you have sold yourselves to do evil: to them you made the offering of your best days, give them also what remains to you.’

Thus, whether we consider the uncertainty of life, or the increasing power of sin, or the bounds set to the day of grace, we must be convinced, that forgetfulness of God in youth, leads almost infallibly to eternal perdition.

And now, my young friends, will you still remain regardless of your duty? Will you not resolve in

the strength of the Lord to relinquish your worldly life, your ungodly habits, your sins and iniquities? Will you not at length return to your God, to your Father, to your Redeemer? Will you not accept that mercy which is offered to you? Sinner! the God of heaven beholds thee; he hears this exhortation which I now make unto thee. Wilt thou, by neglecting this invitation, force him to take hold on justice, and reject thee from his presence? Sinner! the eyes of Jesus are fixed upon thee; of that Jesus at whose bar we must shortly stand. He offers to deliver thee from perdition; he offers thee the blessings of his covenant. Oh! trifle no longer with eternity, but instantly resolve, in dependence on his promised grace, to put thy soul under the bonds of his covenant. Go to thy private chamber; there, on thy knees, bewail thy sins and transgressions, and pray for grace to give thyself up wholly to God.

Act thus, and with Josiah you shall be gathered to the church of the first-born in heaven, where you shall shout for ever, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever! Amen."

SERMON CXLII.



JESUS WEeping OVER JERUSALEM.



LUKE XIX. 41, 42.

And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes.

WHEN the elder Marcellus had taken Syracuse, after a long and dangerous siege, he was not so much elated by the success of his arms, by the splendour of victory, and the congratulations of his troops, as he was affected by the prospect of that devastation which threatened the city; and instead of insolently triumphing, he melted into tears.* The ancient historians have rightly eulogized this action: it was an unequivocal proof of a tender, feeling, generous soul. But “a greater than” Marcellus “is here.” The conduct of our Saviour exhibits still warmer tenderness, still deeper feeling, still more

* Marcellus, ut mœnia ingressus ex superioribus locis urbem, omnium fermè illa tempestate pulcherrimam, subjectam oculis videt, illachrymasse fertur. Tit. Liv. Hist. lib. XV. See also Plutarch.

elevated generosity. He was now descending from Mount Olivet, and entering into Jerusalem. He is not surrounded, it is true, like a Roman conqueror, by kings in chains, and slaves loaded with the spoils of vanquished nations; but, what is infinitely more splendid, he is encircled by the trophies of his almighty power: by demoniacs, whom he has delivered; by the blind, on whose eyes he has poured the light of day; by the dumb, whose tongues he has loosed, and who shout his praises; by the dead, whom he has caused to spring into new life: he advances to complete the conquest of Satan and of sin, whom he has already bound, in fetters which cannot be broken: he comes, loaded with heavenly spoils and celestial gifts, which were purchased, not by the sack of cities and the dying groans of thousands, but entirely by his own humiliation, and agonies, and blood. The multitude crowd to meet him, strew their garments in his path, with palms in their hands welcome the Prince of peace, and shout hosannas to the son of David. These circumstances would have elated an ordinary mind, and filled it with self-complacency and pride; but in the midst of them he cast his eyes upon the city, which was now in full view, and, anticipating its impending calamities, tenderly wept over it; he knew that, in a few days, it would demand his death, it would nail him to the cross, it would riot in his agonies; yet he still wept over it. Compare then these two scenes; place Marcellus by the side of the Saviour; which character shines with greater lustre? The one displays no haughtiness, although a mighty city has yielded to his arms: the other is humble, although he has forced the laws of nature, although he has stormed and vanquished hell, and unbarred the gates

of heaven for our reception. The one weeps over depressed, trembling, subjugated foes, who will not insult and who cannot injure him: the other weeps over those who, he certainly knows, will in a few days cover him with reproaches and ignominies, torture him by the most refined cruelties, and inflict upon him a painful and accursed death. Yes! I repeat it; “a greater than” Marcellus “is here!” If Marcellus acted as a generous man, Christ acted as a God-man. “And when he was come near, he beheld the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.”

Come then, my brethren, let us carefully contemplate the conduct and expressions of our Lord on this occasion; and whilst we are thus employed, grant, most merciful Jesus! that we may not be insensible to thy tears, but may be induced to lament those transgressions which caused thee to weep, and savingly to improve the day of our visitation.

Our discourse shall have two parts: we shall,

I. Explain to you the causes of the Saviour’s tears, and the purport of the words which he uttered; and

II. We shall deduce from these tears and these words, some important truths, in which we are deeply interested.

I. “When he beheld the city, *he wept over it.*” Are you surprised to see the Saviour weep? Do you suppose this a weakness inconsistent with his dignity and elevation? Thus thought a sect of ancient heretics, mentioned by ecclesiastical historians, who erased from their copies of the scriptures all those parts which speak of the tears of Jesus. I know not whether more to admire their presumption or their

folly; their presumption, in daring to alter the perfect character of Jesus; their folly in supposing that the Saviour would be more noble, if he were divested of his overflowing benevolence, and endued with a stoical apathy. If the tears of Jesus had been wrung from him by his own distresses, they would perhaps have displayed some weakness. But he always met his own woes with a firm soul and a dry eye. When arraigned at a criminal bar; when buffeted, insulted, scourged, he is undaunted and serene; when labouring under the weight of his cross, and in the prospect of immediate execution, he says to the afflicted spectators, with an unfaltering voice, "Weep not for me; weep for yourselves." No, no! his tears never flowed but from his sympathy with the unhappy or perishing; they attest his grace, they endear him to the believer; and I had far rather that the most splendid of his miracles should be erased from the sacred volume, than that we should be ignorant that Jesus wept.

But what were those circumstances which caused the tears to gush from his eyes at this time? These three: 1. The prospect of the temporal calamities which hung over Jerusalem. 2. The consideration of those sins of which these calamities were the punishment, and of that eternal destruction of which they were the emblem. 3. The reflection that the time in which it was possible to avert these woes had now past.

1. That the Saviour had regard to the *temporal calamities* which were just descending on this devoted city, is evident from the verses immediately following the text: "For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on

every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." Possessed of infinite knowledge, seeing the future as distinctly as the present, he already beheld those fearful scenes which attended the destruction of Jerusalem, and of which the Jewish historian has given us so lamentable a description. He saw war mowing down thousands, and famine and sedition destroying those whom war had spared. He saw the flames seizing upon the towers, the walls, the habitations, and not respecting even the temple of God. He saw those countless numbers which were put to the sword; those carcases heaped upon carcases; those waves of blood which deluged the city. He saw those eleven hundred thousand persons who perished during this season of distress; the hundred thousand persons who were loaded with chains, and carried into painful captivity. All these miseries and many others which befell Jerusalem, before it was utterly destroyed, were present to the view of the Redeemer. Was it then wonderful that he poured forth his tears?

2. But this was not the only, nor even the principal cause of the tears of the Saviour. Combining the cause with the effect, beholding not only these temporal judgments, but also the iniquities of which they were the punishment; seeing the eternal torments which awaited these unhappy men in the world of spirits, as well as the woes which they would endure on this side the grave; regarding sin as the greatest of evils, and the everlasting agonies of the soul as far more lamentable than the transient sufferings of this life; it is evident that the principal

cause of his tears was the prospect of those *sins*, which drew down these temporal calamities, and of that *future punishment*, of which they were only the earnest. He saw the obstinacy, the impenitence, the hardness of heart, the numberless crimes of the Jewish people: he saw the deep guilt of iniquity: he saw the hell which was prepared for those who persist in it. No veil interposed between his eyes and the future; he beheld these things, not in distant prospect, but as already happening. Already he saw these wretched men condemned; already he beheld them enwrapped in the flames. Was it surprising that he should weep at scenes so doleful? If David poured forth his tears for the death of one rebellious son, much more would the compassionate Lord of David weep at the eternal perdition of so many thousands.

3. Still there would have been less cause for grief, if an opportunity of averting these judgments had remained unto them. But *this opportunity was for ever lost*. They had neglected the time of their visitation, and the things which belonged to their peace were hidden from their eyes. They had filled up the measure of their iniquities; the mercy of God had ceased to plead for them; justice had raised its arm, red with vengeance, to dart its thunders; their sentence had been pronounced, and it was irrevocable. Oh! how must this consideration have affected the compassionate heart of the Saviour!

Such then were the causes of the tears which Jesus shed over Jerusalem! But he not only wept, he likewise uttered this pathetic lamentation: "*If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes.*" What could he possibly have said that would

have been more expressive or affecting? He begins a sentence, but overcome by the violence of his feelings cannot finish it, and leaves the imagination to supply what the tongue cannot utter. There is not a word but what speaks to the heart. "*If thou hadst known, even thou.*" There is in this repetition a touching tenderness, and force of expostulation. It is as though Jesus had said, 'I am less grieved and surprised at the iniquities of other nations, to which I have manifested less affection, and on which I have conferred fewer privileges; but *thou*, much-favoured, much-beloved Zion; *thou*, who hast been the seat of my temple, the habitation of my prophets, the sanctuary of my religion, the receiver of my mercies; *thou*, whom I have always watched, and nourished, and blessed; wilt thou, *even thou*, criminally neglect thy privileges, and obstinately rush on to perdition?' "If thou hadst known, even thou, *at least in this thy day,*" that is, in that period when God still proffered salvation to thee; when the patience of the Lord was not yet exhausted; when the dreadful sentence had not yet been pronounced, "Let him that is filthy be filthy still:" (Rev. xxii. 11.) "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone:" (Hos. iv. 17.) "Because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, therefore I will not purge thee from thy sins any more till I cause my fury to rest upon thee:" (Ezek. xxiv. 13.) This day, for Jerusalem, had now past; the prediction of the prophet was now to be accomplished: "The time is come, the day of trouble is near. Now will I shortly pour out my fury upon thee, and accomplish mine anger upon thee. And mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, and ye shall know that I am the Lord that smiteth." (Ezek. vii. 7, 8, 9.)

“If thou hadst known, even thou, *the things that belong to thy peace:*” that is, if thou hadst diligently considered, and earnestly sought those things which would have procured for thee the peace and favour of God, his protection from thine enemies on earth, and his glories and love in the world which is to come.

“*But now they are hid from thine eyes.*” How is this, my brethren? Had not the inhabitants of Jerusalem after this period, any of the means of grace? Did God from this time cease to call them to himself by the preaching of the apostles, and the course of his providence? We know that even after the death of Jesus, the apostles remained in the midst of the city, working miracles in its streets, proclaiming the atonement made by Christ, and exhorting the people to “repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins.” And if we believe the Jews themselves, in proportion as the time for the destruction of the city approached, God wrought new and more surprising prodigies in heaven and on earth, to reclaim them. How then could it be said, that the things which belonged to their peace, were hidden from their eyes? These facts are not at all inconsistent with this declaration of the Saviour. For these warnings, remonstrances, exhortations, miracles, would be ineffectual to remove the darkness which rested on the minds of the Jews, unless they were accompanied by the influences of divine grace. This grace, God, provoked by their continued impenitence, was resolved to withhold; and in consequence of this righteous procedure, the things that belonged to the peace of the Jews were hidden from their eyes, even whilst the light of divine truth was shining with lustre around them. “*And when he came near, he beheld*

the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes."

Having thus explained to you the text, let us now,

II. Deduce from it two truths, in which we are most deeply interested.

1. The day of grace has its limits, and if we pass beyond them before our peace is made with God, our destruction is remediless.

2. The Redeemer is desirous that we should not, by our criminal neglect of this precious season, bring upon ourselves this destruction.

1. The day of grace has its limits, and if we pass beyond them before our peace is made with God, our destruction is remediless.

The text proves in the clearest manner, that this was the case with respect to Jerusalem. It assures us, that all those things which belonged to the temporal and eternal peace of this city, were granted to it for a certain limited time, called its day of visitation; that because the Jews despised, during this determinate period, the means of salvation which God bestowed upon them, they therefore were consigned to utter destruction; and though Jesus and his apostles afterwards preached within their walls, yet that grace which alone could render these discourses effectual, was withheld from them through the righteous judgment of God.

There are numberless passages of Scripture which show us that the conduct which God observed to Jerusalem, is that which he generally observes towards our race. Read that familiar and striking comparison employed by St. Paul, (Heb. vi. 7, 8.) "The earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh

oft upon it, and beareth thorns and briars, is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned." This earth is man; the rain which falls upon it, and the other cares which are employed by the husbandman, are the means of grace which he enjoys. If this man for a long season, give to God as all the fruit of his culture, only thorns and briars; that is to say, if he remain disobedient, notwithstanding all his spiritual advantages, he is rejected and abandoned by God, falls under the curse, and in future has nothing to expect but to be sentenced to devouring flames.

Consider the 12th chapter of St. John. This apostle there tells us, that although "Jesus did many miracles, yet the Jews believed not on him, that the saying of Isaiah might be accomplished, "Lord, who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed;" and he adds, that "they could not believe, because Isaiah had said again, "He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, nor be converted." (John xii. 37. 40.) Here then are miracles which do not convince those who are the witnesses of them; and which do not have this effect, because in consequence of the long obstinacy of this people, God "has blinded their minds and hardened their hearts;" that is, (in conformity with the scriptural mode of speaking, by which God is said to do that which he does not interpose to prevent,) has righteously resolved to withhold from them that grace which would have enlightened and softened them.

Listen to that exhortation of Isaiah (lv. 6.) "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near." Does it not clearly imply that there is

a time when the Lord is no longer near men, when he will not be found by them?

Attend to the solemn representation given us in the 3d and 12th chapters to the Hebrews, where the oath of God to Israel, and the conduct of Isaac to Esau, are represented as typical of the divine procedure towards sinners of the present day. The children of Israel, instead of obeying the revelations, and being melted by the mercies of God, tempted, grieved, and provoked him for forty years; and then the Lord, wearied with their rebellions, "sware in his wrath, that they should not enter into his rest." Esau at first despised the blessing; and afterwards in vain endeavoured to obtain it; for "when he would have inherited it, he was rejected, though he sought it carefully with tears." "These things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

Listen to the divine Wisdom, asserting in the 1st chapter of the Proverbs, the rejection of those who have long trifled with the admonitions and reproofs of God. "Because I have called, and ye refused: I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded: But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh: When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you: Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: They would none of my counsel; they despised all my reproof: Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of

their own way, and be filled with their own devices." (Prov. i. 24—31.)

But it would be impossible to enumerate all those passages which declare, that "the Spirit of God shall not always strive with man;" (Gen. vi. 3.) that this Spirit may not only be grieved, and resisted, but entirely quenched; (1 Thess. v. 19.) that those who perseveringly refuse to hearken to the voice of the Lord, are by him "given up unto their own hearts' lusts, to walk in their own counsels;" (Psalm lxxxi. 12.) that those who, "when they know God, glorify him not as God, neither are thankful, are often given up to vile affections, and to a reprobate mind;" (Rom. i. 21. 26. 28.) that on those who "receive not the love of the truth, that they may be saved, but have pleasure in unrighteousness, God sends strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned." (2 Thess. ii. 10, 11, 12.)

It is then evident, that the day of grace has its bounds, and is succeeded by a dark, a fearful, a stormy night. It is then evident, that the divine patience has its limits; that the holy and sovereign God will not for ever permit his secret inspirations and the suggestions of his Spirit to be rejected and treated with disdain.

Do you ask me to point out the precise bounds of this day? I acknowledge that I cannot do it. This is one of the secrets which God hath reserved to himself. We know in general that these bounds are different to different persons. In some cases this day extends even to the close of life; but in other instances, and especially among those who have had high spiritual privileges, it probably often terminates by the middle of our days. On this subject it be-

comes us to speak with caution and reserve; but still let me be permitted to remark that there are certain persons who almost touch those limits, passing beyond which, the things that belong to their peace will be for ever hidden from their eyes. The persons to whom I allude, are those who have been faithfully instructed in their duty; who have enjoyed in a high degree the common operations of the Holy Spirit; who have had deep and powerful convictions of their guilt; who have been filled with apprehension and terror at the punishment which they deserved; who have cried to God to have mercy upon them; who have solicitously inquired of the pious, "What shall we do to be saved?" but who now have relapsed into more than their former coldness; have abandoned the exercises of devotion, live secure in known sin, and feeling no disquietude at their awful condition, jest at the most sacred truths of religion, and indulge an enmity against holiness, against the pious, against all that reprove or warn them. Such persons have indeed sad cause to apprehend that their day is on the decline, that the shadows of evening are fast overtaking them.

My brethren, when we press you, from time to time, to think of your everlasting interests, you secretly flatter yourselves that your health and life will still for a long time be continued to you, and that you will have sufficient leisure hereafter to attend to the concerns of your soul. I will not now tell you how dreadfully imprudent is this delay of repentance to a period which may never arrive: I will not point to the repository of the dead, and show you the worm and putrefaction preying upon the mouldering carcases of those who, like you, deferred their duty, intending afterwards to turn to the

Lord; but who were surprised by death, and whose souls are now "suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." What if you were certain of attaining even a patriarchal age, would this justify you in delaying repentance? Tell me, unhappy man, art thou assured that the day of thy grace will continue to the day of thy death? Hast thou read those secret counsels of God which Gabriel himself has not beheld, and discovered that the Almighty Lord of heaven and earth will patiently wait thy leisure till thy last sigh; will consent to be slighted and despised by thee, a worm, till thy final groan?

I cannot, without shuddering, look around on you, my brethren, and think that there are perhaps some in this assembly, to whom this may be the last mean of grace which God will accompany by his influences on them; some to whom the Spirit is perhaps now giving his last excitement, on the rejection of which he will for ever depart, and the destiny of these wretched men be irreversibly fixed; some who may henceforth stand, like the blasted fig-tree, only to wither and be burnt, having that awful curse denounced, "Let no fruit grow on you for ever:" (Matt. xxi. 18.) some, on whom, as on the foolish delaying virgins, the door of divine mercy is about for ever to be closed, and whose lives will be continued, like that of Pharaoh, only to glorify the power and the justice of God; some, in one word, to whom it would be an unspeakable blessing, if God should instantly plunge them into the gulf of despair, since their flames would be far less hot, their woes far less excruciating, than they will hereafter be. God of vengeance! "my flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments!" Father of mer-

cies! forbid that any of us should experience so fearful a doom.

And if you should be excited to attend to the concerns of piety by motives so terrible, so also should you be allured to it from considering,

2. That the Redeemer is desirous that you should not, by a criminal neglect of this precious season, bring upon yourselves this destruction.

This is sufficiently proved by the tears which he shed over perishing sinners. They were not an ostentatious display of unreal feeling, for "he never knew guile." Though he no longer is accessible to grief; though no sorrow enters into the kingdom of unmingled bliss; though no tears are shed upon the throne of glory, yet he still urges you not to neglect the day of your visitation.

Can you doubt of this, when you remember the names "full of grace" which he bears, the intent of his incarnation, the tender invitations and encouraging promises he has given you, the sufferings that he underwent for your salvation, and the welcome reception which he has given to every sinner, who has fled to him for safety.

Listen also to the language which he uses as God. When he beholds sinners scorning his proffered grace, and obstinately rushing on to destruction, what is his conduct? Does he instantly dart forth his thunders, and sink them in despair? No! he affectionately cries, "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end:" (Deut. xxxii. 29.) "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me:" (Ps. lxxxii. 13.) "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" (Ezek. xxxiii. 11.) "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel?"

How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me; my repentings are kindled together:" (Hos. xi. 8.) Hear again the solemn assurance of God's holy word, that the Lord "is not willing that any should perish; but that all should come to the knowledge of the truth: (2 Pet. iii. 9.) and lest this assurance should not satisfy us, confirming it by his oath, saying, "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live:" (Ezek. xxxiii. 11.) It is true that these expressions are to be understood in a sense worthy of infinite perfection, and so as to exclude from the divinity any disappointment or sorrow. But even with these limitations, do they not convince you that the Redeemer, who now appears as "the mighty God," having "all power committed to him in heaven and on earth," desires not the sins or the miseries of man?

Do not suppose, however, that because he entertains such sentiments towards you, he will save you, though you continue impenitent. His compassion is not a weak sorrow which interferes with the claims of justice. He pities you as he pitied Jerusalem; if you like it remain impenitent, the sword of vengeance shall descend upon you as it did upon this city; and the remembrance of your Saviour's compassion shall only aggravate your torment, and shall constitute the very hell of hell.

O then, in time, weep with your weeping Saviour. Be not insensible to the tears of Immanuel. Let them not find the same hardness in your hearts as they did in those of the Jews. Let the terrors and mercies of the Lord, both of which are presented to you in this event, urge you to turn to him. If

these motives do not affect you, religion has no others to offer you, and all that we can do, is to mingle our tears with those of our Saviour, in weeping over your destiny.

But if, on the contrary, you are now resolved to renounce your sins, and instantly to devote yourselves to the Lord, the church will receive you with transport; angels will rejoice at your repentance; the compassionate Jesus will bestow upon you a "peace which passeth understanding," and will at last bear you to the Jerusalem on high, where all tears shall be wiped from your eyes, and an everlasting peace dwell in your soul. There you shall for ever fix your grateful view upon your Redeemer, and see him surrounded, not as on Mount Olivet, by a company of weak disciples, but by myriads of triumphant saints, with whom you shall join, while they swell the song of adoring praise, and cast their crowns before his throne.

SERMON CXLIII.



JESUS LEAVING PEACE TO HIS DISCIPLES.



JOHN XIV. 27.

Peace I leave with you ; my peace I give unto you : not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

THERE is no single event in the life of our compassionate Redeemer, which is not calculated to interest and instruct us. Whether we view him when the people hailed him as the promised Messiah, and shouted hosannas to the son of David, or when they covered him with reproaches, and pursued him with curses; whether we listen to him uttering the severest denunciations against the proud pharisees, or giving the most tender assurances to the humble and broken hearted; whether we behold him mingling with the rude populace of Judea, that he might reclaim them, or retiring to the mount, that, aloof from the world, he might hold sweet converse with his Father; whether we contemplate him clothed with the power of divinity, and commanding all nature, at his pleasure, or invested with our purest affections, taking little children in his arms and blessing them: in a word, at

whatever part of his conduct we look, we behold a character uniformly bright and glorious; admirable for its perfect combination of every virtue, attractive for its overflowing benignity and love.

But though all his conduct is godlike, nevertheless, the last scenes of his life shine with peculiar splendour. In proportion as he draws nearer to its close, his charity appears to burn with a warmer flame, his divinity to shed forth brighter beams through the clouds which enshrouded it. This Sun of Righteousness, now that it is about to set, emits its mildest lustre, and collects, thus to speak, all its fires. The chapter whence my text is taken, and those immediately succeeding it, confirm this observation. They present to us Jesus surrounded by his dear disciples, on the evening before his crucifixion. He is not ignorant that in a few hours his soul will experience agonies unutterable, and the ground of Gethsemane be smoking with the blood gushing from his tortured frame. He looks at his disciples professing their attachment to him, and foresees that before they sleep, one of them will betray him; another deny him with execrations; and all of them timidly abandon him to sustain his misery alone. He fully knows that he just touches that period, when he is to be scourged, buffeted, spit upon, loaded with curses; when his body, suspended between heaven and earth, is to be racked with pain; and his soul, encircled with the flames of divine justice, to be made a sacrifice for sin. In such a situation, the bare idea of which makes us to tremble, what is his deportment? Does he lament his sad destiny, and make loud protestations of his innocence, and execrate the authors of his calamities? Ah, no! with a mind serene as the regions of hea-

ven, he looks on these terrible objects; with a resolution fixed and steady as the eternal purposes of God, he advances to meet them. But though thus calm and intrepid with regard to that weight of woes which is descending on himself, he is not indifferent to the miseries of others. His sensibility is exquisitely alive to the sufferings of his disciples, and he seizes with avidity the few moments of liberty which remain to him, to arm them against the sorrows with which they will have to contend. He institutes a simple ordinance as a memorial of his death, and a pledge of his love; he commends them to the guidance and protection of his Father; he animates them by the most consolatory promises; he sustains them by the richest benedictions, and takes a solemn farewell of them in the words of the text: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

These words may be paraphrased in the following manner: 'I am now about to be taken from you, and your outward situation will be dreadful. Innumerable calamities will assail you. Your conduct in propagating my religion will be esteemed impious; you will be exposed to the bitterest persecutions; many of you will suffer the most cruel deaths. Yet let not the prospect of these evils affright you, nor induce you to decline from my service. To support you under them, I leave you a peace and quietness of mind which external troubles cannot disturb; a tranquillity which will repose in your hearts, and be insuperable by human or diabolical malice. This I call peculiarly *my* peace, because it is purchased by my blood, and applied by my Spirit, and because it is distinct from and superior to those

kinds of tranquillity derived from other sources. Your countrymen, whenever they meet or part, exclaim, *Peace be unto you*: With them this salutation is frequently an unfelt ceremony or an impotent wish. But it is not so with myself; for as I sincerely desire that you may enjoy it, so I will be careful that this desire be accomplished.' Such is the spirit of these words: the principal truths taught in them will be perceived while we illustrate these two ideas:

I. Jesus Christ gives peace to his followers:

II. He gives it not as the world does.

My brethren, I do not ask your attention! It is surely secured by such interesting words uttered on so interesting an occasion; but I ask, I beseech thee, merciful Jesus, to afford us thine aid, and whilst we are meditating on thy precious legacy, make us to enjoy it. Shed down in our souls that "peace which passeth understanding," that so our cares and fears may expire in thy bosom.

I. *Jesus Christ gives peace to his followers*; or in other words, he has opened for them sources of tranquillity and joy amidst all the calamities and afflictions of life. "*Peace I leave with you: let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*"

This will be established if we can prove these two points:

I. He has given us the most adequate supports under all the woes to which we are exposed; and,

II. He has bestowed on us positive grounds of tranquillity. That is to say, with the one hand he gives us an antidote against every sorrow, and with the other reaches forth to us the richest benedictions.

1. Look at your life and heart, and you will find

two great enemies of peace and tranquillity, *sins* and *afflictions*; and in vain will the heart sigh for rest, till in some mode the sting of sin is taken away and the bitterness of affliction removed. These effects, these desirable effects, are produced by the Redeemer, and by him alone.

While the conscience is burdened by the guilt of sin, and the mind harassed by the apprehension of that punishment to which it exposes us, we in vain hope for peace. ‘The dreadful anger of God will crush me if I die in my present situation, and I may die every moment,’ is a thought that will dash every festivity, and embitter every enjoyment. Other miseries are trifling in comparison with this sense of guilt. In the sorrows which proceed from the unkindness and injustice of the world, we may retire within our own breasts, and enjoy that pure and unalloyed satisfaction which results from conscious rectitude: but here the executioner is within us, and it is only by fleeing from ourselves that we can be calm. In most of our other sorrows we see opposed to us, men weak like ourselves, whom we may overcome, and who at most “can only kill the body, and after that, have nothing else that they can do:” but here it is the mighty God who appears as our foe; the God “who can cast both body and soul into hell,” and make us feel in every atom of which we are composed, torments which shall never end. No, no! there is no other grief that can be compared with the anguish of the soul, that is enlightened to behold the spotless purity and inflexible justice of God, and the depth of the abyss dug by its own crimes and iniquities. The tears that are wrung from us by outward afflictions, are ecstasy, compared to these quakings of the heart that has a true

sense of its guilt. It is absurd then, to talk of peace, until in some manner the anguish arising from this source be removed. It is in vain to expect tranquillity, till the mind find something to interpose between its sins and the avenging justice of a holy God. Without this, you may be stupid and senseless, but you cannot have a reasonable serenity. Without this, you may have an air of festivity and joy; but this festivity and joy will be often interrupted by the thoughts of judgment and eternity. "Even in laughter your heart will be sorrowful, and the end of your mirth will be heaviness." (Prov. xiv. 13.)

Where then shall we seek for relief to these torments which arise from a sense of guilt? Where shall the mind, terrified by the splendours of divine justice and the flashes from the infernal pit, find repose and rest? In vain will your thoughts range through heaven or earth for any thing which will afford you solid consolation, except the mediation of Jesus, the mighty peace-maker. "There only can the wearied dove find the olive of peace." Every other resort leaves it full of gloomy doubts and fearful forebodings. But in the sacrifice of Immanuel, we behold all cause of terror removed, and the most satisfying joys presented to our hopes and expectations. Embracing the merits of the Redeemer by a lively faith, the Christian no longer feels the stings of conscience; no longer trembles to look through and beyond the grave, but calmly and cheerfully waits for that period, when he shall be borne into the immediate presence and enjoyment of his God. 'It is true,' he exclaims, triumphing in the security of the divine promises, 'it is true, I am covered with sins and deserving of perdition; but

behold my acquittal sealed to me from heaven by the blood of the cross: "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus: it is God that justifieth, and who shall condemn?" I see the guilt and baseness of my transgressions; I know how terrible is that tribunal at which I must appear; how strict is that judgment which I must undergo: but Christ has died; he has already washed my soul in his blood; and he will in that eventful day appear as my advocate and deliverer. The prospect of my sins fills me with adoring thoughts of that grace which has justified me, and with deep humility before my God; but it can never fill me with a slavish terror, nor make me despair of the mercy of my Father.' Speak for me, believers, and testify that these representations are not exaggerated; tell where you found support, when your awakened conscience showed you the number and enormity of your sins, and pointed to the avenging arm of the holy God, ready to crush you: speak, where did you then find peace and tranquillity? Could you find it in the amusements and gayeties of the world? Alas! in the midst of jocoseness and pleasantry your heart was bleeding. Could you find it in the precepts of human philosophy; in the lessons of worldly wisdom? Human philosophy, worldly wisdom! alas, can these wash out the stain of the smallest sin from the conscience? Can these restrain the arm of an incensed divinity when raised to smite you? Could you find it in the endearments of friendship and affection? Ah! powerful as is the voice of friendship in dispelling other griefs; precious as are the accents of affection to the soul agitated by other disquietudes, yet they both are powerless, inefficacious, in restoring peace to the

conscience, oppressed by the weight of its sins, and shuddering with apprehensions of eternal misery. Yes, believers, you can attest that in such circumstances we in vain search creation round for tranquillity; you can attest that you could find it nowhere, till approaching the only propitiation, and pressing to your souls the cross red with his blood, you heard him whisper to your hearts in accents soothing yet authoritative: "Be of good cheer, your sins be forgiven you." Tell, for you have felt it, what joy, what peace, what tranquillity, succeeded to this cheering assurance of our gracious Immanuel; tell how it changed the voice of sorrow into accents of praise, and enabled you to "go on your way rejoicing;" tell with an holy triumph, that Jesus has given you peace with your conscience, and blotted out all your iniquities, when the whole world was unable to afford you relief. And are you the only persons who can witness to this truth? No! speak for me, ye glorified immortals; ye redeemed of every tribe and nation, who dwell in the regions of blessedness; speak, and declare to the inhabitants of earth, that none but that Jesus on whom you gaze with ever new delight, can give comfort to the troubled conscience; that nothing but the streams which flowed from those precious wounds, which you behold shining with glory, can efface the stain of guilt, and obliterate every vestige of pollution. Speak, ye that are washed in the blood of the Lamb, and declare from your own experience, that this blood can make the soul that was "red like crimson, become white as snow."

Thus then Jesus has provided for his followers effectual remedies against the griefs arising from our *sins*, the first and greatest enemy to our peace:

he has been no less careful in affording to them proper supports under those *trials*, those *crosses*, and *afflictions*, of which human life is full, and which we mentioned as the second great enemy to peace.

To comfort mankind under these crosses and trials was one of the principal aims of the philosophers of antiquity. Long before this "teacher sent from God" appeared in Judea, the most vigorous powers of mind and the most incessant application, had been employed in prescribing means to attain an undisturbed tranquillity of soul. But all these endeavours were fruitless, for grace and not nature, Jerusalem and not Athens, were appointed to teach us this heavenly art. The tear would still flow, and the heart be still wrung with anguish, whether we listened to the haughty stoic who, contradicting fact and the feelings of nature, asserted that there were no evils except in imagination, and that pain existed only in fancy; or to the epicurean who tore away every prop to the frailty of our nature, when he attributed every calamity to a senseless chance. All the schools of antiquity, discordant and clashing in every thing else, were united only in presenting unsubstantial comforts, which were too airy to support those under the pressure of real grief, or else in irritating instead of healing the wounds of the soul. But when we turn from these ineffectual consolations of the brightest ornaments of Greece and Rome, to the divine Instructor who "spake as never man spake," what different sentiments are excited! He proposes such grounds of peace and tranquillity, as will hush every painful passion, will compose every rising grief, will drive back every starting tear, or convert it into a tear of joy, and render us not pa-

tient merely, but triumphant in affliction. He gives us such instructions concerning the *author*, the *intent*, and the *issue* of afflictions, as, if they be properly realized, will cause the sorrows of life to vanish “like the morning cloud,” and the pains of mortality to dissolve “like the early dew.”

Come, children of affliction, let us open his holy volume, let us attend to his sublime instructions, to his tender consolations; and then afflictions will lose their bitterness, and those crosses, of whose weight we now complain, will be borne without a struggle or a sigh. Listen, whilst to console us he points to the *author* of these afflictions, and teaches us that they “spring not from the dust,” but are caused by the will of God; by the will of our Creator who called us into being; of our Preserver, whose power constantly exercised, prevents us from shrinking back into unconscious non-existence; of our Redeemer, who poured out his blood to rescue us from perdition; by the will of that God, who is immaculately holy in all his conduct, infinitely wise in adapting our circumstances to our situation, unspeakably merciful in all his dispensations towards us, and irresistibly powerful in the execution of his designs. When Jesus thus instructs us, ought not every murmur to be silenced? Ought we not to cry out from the bottom of our souls, ‘Since my afflictions come from God, from *my* God, whose infinite power is directed by fatherly compassion, I will not repine. Since he wounds me that made me, that governs, and that deserves to govern the world, I will not be a rebel, and revolt against his dispensations. Father, thy will be done.’

The divine teacher having thus pointed us to the author, instructs us also in the *intent* and *design* of

afflictions, that he may thus afford us a new shield against the assaults of grief. He cries to us, 'These your trials are indeed painful to nature, but they are salutary for your souls. As they proceed from Him who is love, so they are sent in love. This loss, this bereavement, this disease, is ordered by the same heart, and springs from the same rich fountain of mercy, which gave the Redeemer to expire on Golgotha. And shall any affliction then unduly depress us? We who, for the health of our bodies, take those medicines which, though unpalatable, are salutary, shall we not, unless we esteem our souls of less value than our bodies, cheerfully receive those afflictions which God in infinite mercy appoints as medicines to the soul, as admirable means to strengthen our grace and exercise our virtues, to make us quit our eager grasp of the world, and cause us to fix our affections on him who alone can satisfy the capacities of our soul?

And finally, to give us still more effectual remedies against the sorrows of life, Jesus draws aside the curtain which covers the eternal world, and points to that immortal blessedness in which these trials terminate; he tells us that all our sorrows have a certain, though it may be to us a secret connexion with our eternal happiness; that they are such necessary links in that chain conducting from earth to heaven, that if they were wanting, we should either not arrive at those regions of joy, or at least not occupy so high a station there; that these storms of adversity, rude, boisterous, as they are, shall only bear us sooner to the haven of peace, and make us enjoy with greater delight the unclouded and undisturbed serenity of heaven. Ah, Christian! ought we, dare we, when encouraged by such

hopes, when animated by such prospects, repine at the afflictions of life? Ought we not, in the exulting tone of the apostle, to exclaim, "We glory in tribulation; for our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!"

I appeal then to yourselves: has not Jesus given to his followers effectual grounds of security and peace amidst all the afflictions of life? With confidence, with triumph, we pronounce that he has. The power of these supports has been attested in every period of the church. Paul could truly say of himself and his fellow-disciples who were upheld by them, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed: for we know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." And if we descend from the apostolic age to those which immediately succeeded, we see these supports which the Saviour affords, upholding innumerable persons of every age, sex, and condition, enabling them to sing in the midst of the flames, to smile upon racks, to triumph upon the cruel wheel. And even now, when we have so degenerated from the spirit of primitive times, how many instances could we produce of the efficacy of these consolations. Ah! how often, in visiting the mansions of poverty, of sickness, of distress, have I beheld the Christian composed, submissive, even joyous, under those same visitations which filled the impious with the deepest gloom, with unmingled sorrow. How often have I seen the believer, in the midst of those woes most oppressive to nature, lifting up to heaven

eyes in which meekness, trust, affection, were expressed, and saying with a holy composure, "The cup which my father, my affectionate father has given me, shall I not drink it?"

Yes, we repeat the observation, and we repeat it with exultation, Jesus has given to his followers effectual grounds of security and peace, amidst all the afflictions of life.

Having thus established our first position, and evinced that the Saviour has provided for his followers the most powerful antidotes against those sorrows to which we are exposed on earth, it is no less easy to show,

2. That he has conferred on them *positive grounds of tranquillity* so powerful, so cheering, as to be sufficient to keep their souls in sacred peace amidst all the storms of sorrow with which they may be assailed. He was authorized to say to his weeping disciples, affrighted at the prospect of the woes rushing upon them; he is authorized to say to all those of us who are his real friends, *Peace I leave with you*, because he proffers to us *an intimate communion with God, the influences of his Holy Spirit, and the earnest of approaching glory*: three benedictions worthy of a God; three benedictions sufficient to give a heavenly joy to the soul in the most unprosperous circumstances that can be conceived.

Jesus Christ secures peace and tranquillity for his followers, by giving them an *intimate communion with God*. Yes, this glorious God, whose splendours dazzle the eagle-eyed seraphim, this holy God, who cannot view sin without abhorrence, condescends, through the atonement and intercession of Christ, to form the most strict and tender ties with us little mortals, with us sinful creatures; and to admit us to

the most intimate and delicious intercourse with him. He invites us to the most unreserved confidence in him, to the most wonderful familiarity with him; he bids us pour out all our disquietudes into his bosom, assured of finding pity and assistance; he tells us in all our fears and dangers to flee to him for succour, and rely on him for security: and when we obey these calls, when by often betaking ourselves to God we become acquainted with him; when by frequent prayer, meditation, and other practices of devotion, we “follow hard after him,” and attend close upon him, he is accustomed to break in upon the soul with flashes of joy, to warm it with beams of comfort, to breathe into it the inspirations of heaven, to speak peace to the heart, and shed through it a thousand consolations: when on our knees before him, we feel our hearts dissolving with love and flowing out to his bosom, we find the rich tide of affection soon rolling back from God to our souls, and bringing with it pleasures which are unutterable. O precious hours of communion with my Maker! O inestimable privilege of fellowship with my God! blest with thee, what more can I desire; enjoying thee, what can I fear! Say, my brethren, say, can a man who has these enjoyments be deprived of peace? Can the tempests of earth agitate that steady soul which has an anchor thus fixed in the heaven of heavens, and fastened to the very throne of God? What care, what fear, what inquietude can intrude within that breast which enjoys this delicious intercourse with the Lord? Look over the whole circle of human miseries, and see if there be one which will not contract itself and shrink into nothing, when we enjoy these ravishing consolations. Is the Christian bereft of his wealth, and left a prey to poverty? Can

this inordinately afflict him when he can look up to heaven, and say, ' My eternal inheritance is yet unimpaired ; my possessions beyond the skies are yet secure ; I am yet rich, for I have still my God left me, the maker, the owner, the distributor of all things.' Is the Christian scorned, slandered, contemned by the world? What then, provided he has " that honour which cometh from God only." Esteeming the favour of God happiness enough without the applauses of mortals, he can look at the world, and smile and pity it. Is the Christian left destitute of friends, bereaved of relatives, in solitude and dereliction? Ah ! " that man never knew what it is to be familiar with God, that complains of the want of friends while God is with him : He alone is a thousand companions ; he alone is a world of friends." Resting our weary head on his faithful bosom, having him and his glorious angels with us, and permitted familiarly to converse with him, what more do we need? Review in like manner those other internal afflictions or outward woes, which assail the children of men, and see if you can select a single one which the habitual exercise of communion with God will not enable the believer to endure with patience, and perfect acquiescence of soul. Was not then the Saviour warranted to say to his disciples, to those same disciples who were just entering upon a scene of woes, persecutions, and indignities from which nature recoiled, and who most of them were to seal their ministry with their blood ; was he not warranted to say to them, "*Peace I leave with you : let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid,*" since he had secured for them that communion with God which could uphold them under every calamity. I say, He had secured it ; for remember,

my brethren, that it is only through the atonement of Christ that this privilege was obtained for us. Without this atonement, the holiness and justice of God would have planted round the eternal throne a barrier more insuperable than the cherubim and fiery flaming sword, which guarded the access to the tree of life.

Do any of you, my brethren, regard these representations as visions of fancy, having no existence in real life, or as flights of enthusiasm? Believe me, you deceive your own souls; believe me, many thousand followers of the Lamb have found in this intercourse with their God pleasures incomparably greater than those I have described. I appeal to experience for a confirmation of their reality. Not to the experience of those cold formal professors who abound in our churches, who whilst they attend to the exteriors of religion, neglect to cultivate its inward power; who are desirous of *appearing* holy, and careless of *being* so; who perform with assiduity those duties, in the discharge of which the eyes of men are fixed upon them, but who neglect those exercises which exclude all other witnesses than God and their own consciences. To the experience of these men we do not appeal; for they are strangers to communion with God; alas! they are strangers to vital religion. But we appeal to those warm-hearted believers, who daily are cementing this heavenly familiarity, by renewing their intercourse with God, who often talk with him in the secret of their closet, and hourly direct their thoughts to their Father and their Friend. Speak, and declare that God deals familiarly with men; draw for a moment that veil with which your modesty has covered the interior of your soul, and show us that your hearts

have been inundated with pleasures which the world can never bestow, which the men of the world can never conceive. We appeal to the noble army of confessors and martyrs, who, through communion with God, rose superior to all the fury of men. We appeal to the saints of the Old Testament and the New, who, in an intercourse with God, had heaven let down into their souls, and almost emulated the joys of angels.

Jesus Christ then gives peace to his followers, since he has secured for them communion with God.

But this is only the first of his benedictions. He confers also the *Holy Spirit*, that bond and ligament connecting God and the soul of the believer. This Spirit, purchased by the Saviour upon the cross, and conferred through his intercession, by his *enlightening*, his *renewing*, his *comforting* influences, sheds through the soul of the believer a stable and solid peace.

As the *enlightening Spirit*, he presents to our minds those great truths of religion which affect, which interest, and delight us. He removes the veil which conceals futurity, and directs our attention to the eternity of happiness, the perfection of holiness, the consummation of joy which God reserves for his children. He exhibits in a clear and attractive light the excellences of God, the perfections of Immanuel. These and the other important truths of religion, he impresses on the believer, not in a cold speculative manner, but so as to excite the highest delight. Tell, Christians, how at some favoured moments your souls, under his instruction, have, as it were, leaped beyond the confines of this dark prison of earth, and all-surrounded by light, placed themselves before the throne of the Eternal. You have then fixed a steady eye upon the glory which

he unveiled, and filled with admiration and love, have shouted, This glory is mine, given me by the Father, purchased by the Son, applied by the Spirit; and the current of time as it rolls along, is rapidly bearing me to the full participation of it! Tell with what ecstasy you contemplated the attributes of Deity, the graces of the Saviour, when this "Spirit of wisdom and revelation took of the things of God, and showed them unto you" with an evidence and sweetness, which philosophy could never attain. Tell how, at such times, these enchanting glimpses darkened the lustre of earthly joy, made the severest afflictions of mortality vanish from observation, and filled your hearts with that peace which the Saviour here promises to you.

But this Spirit which enlightens, is also the *renewing Spirit*; and how much tranquillity and satisfaction does the exercise of this part of his office give to the soul. To find harmony restored to our irregular affections, to see the passions formerly untamed submitting to the yoke of religion; to behold our native depravity losing its reigning power, and the image of God re-impressed upon us: is not this a desirable, a delightful contemplation? To have a heavenly temper implanted within us, the seeds of glory sown in our breasts, a burning love to the Being of beings, and a tender affection for mankind glowing in our hearts; is not this a state calculated to afford us peace? But these effects are produced in a greater or less degree on every believer, when renewed by the Holy Ghost, he has "Christ formed in him the hope of glory."

And finally, it is part of the office of this same Spirit, by his *consoling* influences, to dissipate the cloud of sorrow, and cause the sunshine of heaven

to break in upon the soul. Oh! how often, Christians, has he given you “the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness?” How often in times of darkness, of perplexity, of gloom, has he spoken to your heart and said, “Be of good cheer;” how often in seasons of wo and affliction, has he given you a warm feeling of the love of God, a calm hope of your adoption, which banished your sorrow, and made your heart swell with delight! How often, when filled with gloomy fears and forebodings, has he by the application of some sweet promise, by recalling some consolatory truth, enabled you to “stay yourselves on the Lord, to rejoice in the God of your salvation!” Though he dispenses these consolations in various degrees to different persons, yet there are no Christians who do not enjoy them in some degree; and sure I am that no Christian would exchange the smallest ray of this divine consolation, for all the combined happiness that has resulted from earthly sources, from the creation of the world to this very hour. Must not then the Christian enjoy peace and tranquillity?

Finally, Jesus is ready to confer on believers, and will confer on them, if they be not wanting to themselves, the *earnests of future glory*, the pledges of eternal felicity. The Saviour offers these to all, and commands us to obtain them; and it is not owing to want of power or defect of will in him, but to our own lukewarmness, if we do not obtain them. Judge now for yourselves, whether he who has complied with this duty, and has hopes full of immortality, has not a peace so excellent as to be worthy to be the last bequest of the dying Saviour. He knows that every moment bears him nearer to his Father and

his Redeemer; that every pain and sorrow that befalls him, is intended and calculated to loosen the bonds which connect him to earth, and prepare his soul to take its flight to the regions of blessedness. And can the sorrows of life be weighty to him who knows that they will so speedily and so gloriously terminate? When his affections and desires form for him a Pisgah, elevated upon which he contemplates the beauties of the promised land, must not all the sorrows of life cease to disquiet him; and can any regret remain to him, except that he cannot at one leap pass over his threescore years and ten, and enter upon his heavenly inheritance?

Thus we have established our first position, that *Jesus gives peace to his followers*: renew your attention while we show,

II. *That he gives it not as the world does.*

We have already remarked to you, that amongst the Jews the customary form both of saluting a person and bidding him farewell, was by using the words, *Peace be unto you*. The Saviour alludes to this custom when he says, *Peace I leave with you*; but to show that he does not merely use a common form in a common manner, he adds the remark so worthy of our attention, "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you." As though he had said, "The men of the world frequently give the salutation of peace to each other without *sincerely* wishing that it may be conferred; I *heartily desire* that you may enjoy it. The men of the world are *unable* to confer the peace which in their salutations they desire for their brethren; my wishes are *not thus impotent*; I am abundantly able to accomplish them. The peace of the world is *transitory*, and endures but for a moment; the peace which I give will *continue for ever*." The

insincerity, the *impotence*, the *transitoriness* of the peace of the world, contrasted with the *sincerity*, the *power*, the *duration* of the peace of Jesus: these will claim your attention in this part of the discourse.

1. When the world exclaims to us, *Peace be unto you!* this exclamation is often *void of sincerity*. A person need only cast a rapid glance over the world, to find numbers, whose words, instead of being the unequivocal interpreters of their sentiments, are in direct opposition to them; numbers, who cultivate with assiduity the execrable art of concealing the most unworthy designs, by an imposing and affectionate exterior; numbers, who with a cruel dexterity dissemble the emotions of their soul that they may abuse the unsuspecting sincerity of those with whom they converse; numbers, who embrace with seeming cordiality him whose ruin they are meditating; who decorate and adorn with garlands the victim that they are leading to the slaughter. How often, whilst the heart is warmed by no tender feeling, whilst it is freezing with indifference, nay, whilst it is rankling with envy, or disquieted by anger, do professions of regard and attachment proceed from the lips! How often are proffers of service, and desires for our happiness, uttered by the mouth that has just been employed in stabbing our reputation, and that in a few minutes will load us with slanders, and hold us up to ridicule! Such is the world; and he who, believing all its professions, relies upon it, is just as wise as the man who should attempt to rear an edifice on the light air, or on the yielding waves of the sea. I do not give an exaggerated representation of its insincerity. Those of you will attest its truth, who, deceived by vain assurances of affection, by feigned expressions of respect, supposed that you

had found warm and real friends; but who, in the hour of trial, have found these pretended friends, on whose professions and caresses you confidently relied, cold, distant, insensible to the voice of your needs, treacherously abandoning you. Those of you will attest its truth, who have been the dupes of the men whom you imagined truly attached to your interests; whose confidence has been betrayed by those in whom you supposed it most surely placed; who have found by sad experience, that the professions of the world are generally a stratagem which self-love employs for the accomplishment of its designs. Yes, my brethren, it is too evident, that when the world, with a flattering voice and a smiling countenance, cries to us, *Peace be unto you*, this wish generally comes not from the heart, and is infected with the mortal poison of insincerity.

Disgusted with its treachery, indignant at its falsehood, let us turn our thoughts towards the Saviour. He also exclaims, *Peace be unto you*; he also cries, *Peace I leave with you*; but he gives this peace to his disciples, *not as the world does*. There is no falsehood, no dissimulation in the expressions of his friendship, in the good wishes which he utters; they proceed from a heart which never knew guile, into which deceit never entered. Hating and reproving every sin, his indignation was however peculiarly excited by fraud and hypocrisy; and if he ever laid aside his meekness and gentleness, it was to direct his thunders and pronounce his woes upon the Pharisees, whose outward deportment and language accorded not with their inward sentiments. "All his promises are yea and amen:" "None ever trusted in him, and were confounded." He never deceived the hope, he never betrayed the confidence

of a single soul that relied upon his assurances, and rested upon his word. In thus commending the Saviour, do I assert what is questionable and incapable of proof? Ah no! every single believer on earth, every single glorified spirit in heaven, is ready to lift up his voice, and avouch the faithfulness, the veracity, the sincerity, of his Redeemer. Believers, tell the unhappy men who have no other reliance than a world which perpetually dupes, deludes, disappoints them, that the Saviour is a friend who will never frustrate their expectations, who will in the hour of trial justify his sincerity by the most clear and unequivocal proofs. Tell them that when in seasons of affliction and distress the world abandoned you, and forgot all those professions which it so prodigally made in the hour of your prosperity, the promises of Jesus were not neglected by him, his declarations were verified by the consolations which he gave you, and the unkindness and treachery of others were forgotten, whilst with the beloved disciple, you leaned on his sympathizing bosom, and there poured out your griefs and disburdened your sorrows. Inhabitants of heaven, ye can declare that during the whole course of your pilgrimage on earth, your heavenly friend ever attested the sincerity of his affection by fulfilling every promise, by satisfying every hope which he authorized you to form, by "never leaving nor forsaking you." Ye can tell us, that when in your closing hours you committed your departing souls with all their wants, and sins, and interests to him, he proved a faithful Redeemer, receiving your disembodied spirits into his embraces, appearing as their Advocate and Saviour before the eternal throne, blotting out all their sins by the precious blood which gushed from his veins upon Cal-

vary, and imputing to them his perfect righteousness. Ye can tell us, that in the land of blessedness in which you dwell, all his promises are fulfilled, all his assurances verified, all your expectations exceeded; and having thus suspended for a moment your adoration, to proclaim to us the praises of your Saviour, ye again will fall before his throne and with renewed fervour exclaim, "Faithful and true are all thy ways, thou King of Saints!"

Oh, my brethren! ought we not to seek the friendship of such a Saviour? Amidst the fluctuations and miseries of life, we need some sure support on which we may confidently lean, some faithful friend on whom we may unreservedly rely: an insincere world is not calculated to be such a support, such a friend: an insincere world will act towards us as the treacherous Joab did to Amasa, come with the accents of peace in its mouth, while it is preparing to stab us to the heart: a sincere, a faithful, a guileless Jesus, is such a sure support, such a precious friend.

2. When the world exclaims to us, *Peace be unto you*, it is not always insincere and deceitful; but even when it most strongly desires our felicity, it is *weak, and without power to afford us a complete felicity*. Man is feeble, indigent, unhappy. We are subject to so many infirmities, so many afflictions surround us, so many evils assail us, that it is impossible to make the humiliating detail of them; and surely, then, it is impossible that the world can remove them. Tell me, ye mortals, who are blest with a generous temper, and placed in a situation where you can exercise your friendship by the bestowal of all the favours which the world idolizes; tell me, what are the enjoyments which your friends may

expect from you? A little wealth, a little glory, some pleasures, some advantages, which always bear that stamp of imperfection that is attached to all terrestrial objects. This is all that your most ingenious and most communicative kindness can bestow. But, I appeal to yourselves, can this make me perfectly happy, since I have numberless inward sources of sorrow which are not at all affected by these outward blessings? To be happy, the guilt of sin must be removed from my soul, and the reign of sin in my heart be abolished: to be happy, my mind must be enlightened, my soul purified, my affections and passions restored to order and harmony, my will subjugated to the will of God, my eternal felicity secured, and an offended Judge converted into a tender Father. The aching void in my heart will not be filled, till these effects be produced: tell me, generous mortals, can you produce them? Can you avert ten thousand other evils which press upon me, and prevent me from being perfectly happy? Oh no! though you say from the heart, *Peace be unto you*; though you sincerely desire that I should enjoy a consummate and unmingled felicity, yet your power, far more limited than your wishes, prevents you from conferring it on me.

Thus unable to find full happiness from the world, shall we, my brethren, entirely despair of attaining it? No, for Jesus *gives peace not as the world does*; his wishes can all be accomplished, for *his power is irresistible*. Raise your thoughts then from feeble mortals to the mighty Saviour: "He is able to do abundantly above what we ask or think;" he gives unmingled felicity to angels; can he not satisfy worms? The possessor of heaven and of earth, he can at his will dispose of the treasures which they

a just subserviency and subordination to the great end we have in view. Nay, a certain measure of them is necessary: "Our heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of these things;" and he hath therefore made it our duty, by conscientious labour and lawful industry, to seek for them; and yet we are forbidden to suffer the world to have dominion over our hearts; and how hard is it to labour for it, to pursue it, to see its charms spread out before us, and apparently within our reach, and yet not inordinately to love it.

But nothing, perhaps, can so strongly prove the dangerous influence of worldly enjoyments, as the conduct of Divine Providence towards the children of God. We sometimes see, it is true, those who are surrounded with earthly enjoyments devoted to God; but such instances are comparatively rare. In general, we find that worldly prosperity intoxicates the mind, and that few are able to bear it with sobriety and moderation; and if the real Christian is surrounded by earthly blessings, a variety of corrective strokes of a different kind is found necessary, to counterwork their influence.

4. The world assaults the believer by its *persecution* and *rage*, by its *injuries* and *scoffs*.

In the first ages of Christianity, the path to heaven was a path of blood, and believers were called to bear their testimony to religion on the rack and in the flames. Through the mercy of God, we need not now fear such sufferings; yet still the Christian is often loaded with the scoffs and sneers of the ungodly. True, vital religion, not being generally embraced, cannot expect to meet with general approbation. Indeed, there is something in the genuine Christian so opposite to the spirit and maxims of the

world, that it is not surprising he should be often treated with derision. Besides, believers are often obliged, by the irresistible call of duty, openly to declare their opposition and abhorrence of things sanctioned by the world; and if by such conduct they do not reform, they inflame, they irritate, and excite the enmity of the ungodly. And even if he attempts nothing directly, yet the life of every strict and conscientious Christian is a constant reproach upon the careless or more dissolute lives of those with whom he is surrounded. It, as it were, flashes light upon the dark and sleepy conscience; it disturbs the tranquillity of the impenitent; and if it does not reform them, it causes them to regard the believer as a troubler of their joy, and to view him with resentment or contempt, or with a mixture of both. How hard is it to bear such treatment with patience and resignation! How many, whose good resolutions have been shaken by the mockeries and insults with which libertines have treated the pious; by the malignant and diabolical pleasure with which they have seized upon the smallest failings of the believer, and held them up with bitter scorn and wicked exaggerations to the public gaze! How many who, afraid of the raileries and scoffs which attend an inflexible adherence to duty, have abandoned that firm and independent deportment which becomes the Christian; have striven in almost every point to accommodate their conduct to that of the world; and have endeavoured, by means which wounded their conscience and marred their peace, to diminish the contrast which ought ever to subsist between the lives of the pious and of the impenitent.

Such are the chief modes in which the world assails the believer; and who of us can reflect upon them without being filled with a holy fear and apprehension, with a trembling sense of his danger, and with a deep persuasion of his need of divine aid to overcome an enemy who attacks us in a manner so powerful and so various? But be not discouraged, believers; the world has been conquered by your Saviour, and through his grace *you may also triumph over it.* This we are to prove to you in the

IId. Division of our discourse.

When the apostle says, that those who are born of God overcome the world, he does not mean to assert that they are never sensible of its assaults, and never injured by them. God, no doubt for reasons infinitely wise, though perhaps inscrutable by us, has thought proper to leave believers but partially sanctified whilst they are in this world, and to suffer the remains of depravity to dwell within them. In consequence of this state of imperfection, the world may sometimes obtain a momentary triumph, through the weakness, the errors, or the unguardedness of Christians; but these defeats are only temporary; in the habitual temper of their souls and conduct of their lives, the children of God have a mastery over the world. They cannot remain under the dominion of their adversary; they quickly rise from their defeats more watchful and more guarded; they resume their combat in the strength of the Lord, and persevere in it to the end of their lives.

When the apostle says, that "he who is born of God overcomes the world," he does not mean to assert that all Christians have obtained equal advantages over this enemy. In some, the Christian graces are more weak and feeble; they have not often used

their spiritual armour, nor acquired strength from a long and successful contest. Their course is therefore less brilliant; they have to mourn over many humbling defeats; and their lives, too unsteady and wavering, afford little comfort to themselves and little benefit to others. Others, more firm, more animated, and more prudent, hold on a steady course; each day gain some new victory over their foe; and give a brilliant example to the world. But though there are such different degrees of victory, they all of them are superior to the world.

The weapons which they use are correspondent to the assaults that are made upon them. When they are assailed by the *example* of the world, they oppose to it more dignified, more illustrious, more holy models of conduct. They ascend by their thoughts even to heaven; they behold there the all-perfect God, and they resolve to imitate him as far as a creature can imitate its Creator. They meditate on the spotless character of Jesus; they resolve to follow his footsteps, and conform themselves to him as far as human weakness, strengthened by power from on high, will enable them. They contemplate the innumerable society of angels, the first-born, the most glorious part of creation; they trace the long succession of patriarchs, of prophets, of apostles, and martyrs; they remember their pious friends who once fought under the banners of Jesus, and who, dying in his love, now rest from their labours: these they choose as their patterns, and select as their guides. When the world accuses believers of singularity in their sentiments and conduct, they point to those illustrious models; they cry with a holy triumph, 'No! we are not singular: our faith and our practice is approved by God, the

Redeemer, and the holy angels; the path in which we tread is that which has been traversed by all the redeemed, and which will be pursued by all who shall succeed us to the consummation of all things. These we have chosen as our eternal companions; these we take as our models; and we equally pity and wonder at the folly of those who would prefer the example of the impenitent and the unholy, of the slaves of Satan and the heirs of perdition.'

When the world assails the believer *by its false sentiments and relaxed maxims*, he opposes to it the law and the testimony of God. He feels that it is infinitely more safe and happy to follow the precepts and directions of him who cannot err, than to listen to the pleadings of the passions or the sophisms of iniquity. He acknowledges but one lawgiver, that is God; he knows that whatever is imposed by this lawgiver is just and right, and that at his bar our eternal destinies will be decided. He therefore cries to the scoffing worldling, 'Your silly jests and impious sneers may now harden you in guilt, and drown the reproaches of your conscience; but they will not support you on the bed of death, they will die upon your trembling lips when you stand at the bar of your God. For my part, I take the holy volume as my rule, as a lamp to my feet during my life, as a supporter in the hour of dissolution, as the standard to which I must conform my life, since by it my future doom must be fixed. Prove from it that a worldly, careless, thoughtless life, is safe or happy; and I will then acknowledge the justice of your maxims and the wisdom of your conduct.'

When the world assails the Christian by its *pleasures*, he opposes to these pleasures those that result from communion with God, and those that are re-

served for the pious beyond the grave. He feels that the pleasures of religion are the only ones that can fill the capacities of his soul, and that are coeval with its existence; the only ones that accord with the sublimity of his hopes and the grandeur of his destination. Whilst he contemplates those enjoyments of which the glorified partake, the joys of earth shrivel into insignificance, and he is astonished at the stupidity of those, who for the meagre and unsatisfactory pleasures of earth, barter away a felicity infinite in degree, and eternal in duration.

When the world assails him by its *persecution* and *fury*, he is supported by a consciousness of the approbation of God, and by the silent applause of his heart. He knows that God beholds him, and for wise and benevolent reasons permits that he should undergo these sufferings; he knows that this tender Father stands by him, sees him contending with sorrows for his sake, and "will not suffer him to be tempted above what he is able to bear," but will "make all things work together for his good." He remembers that he treads in the path in which Jesus went before him, and he hears the consolatory voice of this gracious master saying unto him, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." He remembers that the crown of glory is just before him, and anticipates the time when, like Moses from the top of Nebo, he shall look back upon all the dangers and sorrows of the wilderness; and from this retrospect enjoy with greater delight the unclouded and undisturbed felicity of heaven. Supported by these hopes and animated by these considerations, he repulses this last assault of the world, and overcomes this foe.

In concluding this discourse, let us,

1. Seriously examine whether we have obtained this victory. Without it, we in vain hope for heaven; for "if any man" supremely "love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." If there is any earthly object that we are not ready to lay down as a sacrifice, and to reject as a snare, when it comes in competition with our duty to God, he does not possess the first place in our hearts. Solemnly then inquire whether you have obtained the mastery over this foe, or whether you are bound by its chains. And in order to decide this question, see whether you have a living, practical, efficacious *faith*; for you are assured by the apostle, in the words immediately succeeding the text, that "this is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith." If then you are actuated only by natural principles, if the Holy Spirit has not implanted in your souls that faith which purifies the heart, which shows us the infinite importance of everlasting things, and endues us with supernatural power; however painful may be your exertions, however severe your struggles against the world, you are yet its slaves, and shall perish with it.

2. How small is the number of the children of God! Look around you: how many do you observe who, instead of regarding this world as an enemy, view it only as a friend, and consider themselves happy merely in proportion as they acquire its enjoyments; how many, the sole object of whose life is to procure the blessings of earth, and who, unrestrained by the fear or love of God, are ready to commit any crime to attain the object of their wishes! how many, who, though impressed in some degree with the truths of religion, yet fluctuate perpetually be-

tween God and the world, and refuse to give him the undivided throne in their hearts. All these, we are assured by the unerring oracles of truth, shall never enter into the kingdom of heaven: and do not these compose the greater part of our race? Unhappy men! who for fugitive and unsubstantial pleasures, which cannot perfectly satisfy them even here, which cannot diminish their pains and apprehensions on the bed of death, which make no provision for that eternity which is before them, which cannot interpose between them and everlasting perdition when they close their eyes upon the earth. Unhappy men! who for such trifles renounce those pure and holy delights, which remorse never embitters, which death cannot impair, which will grow and expand throughout eternity. Stop for a moment in your career to ruin; seriously contrast all the blessings which the world can give its votaries with those treasures of grace, those merits of Jesus, those influences of the Spirit, those splendours of glory, with which God crowns those who choose him as their portion. Between these make a deliberate election; and in deciding, remember that you will have a whole eternity of joy, or a whole eternity of misery, in which you will have to felicitate yourselves for the wisdom, or curse yourselves for the folly, of your choice.

3. Let this subject induce you, believers, to live near to God. You have been told that you stand not by your own power, but by that "faith which is the gift of God." Pray then continually, that this grace may be strengthened in you: look to your interceding Saviour, and implore him to plead for you, as he did for Peter, "that your faith fail not."

You have been told of the numbers whose conduct once excited the hopes of the pious, but whom the world overcame. Their histories are beacons to warn and direct you: beware, lest the succeeding generation should have reason to unite your name with theirs, and point to you also as a sad monument of the power of the world.

SERMON CXLV.



MINISTRY OF ANGELS.



HEB. i. 14.

Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation?

MAN stands at the head of the visible creation, and serves to connect two widely different orders of being. Compounded of body and soul, by his *body* he bears an affinity to the beasts, that are not endued with an immortal spirit, and by his *soul* to those superior intelligences, who are not united to matter, nor encumbered with body.

That such intelligences exist, reason, or the remains of a primitive revelation, taught every people that has ever lived. Differing in almost every other subject of belief, nations of every climate and age,

and religion, have, nevertheless, concurred in acknowledging that, between us and God, there are innumerable orders of spirits, far excelling us in every natural and moral quality. The universality of this belief is a strong presumption of its truth, and of its consistence with reason.

Indeed, it would appear almost impossible for any person who had, with any attention, examined the works of God, and observed the various gradations of being, to doubt of the existence of angels. We ascend, step by step, from dull, inert, unorganized matter, to the living plant, the perceptive brute, and the reasonable man. And, having risen to an immaterial substance, endued with such powers and faculties as the human soul, shall we suppose that the great scale and gradation of being ends there? Will we not feel ourselves compelled to believe that, between us and Deity, numberless creatures intervene, possessed of perfection, power, and excellency, beyond our present conception?

But we are not left on this subject to the dim lights of unassisted reason. The holy scriptures are full of proofs, not merely of the existence of angels, but also of their care and watchfulness over the pious, of their fellowship and communion with the saints. Nothing can be more explicit on this point than the words of our text, in which St. Paul, speaking of the blessed angels, says, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation?" Though the apostle here uses the interrogatory form, he does not by it intimate any doubt of the truth of the question which he asks, but only designs, by this mode of speaking, more strongly to affirm it, more pointedly

to appeal to the general belief of the Hebrews, and their own knowledge of the scriptures.

This subject, my brethren, though so much neglected, is worthy of our serious attention. Since God has revealed to us, that by his orders the heavenly host defend, instruct, and support his children, we must surely be ungrateful if we do not sometimes meditate on this glorious privilege, and render our thanksgivings for it to our heavenly Father. And besides, we must be regardless of our own comfort, and indifferent to our own felicity, if we do not strive to obtain a constant persuasion and a deep sense of a doctrine so calculated to console us in our sorrows, to quiet our fears, and to animate us to diligence in our Christian course.

I well know, that on this subject many persons have substituted the impulses of imagination, in place of the cool deductions of reason, and the sacred lights of revelation. I well know that many persons, "desirous to be wise above what is written," have, when speaking of the heavenly host, delivered opinions, not only unsupported by the scripture, but inconsistent with its holy teachings. I well know that it is a subject which has often excited the pitiful sneer of the modern sadducee and conceited unbeliever; but I know also, that these considerations should not deter us from a sober examination of this precious truth. God has not revealed it for no purpose; he has not written it down in the holy volume with a design that we should never attend to it; he expects our gratitude and adoration for this proof of his paternal affection and goodness: we are, therefore, bound to inquire into the nature of this angelic ministry. And besides, according to the

judicious remark of Dr. Owen, “we have the word of God for our way and guide; and if we go not *beside* it, and if we go not *beyond* it, we are as safe when we treat of angels as when we treat of worms.”

In illustrating this subject, we shall,

I. Examine the names, number, and perfections of the angels;

II. Inquire into the extent, duration, and nature of their ministry; and,

III. Point out some of those practical lessons which result from this doctrine.

I. The *names* bestowed upon these high intelligences are indicative of their nature or occupations; it is then proper to begin with an examination of them. One of the most common names given to them is *angels*, the primitive meaning of which word is *messengers*; it therefore denotes the office to which they are appointed, of carrying on the intercourse between God and his creatures. They are called *spirits*, to show that they are incorporeal, and not naturally subject to dissolution; *seraphim*, from a word signifying to *burn*, in order to express their fervent zeal and ardent love; *cherubim*, of the derivation and precise meaning of which term there is much doubt; *watchers*, (Dan. iv. 13.) to display their own vigilance and their care in exciting others; *morning-stars*, (Job xxxviii. 7.) from the splendour of their nature, the brightness of their knowledge, and the earliness of their creation; *sons of God*, (Job xxxviii. 7.) not by adoption, like the pious; much less by eternal generation, like the blessed Redeemer; but because they bear the impress of the perfections of God; *thrones*, *dominions*, *principalities*, and *powers*, (Col. i. 16.) because of their high dignity and elevation.

These are the most common names whereby they are distinguished in holy writ. As to their *number*, it is almost inconceivable. Our Lord speaks of "more than twelve legions" who would instantly fly to his succour if he required it. (Matt. xxvi. 53.) Daniel beheld "thousand thousands" ministering to the ancient of days; (Dan. vii. 10.) St. John in prophetic vision saw "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;" (Rev. v. 11.) and St. Paul, who had been caught up to the third heaven, attempts not to reckon them up, but calls them an "innumerable company." (Heb. xii. 22.)

The capacity of their minds, and the degree of their knowledge, exceed, inconceivably exceed, those of our feeble and short-sighted race. No prejudices nor passions pervert their judgments, nor disguise from them the truth. No cumbersome body, fatigued with the intensity of their application, interrupts their meditations, or obliges them to intermit their researches. They live in the region of light; and there contemplating God, the eternal source of truth, they behold truth itself, unveiled and unclouded. They have existed for many thousands of years; they have beheld not only a great part of what has been transacted on this our world, from the period of its creation, but also what has been done in the other parts of God's dominion. To what a point then must the most extensive human knowledge be contracted, when compared with theirs!

If they thus shine with light, they *also burn with love*. It is all their employment and all their felicity to admire, adore, serve, and imitate God. There is no moment of their existence in which their souls are not penetrated with a rapturous and adoring sense of his glory and excellence; in which they

are not overwhelmed with gratitude for his mercy and goodness. Their hearts are so many altars, flaming by day and by night with the most intense love, with the most elevated devotion. Losing themselves in the contemplation of the works and attributes of God, absorbed, thus to speak, in the Eternal All, they continually cast their crowns before him; and prostrating themselves at his throne, exclaim in holy ecstasy, "Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto God for ever and ever. Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are all thy ways, thou King of saints!"

These sublime intelligences are also endued with *power*, which, although limited, is yet far, very far superior to that of the mightiest mortals. David teaches us, that they "excel in strength;" (Ps. ciii. 20.) and St. Paul terms them, the "mighty angels;" (2 Thes. i. 7.) The Scriptures abound with the most striking examples of their power. Here we behold one passing through the land of Egypt, and in a single night destroying the first-born of every family, from that of the imperial Pharaoh to that of his meanest subject. (Exod. xii. 29, 30.) There we see another in the same short period exterminating the army of the proud Sennacherib, and delivering Israel, by bringing to the tomb an hundred and four-score and five thousand of its furious and malignant enemies. (2 Kings xix. 35.) Every where, in short, we find them exerting the most wonderful strength for the protection of the pious, and the punishment of the ungodly.

These angels are *immortal*, and will never cease to exist. Of this we are assured by the Saviour when he tells us, that the pious; after the resurrection,

“cannot die any more since they are equal, or like unto the angels.” (Luke xx. 36.) These exalted beings are creatures; they therefore began to be, and owe their existence to God; but being made pure spirits they are not naturally subject to dissolution; and being perfectly holy, they need not dread that death which is the wages of sin. Whilst one generation of mortals succeeds to another, they still survive; they were living when the Almighty first fixed the sun in the heavens; they beheld the first rays that it shed forth, and saw time begin its course, and they will still exist to behold the sun and the moon torn from the skies; to behold time swallowed up in eternity. They were living when God first infused the vital spirit in our great progenitor; they saw him open his eyes upon the light, and close them in the tomb; they have beheld the uncounted millions of his posterity flitting in succession over the scene of life, and giving place to others as transient and unsubstantial as themselves; and they will still live when this world, the residence of mortals, and these material heavens on which we gaze, shall be consumed together; they will live whilst eternity endures; they will live for ever and ever.

These blessed spirits are most *agile* and *active*. We find them in the Scriptures in an instant descending from heaven to earth, or returning from earth to heaven. We find them performing, with a celerity almost inconceivable, the most stupendous works. Unimpeded by these clogs of flesh, unrestrained by this dull and sluggish matter to which we are united, they fly to perform the divine will with a velocity far superior to that of the rapid lightning; with a velocity of which nothing can give us any conception, except perhaps it be the fleet glances

of the human mind which in an instant can reach to the bounds of the universe.

Finally: these angels enjoy a *consummate felicity*. How can it be otherwise, since their faculties of enjoyment are so vast, and the objects to be enjoyed so glorious and inexhaustible? How can it be otherwise, since they are encompassed by the love of God; since, from the exhaustless source of his all-sufficiency, this God pours upon them that full ocean of delights, some drops only of which, when shed down in the hearts of his children on earth, give them an anticipated heaven?

But though these exalted intelligences are thus happy, though, seated on the Rock of ages, they feel no anxiety or distress, yet they are not indifferent to the happiness of mortals; they extend their sensibility and their views to this unhappy world where sin and sorrow prevail; they leave the climes of bliss, and with joy fly hither to execute the commands of God, and minister to his children. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation?"

We are to consider the reasons, the extent, the nature, and duration, of this their ministry, in the

IId. Head of our discourse.

1. As God by his word alone originally produced all things, so he could govern them by his word alone, without using the instrumentality of inferior agents. It is not then through weakness or necessity, but for reasons full of wisdom and goodness, that he employs the ministry of angels to accomplish the designs of his providence. He does it to honour the angels by making them, in the strong language of the scripture, "workers together with him." He does it to give to his children an exam-

ple of obedience which is calculated to inspire them with a desire to do the will of God on earth as it is done by the angels of heaven. He does it to console and cheer the pious, by showing them that he is so attentive to their interests, so careful of their felicity, as to employ his own glorious retinue for their benefit and support. He does it, that by the bestowal and reception of good offices, the ties that will for ever unite angels and believers may be more closely cemented. He does it to promote the harmony of the universe, by connecting together in the tenderest bonds superior and inferior creatures, things visible and invisible. He does it for the manifestation of his own glory and greatness, which are displayed by the alacrity, the joy, and zeal, with which such noble and exalted creatures fly at his command. He does it to show the dignity and elevation of Jesus Christ. This blessed Saviour is exalted "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come;" (Eph. i. 22.) and is made the prince, the head, and the governor of the angels. If then you are but little affected when you consider Jesus as the Head of the church on earth, raise your thoughts to heaven, behold the splendid hosts of angels that are there subject to him, and are employed by him for the service of his people; and you cannot but be impressed with a sense of his dignity and greatness. For these and similar reasons God uses the ministry of angels.

2. This ministry is not committed to a few hundred, or a few thousand, of the heavenly host. Each one of the various orders of angels, from the lowest rank to the highest archangel, is sent forth for this

benevolent purpose. "Are they not *all* ministering spirits?"

3. Perhaps it is difficult to tell the precise period at which they begin to exercise these offices of charity, towards those who, according to the eternal purposes of God, shall be heirs of salvation. It is probable, however, that their care commences the moment the soul is infused into the body. "Thou hast covered me," says David, "in my mother's womb." The providence of God is then thus early extended over his children; and why may we not suppose that those angels, who in after-times are the instruments of God's providence, serve the same purpose at this early period, and defend, strengthen, and cherish the chosen heir of heaven, even before it has seen the light? Why may we not suppose that other angels, besides the one who gave directions to the wife of Manoah, respecting her conduct before the birth of Sampson, (Judges xiii. 13, 14.) may have invisibly watched over other mothers before their offspring opened their eyes upon the world? This, we say, is *probable*, but it is *certain* that the holy angels watch over children in their tenderest years. "Take heed," says our blessed Lord, "that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven *their* angels do always behold the face of my Father, who is in heaven:" (Matt. xviii. 10.) a text to be understood of those little in age and growth, as well as of converts who resemble children in docility, humility, and harmlessness. No one can think of all the perils of children, and all the exposures of youth, without being astonished that, notwithstanding his ignorance and heedlessness, he has been carried through them all, much more safely than he could have been by

the greatest human prudence. This astonishment is not removed till we remember that heaven is observant, that angels are vigilant.

The care thus early commenced, ceases not during any of the periods or vicissitudes of life. In the dreariness of old age, as well as in the vigour of youth; in the languors of disease, as well as in the season of health; in the gloom of affliction and sorrow, as well as in the sunshine of prosperity and joy; when the night seals up our faculties in sleep, or when we awake refreshed from our slumbers: at all periods, and in all places, angels missioned by the Almighty surround us, and their ministry is not for a moment intermitted, until we arrive at the abodes of the blest.

4. The *objects* of this ministry are all "those who shall be heirs of salvation." The ungrateful neglecter of God cannot hope for this privilege. The holy spirits may perhaps extend a general care over the wicked, but they will not exercise this tender and kind affection upon those who outrage and insult their master. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about *them*" only "*that fear him.*" (Ps. xxxiv. 7.) No, unhappy man! who hast no part in the blood of Christ, who hast no love for this Saviour, who habitually disregardest his laws; to thee no angels minister, except those that have ascended from hell, and that strive to lead thee thither. Thou dost not participate in this inestimable blessing of the pious; thou hast no right to the consolations of this discourse.

5. But what is the *nature*, and what are the *acts* of this ministry?

These angels *guard and protect* us in dangers; unseen by mortal eyes, they often interpose in our be-

half, and powerfully defend us. Many an arrow that flieth in secret, is averted by their vigilance; many a calamity that was just rushing upon us, is warded off by their care. When Lot and his family were in danger of perishing in Sodom, the angels directed them to a secure retreat; (Gen. xix. 15—17.) when the king of Syria resolved to destroy Elisha, angels delivered the prophet from peril; (2 Kings vi.) the three Hebrew youths in the fiery furnace, and Daniel in the lions' den, were preserved by the ministry of angels; (Dan. iii. 25. and vi. 22.) and Peter and the apostles were by the same means rescued from prison. (Acts v. 19. and xii. 7.) And lest we should suppose that these interpositions were made only for extraordinary persons, and in extraordinary circumstances, we are told in general terms by the Psalmist, in a text which has already been quoted, "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about those that fear him, and delivereth them." And in another psalm he assures the pious man, "God shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways: they shall bear thee up in their hands lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." (Ps. xci. 11, 12.) In all our ways then that are good, and in every step that we tread, we have the care and ministry of tutelary angels; they are our ordinary defence and guard; and in all our justifiable undertakings we may say, with as much confidence as Abraham, "The Lord before whom we walk, will send his angel with us, and prosper our ways." (Gen. xxiv. 40.)

It is true that, notwithstanding this care, the righteous sometimes suffer afflictions; but these are afflictions which are sent in mercy, for the cultivation of their faith and holiness; and which the angels,

who act only according to the commands and good pleasure of God, cannot prevent without violating their duty both to their Lord and to the objects of their charge. But even in such circumstances, the angels are not careless and indifferent spectators; they give support to the pious under these sorrows, and remove them when the merciful ends which God intended by them have been accomplished.

Yes, in all our afflictions and distresses, they *bestow the most precious consolations*. Thus they ministered to Jesus Christ, according to his needs in his agony in the garden; and what they did for the *head* they perform for the *members*, so far as God sees it is expedient. Thus they comforted and encouraged the desponding Elijah. (1 Kings xix.) Thus they brought joy to the soul of Peter, confined in prison. (Acts xii. 7.) Thus they supported Paul, amidst the fury of the tempest. (Acts xxvii. 23.) And no doubt they often perform the same kind offices to Christians in the present day, cheering them when dejected, and encouraging them when bowed down. For this office they are admirably qualified from the tenderness of their natures, from a more intimate acquaintance with the state of our souls than our earthly friends can have, from the more rapturous consolations which they bring, from the easier access they have to our spirits, and from the impossibility of excluding them from the solitary sufferer, to whom human sympathy is prohibited. In vain will the tyrant strengthen the walls of the dungeon in which the servant of God is laid, and surround it by his guards; all his efforts cannot shut out these messengers of heaven.

The angels *suggest holy thoughts, and incite to pious actions*. As the evil spirits continually attempt to

seduce us into sin, so the blessed angels strive by their monitions and excitements to preserve and advance us in holiness. And as the criminal suggestions of the former are not often distinctly perceived, because they are rendered effectual only by being mingled with our corruptions, so, on the other hand, it is equally difficult distinctly to perceive these angelical impressions, because they concur with that principle of grace infused by the Holy Ghost. Satan and his angels perpetually compass the earth, seeking whom they may devour, spreading snares and temptations for the pious; the angels of God stand prepared to resist all their assaults, to admonish and support the believer, who might otherwise be overcome. As they rejoiced in the first repentance of the sinner, (Luke xv. 10.) so they afterwards delight to further him in goodness.

The angels minister to believers *in the hour of death*. In this last conflict with the king of terrors, they surround the bed of the Christian to comfort and assist him, to drive off the powers of darkness that would harass and distress him. As they stood by the Redeemer in his agony, so they are with his followers in their last and greatest need. They mingle the song of triumph with the sighs and tears of our relatives and friends, and rejoice that, "having fought the good fight, and kept the faith, and finished our course," we are about to receive the crown of victory. At the moment when the soul is separated from the body, they joyfully receive it, defend it from the bands of apostate spirits who would willingly seize it, and bear it exulting to the throne of God. Thus they carried the spirit of Lazarus to the bosom of Abraham; (Luke xvi. 22.) thus they wafted Elijah through the opening clouds to the re-

gions of glory. (2 Kings ii. 11.) They present the happy spirit to their common Lord; they strengthen in the world of love the fellowship which was begun on earth; they unitedly raise the anthem of everlasting praise to the All-Merciful and the Redeemer.

At the resurrection and final judgment they are still employed for believers. It is not their office to raise the bodies of the saints: this is the effect of Almighty power, and is peculiar to the Deity: but at the consummation of all things, they will attend and make preparations for the great events that then will be transacted; they will descend from heaven with their Lord, when "he shall come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him." (Mat. xxv. 31.) They will be employed in summoning the sleeping dead to appear. "The voice of the archangel" (1 Thes. iv. 16.) will penetrate every grave, and the rest of these glorious beings will add to the solemnities of this event: for Jesus "shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Mat. xxiv. 31.) They accompany the souls of believers to their former bodies. Over these bodies it is not improbable, from the conduct of Michael, (Jude 9.) that they had some charge during their separation from their spirits; and now the soul which they had conducted to heaven, they re-conduct to its former tabernacle. They "sever the wicked from among the just;" (Mat. xiii. 49.) they witness and approve the sentence which God pronounces; and ascend to immutable felicity with the redeemed; who, perfectly delivered from ignorance, sorrow, and sin, have no longer need of their directions, their consolations, or their incitements to holiness. Then they fall to-

gether with adoring gratitude before the Lord, and celebrate that sublime worship which was seen in vision by the beloved disciple: "I beheld and I heard the voices of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; 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!" (Rev. v. 11, 12.)

Such are some of the principal occupations of the blessed angels towards believers. We might enumerate several other offices of love, did the limits of our discourse permit it; but we have mentioned enough to show the high privileges of those who shall be heirs of salvation. We might have added many probable conjectures; but we chose rather to adhere to what is plainly and unequivocally taught in the word of God.

III. This subject is full of useful instructions. It is not presented to you merely to amuse your imaginations, but to correct your feelings, and regulate your conduct.

1. We are bound to love, to reverence, and to imitate these angels. While we abhor that superstition and impiety which renders to them the worship due only to God, let us be careful to cherish for them those sentiments which their characters and their relations to us require.

Every thing that tends to excite *love*, is to be found in them. Do we love those objects that are excellent in themselves? Surely then the holy angels deserve our affection, in a higher degree than the most perfect of mortals, since they are far more

amiable and exalted, have far more of the image of God and of moral beauty, incomparably exceed in knowledge and benevolence any of our friends on earth. Do we love those persons who are tenderly attached to us? The blessed angels have a special affection for us; as the fond parent, or the pious pastor, has a peculiar love for the family or flock which God has committed to him, so these spirits feel a warm, a distinguished affection for those who are made, by the appointment of the Lord, their special charge and care. Besides, as they love God with greater intensity and ardour than we do, they, for the sake of God, must more warmly love those who bear his image. Do we love those whose state, pursuits, and inclinations, are similar to our own? The angel and the Christian are servants of the same God, members of the same immortal society, having the same Jesus as their common head, engaged alike in glorifying the Lord, and obeying his commandments. Every motive, then, capable of exciting love, should fix our attachment on them; and sweet indeed is the communion of a believer with these spirits, in the exercise of mutual affection!

Let us also *reverence* them. "Wheresoever you are," said one of the fathers, "reverence the angels." Let us remember, that in our most retired moments, in our most secret solitudes, we have these as our companions, and therefore let us not dare to do any thing which we would blush to perform in the presence of the most holy and virtuous of mankind. And especially let us exercise this reverence for them when we are engaged in the worship of God: then they are peculiarly present with us; and though they do not come as preachers of the gospel, this being committed to sinful men, that they might more deep-

ly sympathize with those in the same situation by nature with themselves, and that their success might be ascribed only to God, yet the angels are carefully observant of our devotions. Remember then, in your approaches to God, not only the greatness and holiness of the Being whom you adore, but also the dignity of the companions who join with you; the zeal, the constancy, and the joy with which they serve their Maker. This remembrance will animate you to exertion, that there may not be too great a discordance between your praises and prayers, and those of your fellow-worshippers.

If we thus love and reverence, we shall be careful also to *imitate* them: like them, we shall make it our chief delight to obey and glorify God, and shall esteem it our highest title of honour to be his servants. We shall strive according to our daily prayer, to do "the will of God on earth, as it is done in heaven." With David, we shall, from the consideration of their employments, rouse up our own souls to the same occupations; and having exclaimed, "Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength," we shall fervently add, "Bless the Lord, O my soul!" Like these benevolent spirits, we shall make it our delight to succour the afflicted, to console the unhappy, to confirm the wavering, to direct the doubting. When so elated with pride by those distinctions made between us and others, by nature, or providence, or imagination, as to regard those beneath us with contempt, and refuse to interest ourselves in their concerns, let us think of the angels: though far more elevated above the highest of our race than any man can be above his fellow-worm, yet they condescend to minister unto us; to extend their sympathies and attention even to a Lazarus.

whom the rich man treats with disdain. Let us cultivate this same condescension and tenderness, if we would be truly great.

2. The ministry of angels demands our gratitude to God. "The Lord forgive me," says the excellent Bishop Hall, "for that among my other offences, I have suffered myself so much to forget, not only his divine presence, but also the presence of his holy angels. It is, I confess, my great sin that I have filled up my eyes with other objects, and been slack in returning praises to my God for the continual assistance of those blessed and beneficent spirits, who have ever graciously attended me without intermission from the first hour of my conception to the present moment; neither ever shall, I hope, absent themselves from my tutelage and protection, till they shall have presented my poor soul to her final glory." We have all of us need with him to supplicate forgiveness for this omission: when God honours us with the attendance of his own glorious retinue, commissions the brightest orders in creation to serve as guides, instructors, and comforters to us, shall no gratitude swell our hearts, shall no thanksgivings burst from our lips for this tenderness and love? Shall not "men praise the Lord for his goodness, for these his wonderful works to the children of men?"

We frequently speak of the power and malice of evil spirits, and of the temptations with which they assail us: why then do we forget the assistance of the good angels, except that we more easily retain the remembrance of injuries than of mercies; or that we think to excuse ourselves by casting the blame of our sins upon Satan, while we would reserve to ourselves all the glory of our good deeds? Are these dispositions becoming a believer?

3. This subject should solace the believer in all his dangers and distresses. However numerous or powerful may be your foes, you may always confidently use the language of Elisha when he was encompassed with hostile troops, and without any visible means of deliverance, "They that be with us are more than they which be with them." (2 Kings vi. 16.) In the midst of your perils, if your eyes were opened like those of his servant, you would behold the angelic band surrounding you, and all your apprehensions would be dissipated. By that faith which "is the evidence of things not seen," contemplate at all times these holy beings, vigilant, benevolent, powerful, and faithful in the discharge of the office committed to them: to the reproaches of the ungodly, oppose the approbation of these witnesses of your conduct; when your heart is pained by the blasphemies of the impenitent, think of their hallelujahs to the God whom you love: under infirmities of body, anticipate the time when "this tabernacle shall be dissolved," and you shall resemble them; when bereaved of friends, recollect that these your oldest, your most tried, created friends, still are with you; when persecuted or oppressed, recall their conduct to those who in former times were in the same situation; when about to enter into eternity, rejoice at the purity, the tenderness, the zeal of the companions with whom you shall for ever dwell.

4. Despiser of the grace of Jesus! in what manner do these angels regard you? They were innocent; for them it was not necessary that Jesus should die, that the blood of the covenant should flow; yet they treated not his atonement with indifference; they announced his birth with rapture to Zechariah, to

the virgin, to Joseph, to the shepherds; they descended from heaven to felicitate the earth upon it; they attended the Redeemer in the wilderness, and the garden; they rolled away the stone from the sepulchre, that mortals might learn with joy that the Saviour had risen from the dead; they were with him when he rose refulgent from the holy mountain; they still make his praise their theme and their delight; and notwithstanding the extent of their powers, they see such glories and such wonders of love in the mysteries of redemption, that they constantly search more deeply into them. (1 Pet. i. 12.) If such have been their sentiments and conduct, notwithstanding they were secure without the sacrifice of Immanuel, with what mingled indignation and pity must they look at you? What must they think of the baseness, the ingratitude, the madness of your conduct? Could tears be shed by them, they would surely weep, when they beheld guilty, unhappy mortals, exposed to a misery that has no other bounds than eternity, yet despising the grace that would save them, neglecting that Redeemer who died for them, breaking through the restraints that divine mercy has placed between them and the world of torments, and wading through the blood of Jesus flowing between them and hell, that they may seize upon damnation! Oh! be not so ungrateful to your Lord, such cruel enemies to your own felicity. At last renounce your sins, and accept the offers of salvation; then the angels, who are now in the midst of us, shall rejoice over you, and shall shout. "Our brother was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

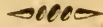
5. Finally: how much happier is the meanest and most despised Christian, than the most prosperous

sinner? Ye worldlings! who are surrounded with riches, with dignities and acquirements, come, and for a moment compare your situation with that of the humble followers of Jesus. Enlightened by the revelation of God, I look at invisible things: you both are surrounded by bands of powerful spirits; but the host that attends you has risen from hell; they flatter and delude you that they may lead you into the abyss; they tell you that religion is useless, or false; that there is no necessity of a strict regard to the duties of piety; that the threatenings of the gospel need not terrify you; that you may be saved without a change of heart, the application of the blood of Jesus, and the influences of the Holy Spirit: thus they whisper to you; you believe them, and charge God with falsehood, who has taught you otherwise; you follow their suggestions, and prepare to share their fate: shortly death will come; stripping you of this body, it shall remove from your eyes that veil which hides from you your present companions: they will seize upon your shuddering soul, and while they, the fierce executioners of God's wrath, exercise upon it their malignant fury, they will laugh you to scorn, because you were so foolish as to believe them, when God and his Spirit, and his people, and his ministers, warned you of your danger.

This is your situation, unhappy man; contrast it now with that of the humble Christian whom you despise: the most glorious and holy part of creation daily and nightly encamp around him; feel for him the most ardent affection; guide him during all his pilgrimage; and when death comes, own him as a brother, and carry him in triumph to their Lord. Sinner, I appeal to your own conscience, which of

these two states is preferable? Ah! you cannot avoid wishing for the lot of the righteous; hasten, then, and seek the favour of the Lord of angels, and of Jesus Christ their prince. Thus, and thus only, will they become your friends.

SERMON CXLVI.



HEAVEN.

MATTHEW XXV. 34.

*Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand,
Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*

THE moralists and divines of every age have made frequent lamentations on the shortness and misery of human life. Man rises into being, enjoys some happiness, experiences much sorrow, and then sinks into the "house of silence." But shall the light never dawn upon the dreary carments of the tomb? Shall corruption for ever prey upon the mouldering carcass? Shall death hold his victims in bonds that shall never be broken? No: for as "it is appointed unto all men once to die," so "after that cometh the judgment;" at the sound of the trump of God, the dust so long inanimate shall spring into new

life; and at this second advent of the Redeemer, the tenants of the grave shall appear before his sacred tribunal.

My text is taken from a description of the events subsequent to this resurrection; to this resurrection, so terrible to the wicked, since to them it is the commencement of eternal perdition; so joyful to the righteous, since it secures to them endless felicity; so interesting to all men, since it irreversibly fixes their destinies. All nations being gathered together before the judgment-seat of Christ, the actions of their past lives being accurately examined, their true character being displayed, and the most concealed motives of their conduct being exposed to the view of the assembled universe, the Judge with infinite benignity, shall address the pardoned and redeemed sinners whom he acknowledges as his children, and shall say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

My sole object in discoursing from these words, is to point out the constituents of that future felicity, which is here promised by the Saviour; the expectation of which is the prop and support, the consolation and triumph of every Christian. Such a subject is of immense consequence. It is necessary to know the nature of our future enjoyment, that we may see the propriety of those self-denying duties enjoined by the gospel as means for its attainment. and be thereby induced sincerely to perform them; that the hopes of it may teach us to purify our souls, and may comfort us amidst all the trials, the agitations, and afflictions of life; and that the frequent contemplation of it may prompt the ardent tribute of gratitude, thanksgiving, and praise to that God who

has provided it for us, to that Saviour who has poured out his most precious blood to remove those obstacles to our salvation which were otherwise insuperable, and to that Holy Spirit who sanctifies and prepares us for heaven.

It is almost unnecessary to premise that whatever I can say on this theme, will fall infinitely below my subject. The painter who should essay to display upon his canvass the brilliancy and lustre of the sun, would be certain of failing in the attempt; how much weaker, when compared with the bright original, must be the most elevated description of those felicities, which even Paul, who had been caught up to the third heaven, declared to be unutterable, and of which the beloved disciple who had lain in the bosom of the Saviour, asserted, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." Nevertheless, some idea may be had of this glory to be revealed, by considering that it includes the renewal and glorification of the body; the expansion of the understanding, with proper objects for its employment; the perfection of holiness, with a sufficient sphere for its exertion; the removal of every species of misery; the blissful society of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect; the vision and fruition of God and the Redeemer; and the certainty that these enjoyments shall be eternal.

1. In heaven *the bodies of the saints shall be renewed and glorified.* Corruption may prey upon them after they are laid in the dust; the particles which compose them may be scattered over every part of the earth, yet the Almighty will re-assemble these particles, and our bodies will rise *essentially* the same as they were when laid in the grave. But as they will be reared again by the Lord, in order that they may

partake of his mercies throughout eternity, it will be necessary, lest they should be overborne by the abundant communications of his love, that certain changes should take place in them, which, without destroying their identity, will infinitely ennoble them. As in the spiritual resurrection, God does not create a new soul, but sanctifies that which was dead in sin, and gives it new principles, desires, and affections; so in the natural resurrection he will not create a new body, but will give to that which has lain dead in the tomb, new qualities and more exalted properties. Natural reason, unaided by revelation, cannot establish the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead; much less can it teach us the precise changes that shall then take place in the bodies of believers. The Scriptures, however, are sufficiently explicit on this subject. St. Paul tells us, in the 15th chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, the body "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." And in the 3d chapter to the Philippians, he informs us, that "Jesus Christ shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." In these two passages we have a satisfactory and clear enumeration of the principal differences between our earthly and heavenly bodies. Our earthly bodies are *corruptible*, subject to innumerable disorders, advancing daily to that state where they must leathsomey putrefy: our heavenly bodies, like the souls which shall animate them, will be *incorruptible* and *immortal*; disease and languishment shall never assail them; death shall have no power over them. Our earthly bodies are com-

paratively *dishonourable* and *vile*; unlike to that of Adam in Paradise, they are through our sins, exposed to deformity, defects, and defilement. Our heavenly bodies will *beam with glory*; they will, (as our Saviour assures us,) shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of our Father; they shall be lustrous, like the face of Moses when he descended from Sinai, or like that of Jesus when he was transfigured upon Tabor. Our earthly bodies are *weak*; our strength at best is inconsiderable and frail; it daily decays through the infirmities of age; and is liable to be destroyed by innumerable circumstances. Our heavenly bodies will be of vast and astonishing *power* and *force*, which shall be unmingled with impotence, and unexposed to diminution. Our earthly bodies are *natural*, or (as the original word also signifies,) *animal* ones; fitted for the low functions of animal life. Our heavenly ones will be *spiritual* ones, fitted to aid in the employments, to participate in the delights of an immortal spirit in its highest state of perfection. Our earthly bodies, (it is the last and most important idea which St. Paul gives us on this subject,) are *like that of fallen Adam*: our heavenly bodies will be made *conformed to that of our blessed Saviour*. Not to that with which he travelled through Judea, experiencing misery, distress, hunger, pain, all the innocent infirmities of our nature; not to that which sunk down in agony at Gethsemane, and bled upon the cross; but to that in which he rose resplendent from the holy mountain, to that in which he shall come at last to judge the universe. O! blissful change, when wilt thou arrive! when shall these poor, feeble, disordered frames be thus ennobled and glorified through the grace of our God!

2. And as in heaven our bodies will be thus renewed, so also shall our *knowledge be increased, our understanding be inconceivably strengthened*, and be perpetually employed upon the noblest objects. "Now," says St. Paul, "now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known." The cultivation of the understanding affords us even here one of the highest gratifications which we can enjoy. There are few pleasures superior to those which are felt in strengthening the mind by study and meditation; in pursuing and apprehending truth; in passing from one discovery to another, and making each step of our advancement the foundation of further improvement. But, alas! these pleasures have that imperfection which belongs to all earthly objects, and are mingled with many cares and difficulties. The weakness of our powers makes it necessary for us to proceed in our investigation after truth, by slow and laborious advances; to trace the mutual connexion and dependence of things by perplexing and painful deductions, and to stand in constant guard against prejudice, against the senses, against the imagination, against the passions, against the natural defects of our mind, which might lead us into error. And after such constant vigilance, after the sacrifice of health, of riches, of social enjoyments, of a thousand pleasures, what is gained? We know a few things superficially and indistinctly: we perceive many things, concerning which we must hesitate and doubt: we behold innumerable things which we will not be able to comprehend by all our labours and researches. "Our attainments in science resemble those stars that appear in a dark night; they are a few luminous points

scattered at a distance from each other in a sky which is otherwise gloomy and obscure." Oh! how painful is it, my brethren, thus to desire truth, to pursue it, and yet almost always to fail to apprehend it; to find ourselves almost always baffled, disappointed, doubtful, or ignorant. It will not be so in the future world: there our understandings will be so strengthened, and the depths of nature, of providence, and grace be so unveiled to us, that the decisions of reason will be equally easy, quick, and certain: there no prejudice will mislead us, no passion will delude us, no trifling objects will distract us, no cumbersome body will weigh us down to earth; but the mind, privileged from error, shall travel on from truth to truth, from attainment to attainment, with increasing delight through interminable ages. O Christians! how pure and serene, yet how rapturous will be our pleasure, when God shall give us in heaven that reality, of which the delights of science on earth were but the shadow. Contemplating God, the eternal source of truth, we shall behold truth itself unveiled and unclouded. "Our attainments will no longer be a few luminous points scattered here and there amidst an otherwise general obscurity, but a day without shadow, an ocean of light." Then the order, the harmony, the universal beauty of nature shall be developed to us: then we shall see and adore in the whole conduct of Providence, which is now so impenetrable to our feeble capacities, displays of infinite wisdom, of power, and mercy, which will fill us with admiration and love: Then those mysteries of grace, which angels desire to look into, shall be more fully unfolded to us than they could be by the united wisdom of all the inhabitants of earth. Then we shall study *in themselves*

those perfections of God which we now see only through the medium of his works, which we now adore, though we so inadequately comprehend them. And how delightful will it be, to be perpetually occupied with this exhaustless study! how joyous, to have the mind ever unwearied by the intensity of its application, prying deeper and deeper into the perfections of God; how ravishing, thus to be occupied by infinity, to be lost and swallowed up by the greatness and immensity of the attributes of Jehovah!

3. As the bodies and the minds of the blessed shall be thus improved, so also shall *their holiness be perfected, and their wills be brought into a complete subjection to the will of God.* There, “nothing that defiles shall enter;” there the “spirits of the just” are “made perfect.” Believers, how delightful a prospect is this! You daily mourn over the remains of corruption within you; you daily lament that your will is so perverse, that your affections are so disordered, that temptations still have so much strength over you: wait but a short time, and glory shall entirely abolish in your souls the existence of that sin, the dominion of which has already been destroyed by grace. You will no longer complain of “a law in your members warring against the law of your mind,” nor “of the lustings of the flesh against the Spirit:” you will no longer be obliged to exclaim with the apostle, “O miserable man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!” for it shall be thoroughly removed by the Saviour when you are put in possession of eternal life. There you will not sin; for all those causes which here lead into guilt shall be unknown. *There, is no evil society to entice you by their licentious principles or their*

irreligious conduct; you will be surrounded by none but the holy: *there*, is no carnal body to tempt you to fulfil its lusts; your body will be so spiritualized as to be entirely under the direction of a purified and pious soul: *there*, is no mistake as to your duty, for “in God’s light you shall see light:” *there*, is no forgetfulness of the presence and inspection of God, for you will be ever encircled by his brightness and glory: *there*, is no evil world to ensnare your affections by its false lustre; its riches, its pleasures, its honours, will be more contemptible than the playthings of a child, when compared with the beauties of the New Jerusalem: *there*, is no Satan to deceive you; he gained admittance into Paradise, but from heaven he is eternally excluded: *there*, there is no intermission of the divine influences; here they fall upon you drop by drop: there they shall pour upon your souls in a rich and unfailling torrent. In short, nothing will there remain which can in the most remote manner incite us to sin. No David will there have to lament his falls, no Peter to weep for his denial of his Lord, no Christian to pray, “Lord, lead us not into temptation.” Every sincere believer shall then stand up in humble triumph; and whilst he ascribes his victory to the unmerited grace of God, shall rejoice that he has at length arrived at that state of complete purity for which he has so long wished, and prayed, and laboured; that every inclination contrary to his duty is now completely taken away; that he shall no longer have to complain of the blemishes and sins that attend his best performances; that he shall never more have to lament the coldness and hardness of his heart; but that his soul shall burn unceasingly with the warmest love towards God, and the purest benevolence towards all

his fellow-creatures. Saints of our God who have already arrived to this happy state, blessed indeed are ye! whilst ye have entered into the port of rest, we are still exposed to the fury of the tempest; whilst ye have received the crown of victory, we are left to conflict with enemies and dangers.

4. Sin being thus completely abolished, all that *misery* and *sorrow* which entered into the world by sin, shall be abolished with it. This is another constituent of the heavenly felicity. Christians, no pains or infirmities of body shall there afflict you; after your convulsive struggle with death, they shall be felt no more: no anguish or grief of mind; for your fullest desires will be satisfied. There will be no wicked men to vex you by their unholy deeds; no revilers to mock at you for your attachment to vital godliness; no slanderers to wound your good name, or to charge you with hypocrisy; no malicious enemy to oppress you; no unfaithful friend to grieve you. You will no longer have to watch by the sick bed of an expiring relative, and receive his last breath, or to weep in anguish over his grave. There will be no widow or orphan to be consoled; no hardened sinner to warn; no brother afflicted by want, by sickness, or oppression, to be lamented; no blemishes or falls of the pious to be bemoaned. You shall partake of a joy that shall be unmingled with sorrow; of a joy worthy to be the gift of a God; worthy to be the purchase of the blood of his Son. Then, as the voice from heaven declared to the beloved disciple, "God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away," (Rev. xxi. 4.) and in their stead will be

“fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore;” “for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed you, and lead you unto living fountains of waters.” (Rev. vii. 17.) Then the recollection of our past trials, instead of paining, shall afford us delight. As Moses from the top of Nebo, looking back on the dangers of that wilderness which he had traversed, was more gratefully affected by his present security; as the victorious general feels renewed satisfaction by recurring to the perils which he has endured; so shall our enjoyment be heightened by considering that our pilgrimage through this wilderness world, where we were encompassed by so many dangers, is for ever at an end; that our warfare is finally and gloriously accomplished. Like Noah in the ark, when it had fixed on Ararat, we shall look from our secure height over the passage of a troubled life; and the winds, the waves, the tempests being ceased, shall enjoy the everlasting calm of heaven.

5. Christians, if your natures were thus perfected, if you were thus delivered from sin and misery, you could not but be happy, yet this happiness would be incomplete if it were solitary; God therefore has graciously resolved, that, in this eternal life, you shall have the *society of angels and glorified saints*.

The *angels* delight in your happiness. When man was first created, these “morning stars sang together, and these sons of God shouted for joy.” (Job xxxviii. 7.) When the Saviour became incarnate for our salvation, a host of them appeared uttering praises and thanksgivings to God. (Luke ii. 13.) When a sinner repenteth, there is joy amongst them. (Luke xv. 10.) In the midst of the sorrows and temptations of our state; they minister to those that are heirs of salvation; with what warmth, then,

will they welcome us to their blissful society; with what transport will they lead us to the throne of God and the Lamb; with what joy will they relate the embassies of love which they discharged to us; the succours and deliverances which they unseen afforded to us, whilst under their protection we were training up for heaven!

We shall be united also *to all the good men* who have existed from the creation of the world. The scriptures clearly imply that we shall know all these saints in the kingdom of glory. Thus, you recollect that the apostle Paul consoles himself more than once with the prospect of meeting in heaven those who had been converted by his ministry on earth; that it is made a part of our privilege to sit down with Abraham, with Isaac and Jacob; that Lazarus immediately remembered the rich man; that Peter, in the transfiguration, knew Moses and Elias, notwithstanding they had died so long a period before him. My brethren, how unspeakably consoling is this anticipation; we shall be united in an immortal society with those with whom we have prayed, and suffered, and conversed, and gone to the house of God in company on earth; we shall be re-united to the pious husband, or wife, or parent, or child, or friend, who have gone to the enjoyment of their Saviour, leaving us desolate and afflicted. And besides these former acquaintances, we shall meet with those whom the narrow span of our life does not permit us to see on earth. The patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles, the martyrs, the pious men who have animated us by their example or encouraged us by their writings, shall there be our friends and companions. It was a wish of St. Augustine, that he could have lived in the time of Paul, and

beheld him delivering his defence before Felix: he has seen, what is more desirable, St. Paul shouting the praises of redeeming love before the throne of the Most High God; and we, too, my brethren, shall see him and all the holy men from whom we are separated by distance of time, if we, like them, are faithful to the death. We shall meet, too, all that are separated from us now by distance of place. Interposing seas and mountains divide the children of God from each other in this our earth: we hear of many faithful disciples of Christ in the old world and the new, whose labours and exertions in the cause of their Saviour make us bless God that he has not left himself without witness in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation; but, alas! we are prevented from associating with these followers of the Lamb, from being blest by their society. But, Christians, we shall meet them hereafter, and shall never be divided from them more. Oh! who can conceive how delightful will be that intercourse which we shall then enjoy with all the blessed spirits, and with all the church triumphant. No ignorance, no unkindly affection, no irregular passion, no blind zeal, no narrow and selfish views, no divisions in sentiment, no slanderous tongue, shall impair our bliss; but the most exalted wisdom, the most spotless purity and innocence, the most tender benignity and love, will be united in their highest perfection in every member of this heavenly society; throughout all of them there will be a complete harmony in judgment, in will, and in practice; all of them will be united in love to that God, in gratitude to that Saviour, whose throne they encircle; all of them will be so completely cemented in affection to each other, that the happiness of each particular one will

become a common felicity. Selfish and censorious world! what have you to compare with this ennobling and rapturous intercourse, where every mind thus shines with light, and every heart thus burns with love?

6. My brethren, this is a blissful society; but what is it to the *vision and enjoyment of God and the Redeemer*, with which believers shall be made happy in heaven. St. John assures us, that, hereafter, we shall be like God; for “we shall see him as he is.” The Saviour also has promised to the pure in heart that “they shall see God;” and David expresses the same idea, when he exclaims, “I shall behold thy face in righteousness.” Do you ask, what is the precise nature of this vision of God, and of the enjoyment which thence results? We without hesitancy confess our ignorance; for clouds and darkness are round about thee, great God; we, short-sighted creatures, know but little of thy nature or thy essence; we are totally unable to comprehend the manner of that intimate communion with thee which shall be the portion of thy saints! But, my brethren, though we are unable to explain the particular mode of this enjoyment, yet we know that he who has formed an infinite diversity of animated beings, can communicate himself to them in an infinite variety of methods. We know that in heaven his immediate presence will make us more sensibly feel his love; that the emanations of his goodness will fill the utmost capacity of our souls; that thence will spring unfailing and unspeakable delight. We know that, surrounded by his glory, tasting perpetually of his mercy, all our desires will expire in his bosom, and triumphs of joy and of rapture will succeed.

And there too we shall be blest by the presence of our glorified Saviour. "I go," it was his consolatory address to his disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you; I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." "Father," it was his prevalent prayer in their behalf, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." Yes! we shall see that glorified body, which he has taken into union with his divinity; that body, that eternal monument of redeeming love, which was once afflicted, and buffeted, and crowned with thorns, and crucified; but which now is raised to the highest dignity and glory: those arms, which were extended upon the cross for your salvation, shall be opened to embrace you; that heart which was pierced for your offences, shall glow with affection to you; he who wept over Jerusalem shall rejoice at your redemption. O what joy will you feel in beholding him, who hath loved you so much as to give his life for you, living and reigning for ever and ever! what joy, after having loved, and adored, and served him below, to receive from his hand a crown of unfading glory, to be admitted into an intercourse with him, to dwell in his embraces, to hear him declare the scenes of wo and distress through which he passed to pluck you from the eternal burnings, and to confer the bliss of heaven upon you! what joy, to follow him whithersoever he goeth, and to find in him a creator, a redeemer, a father, a tender friend! Blessed Jesus! this is the felicity which our souls desire. Enjoying thy presence and partaking of thy love, we cannot be unhappy; and separated from thee, we

should be miserable, amidst all the splendours of the new Jerusalem.

7. Finally, these pleasures, this glorious life, will be *without decay and without end*. They are not like the enjoyments of earth, which require to be perpetually varied that they may not displease by their uniformity. Here we can never be weary, since there is no defect in the objects enjoyed, no weakness in the faculties enjoying. Here there is no alternate succession of trouble and joy, no mixture of good and evil; there is no change, except by the augmentation of bliss. And as there is no decay, so neither is there any end. The blessed are not pained by reflecting that these enjoyments can be torn from them, but triumphing in the security of the divine promises, they confidently exclaim, "This God is our God for ever and ever!" This thought redoubles their joys, and consummates their felicity.

Thus, my brethren, I have endeavoured to give you an imperfect description of "the inheritance of the saints in light." But I must say with Job, "I have uttered what I understood not; things too wonderful for me which I knew not:" for the future delights must transcend the most elevated conceptions that man can have of them in this dark commencement of his existence, incomparably more than the high-ecstasy, of which our nature is here susceptible, exceeds the dull, the undistinguishable perceptions of the infant in the womb. Yet forgive me, O God, that I have degraded these glories by my unworthy representation of them; and grant, that, hereafter enjoying them, we may, from our own experience, form more suitable conceptions of them.

In reviewing this subject, let us,

1. Inquire whether we are prepared for this felicity.

city; whether at the hour of dissolution we shall enter into "the joy of our Lord," or, for ever banished from it, and lying in torments, shall see it only "afar off;" and behold it only with envy, with rage, and self-reproach. This question may easily be decided, if we will be faithful in the examination of our hearts and lives. The Saviour who has purchased heaven for us, and who confers the crown of immortality, has plainly taught us who are the persons who alone shall dwell with him in glory. They are those, who having felt that they were wretched and undone, have fled to his cross for pardon, and to his Spirit for power to resist sin; have given themselves up to him in an everlasting covenant, and have accepted him as their Saviour and their king; have chosen God and heaven and holiness as their portion, and have laid up their best treasure and their dearest hopes there, "where Jesus is, at God's right hand;" have mourned over their remaining imperfections, and have prayed, and longed, and laboured for complete holiness. If when you die, this be not your character, so sure as God is true, you must be excluded from these joys, and all your sanguine hopes of heaven be for ever blasted. Notwithstanding the infinite mercy of God and the boundless merits of Jesus, no unsanctified soul shall ever be admitted into the new Jerusalem. Strictly then try yourselves: dream not away your lives in carnal security; be not satisfied till you have evidence derived from that word of God by which you shall be judged, of your preparation for heaven; evidence that will uphold your sinking spirit when contending with the last enemy, and that will brighten as you approach the light of eternity; evidence that will stand the scrutiny of that holy tribunal

where God will search deep into our souls, and where the mere name of a Christian will not be considered as constituting Christianity.

2. We should be deeply humbled for our insensibility to blessings so immense, for the feebleness of our desires and longings for this felicity. We should naturally suppose that when such high joys were proposed to our hopes and expectations, the children of men would delight to lift the curtain which covers futurity, and gaze on the eternity of being, the consummation of holiness, the perfection of bliss, reserved for the pious; that believers especially, would perpetually groan to be delivered from these fetters of flesh, which hold their souls in thralldom, and prevent them from mounting and winging their flight to the bosom of their Redeemer. But, alas! when we look around us in the world, how few do we perceive with these feelings and disposition! Almost all men regard this world as their country, and consider themselves as inhabitants, not pilgrims in it; they had rather be in the body than with the Lord; and the presence of the Saviour, that presence which constitutes heaven, is the object of their dread. Ah! is this the disposition of a Christian? Were these the feelings of a Paul, while panting for celestial joys, he cries, "I desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better:" of a Peter, when with so much delight he tells the churches, "I must shortly put off this tabernacle, even as the Lord Jesus hath showed me:" of a John, who so joyfully responds to the Saviour, telling him, "I come quickly: even so, Amen, come Lord Jesus!" Let us imitate these holy men; let us study to acquire such a temper as will induce us to view

life as a subject of patience and resignation, and death as a cause of triumph and joy. let us cultivate those feelings so forcibly expressed by St. Augustine: "O joy most exquisite, most excellent, most comprehensive; above which, in comparison of which, beside which, there is no joy! when shall I enter into thee, and behold my God that dwelleth in thee! what is it that detains me from him whom my soul loveth? How long shall it be said to my eager heart, 'Wait, wait patiently?' And now, O Lord, what do I wish and wait for? surely it is for my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; surely it is for thy coming to the marriage, that thou mayest admit me to the bride-chamber. Come quickly, Lord, and do not tarry; come and unlock our prison-doors, that thy released may walk before thee with a perfect heart; come, my light, my Redeemer, and set my soul at liberty, that I may give thanks unto thy holy name. How long shall I continue tossed on the waves of this mortal life, separated from thee!" Ah! my brethren, can you who are contented with earth, who long not for a better portion, suppose that you will dwell with these men from whom your temper is so discordant?

3. This subject is full of consolation for the believer. However severe may be your sufferings on earth, heaven will abundantly compensate you for them: fear not then the cross, since it will be succeeded by the crown. "If ye suffer with the Redeemer, ye shall also be glorified together." Ask those who are already received to the embraces of their Saviour, whether it is not better to experience affliction upon earth for the sake of Jesus, and then to dwell in heaven with him in endless joys, than to

enjoy the vain delights of sinners, and to descend into everlasting despair. Ask the martyrs, whether they regret that they submitted to all the tortures which the most ingenious cruelty could devise, rather than forsake their Lord. Ah! could we have but a single view of the redeemed, we should no longer hesitate to "follow the Lamb whithersoever he leadeth;" did we keep fresh upon our hearts the joys of heaven, we should smile in every sorrow, we should exult in death; and seeing the gloom of the grave dissipated by a light from heaven, we should regard it only as the path to immortality, the gate of glory.

SERMON CXLVII.



LOVE TO THE SAVIOUR.



JOHN XXI. 17.

He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me ?

“ I WILL NOT deny thee, I will die for thee, though all should be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended :” these were the confident declarations of Peter when the Saviour foretold his lamentable fall. They were not hypocritical expressions ; his heart accorded with the words of his mouth, and he really believed that he would rather brave death clothed with its most awful terrors, than deny his master. Alas ! he forgot the frailty and deceitfulness of the heart when left to itself and unsupported by divine grace ; a few hours after these protestations, he thrice denies any knowledge of Jesus, denies him with execration. This conduct was highly criminal, but he rose from it again by a deep repentance ; for when after the third denial. “ the Lord turned and looked upon Peter :” this look penetrated to his soul, and caused his eyes to gush forth with penitential tears. The Saviour saw

the sincerity of his repentance, and in several conversations with him after the resurrection, restored to his afflicted mind pardon and peace. One of these conversations is related in the chapter whence our text is taken. Jesus having met his apostles in Galilee, according to his promise, converses with them in general, and then addresses his discourse to Peter in particular: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these," thy companions do? 'The night on which I was betrayed, thou declardest that although all others should deny me, yet wouldst not thou; and now thou hast preceded thy fellow-disciples to testify thy affection; these, however, are equivocal proofs of attachment; I ask thee then, Lovest thou me more than they do?' This question is three times repeated to remind Peter of his three-fold denial, and to give him an opportunity of repairing it by thrice displaying the disposition of a true disciple. Peter had learned humility by his fall; he no longer dares to compare himself with his fellow-disciples; but nevertheless he can appeal to the omniscience of his master for the sincerity of his affection: 'Perhaps I should flatter myself in estimating the degree of my affection to thee, in declaring what I would undergo to attest it; but, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.'

My brethren, if Jesus Christ were to put the same question to each one of us; were individually to inquire of us, "Lovest thou me?" I fear that the greater part of us, instead of being able to appeal with humble confidence to the searcher of hearts, would be abashed and overwhelmed with confusion. Yes! the humiliating confession must be made, there are few men who love the Saviour: the visible church

of Christ is but small, and even in its bosom, how many are there whose careless and worldly conduct proves that they are either utter strangers to this heavenly grace, or possess it but in the smallest degree! What a lamentable reflection is this, and what a heart must he have, who can think of it without emotion! There are but few persons who love the Saviour; that is to say, almost all mankind are guilty of monstrous ingratitude, are blind to true excellence, are going thoughtlessly to perdition; that is to say, the prince of darkness rules upon earth, and is drawing down millions to his dreary habitation. In inquiring into the reasons of the general neglect of this duty, two principal ones have occurred to me. Many do not labour for the attainment of love to Christ, because deceived by natural emotions which somewhat resemble it, they falsely suppose they already possess it. Many do not labour for the attainment of love to Christ, because they have never solemnly pondered those impressive motives which should induce them to strive for it. Against these two causes we direct the two heads of our discourse, in which we shall,

I. Show you the nature of true love to Christ:

II. Urge upon you a variety of motives to induce you to seek it.

I. We must begin by giving a *general idea of love* as it subsists between intelligent beings. Love, then, is an affection resulting from the perception of excellences in the persons beloved, causing us to desire the most intimate union with them, attracting the mind and the heart towards them, and making us to enjoy from an intercourse with them the sweetest pleasures. This is a definition of love in its most extensive sense; and hence it follows, that

love to Christ is that grace whereby, upon a discovery of the Redeemer's matchless excellences, the souls of believers are caused to thirst after a more intimate union with him, their minds and their hearts are withdrawn from other objects and fixed upon him, and they esteem an intercourse with him their chief joy.

But it is necessary, in order that we may be fortified against the deceptions of our hearts, and that we may know our true character, to consider more in detail the *foundation*, the *properties*, and *effects* of a true love to Christ.

What then is the *foundation*, the *ground*, or the *cause* of love to Christ? In order that we should love any object, three things are requisite: this object must have certain excellences; these excellences must be perceived by us; and there must be a conformity between these excellences and the inclinations of our hearts. Where one of these circumstances is wanting, there can be no love; and it is the concurrence of the three that is the foundation of love to Christ.

The Saviour has those excellences which render him intrinsically lovely, and infinitely suitable to us. In himself, he is the perfection of beauty, the pattern of loveliness, the centre of all moral excellence: all the perfections that are scattered over the works of creation, have emanated from him, the great Creator; they are only a drop from him, the mighty ocean, a beam from him, the brilliant sun. Every excellence is concentrated in him in an infinite degree, so that the eternal Father always beholds him with delight, and the splendid host of heaven gaze upon him with wonder and with love. Thus worthy in himself of our supreme affection, he is moreover

a Redeemer perfectly adapted to our state and circumstances; he has precisely those graces, those dispositions and sentiments, which fit him to be the Saviour of perishing sinners, the fountain of joy to our miserable race: supremely excellent in himself, he is no less so in the relation which he bears to us.

But even though the Saviour possess all these excellences, yet to us they are still invisible, and therefore, till in some manner they are presented to us, they cannot be effectual in moving our love. The diamond may have a dazzling brightness, yet we shall not admire it till it is brought from the caves of the earth, where it lies concealed from observation, and presented to our view. Doubtless there are many persons in distant countries, of whom we have never heard, and who are deserving of our warmest attachment, but we cannot exercise this attachment till their amiable qualifications are made known unto us. In like manner the Saviour may possess supreme excellence, yet this excellence cannot move us till in some manner it is revealed to us. The heart will not be attracted, except the mind perceives or fancies that it perceives some loveliness. God has therefore been pleased in the sacred scriptures to unveil to us the beauties of Immanuel, to display to us those glories which seraphs contemplate with ever new delight, to show us the excellences of his person and the graces of his heart, to give us, as it were, the portrait of this Redeemer, to sketch out every lineament and feature, that so we might perceive how deserving he is of all our love.

Still, however, this is not sufficient to kindle the holy fire of love for Christ; he may have divine

endowments and celestial qualities ; we may clearly perceive all these endowments and qualities, and nevertheless the deepest enmity against him may rankle in our hearts. However cheering the light of the sun may be in itself, and however brightly its beams may shine around us, yet as long as the eye is distempered, the brightness of its beams, the clearness of its light, will afford, not pleasure, but pain, because there is not a correspondence between these two objects. In like manner, however excellent the character of the Saviour may be in itself, and however clearly this character may be revealed to us, yet as long as the soul is distempered by sin, the clearness of these views will excite enmity, not love, because there is no correspondency between it and the corrupt inclinations of the sinner's heart. If the beauties of Jesus were conformed to the taste and relish of our souls, nothing would be requisite to excite our love for them, but to make them known to us ; but since they are holy beauties, and our souls naturally have a tendency to sin, it is plain that, in proportion as they are manifested, must our enmity be roused. It is for this reason that persons under their first convictions of sin, frequently feel dreadful heart-risings against God and the Saviour. They have a true view of the infinite holiness, the spotless purity, and the inflexible justice of the divine character ; but as yet their minds are not conformed to these attributes, and therefore the contemplation of them excites nothing but enmity. It is for this reason that the damned souls, though they have a distinct view of the character of Jesus, do nevertheless continually blaspheme and curse ; because, though the character of Jesus is infinitely amiable, and their views of it clear, yet it does not

correspond with their vitiated propensities and sinful desires. It is evident, then, that a correspondency of heart is the third thing that is requisite to produce true love to Christ; and this correspondency can be produced only by the mighty operation of the Holy Ghost renewing our minds; giving us new tastes, relishes, and inclinations; causing us to hate what we once loved, and love what we once hated. When this change of sentiments is made, when we are thus new-born, then, and not till then, the heart will be attracted by the beauties of Immanuel, will flow out in love towards him, will accord with the lips when they exclaim, "He is the fairest among ten thousand, he is altogether lovely!"

Such is the origin of love to Christ. Let us sum up what we have said on this point in a single sentence. Love to Christ is produced by the Holy Spirit, who shows us in the scriptures the real character of Christ, who changes our hearts so that they may become conformed to this character, and thus fills our souls with admiration of the glories, with love of the excellences of the Redeemer.

Ah, my brethren! how many of you are there whom this observation should cause to tremble! How many of you who suppose that you have a sincere, spiritual affection for this Redeemer, whilst you have no other love than that which is founded on nature, custom, education, or partial and unscriptural views of Christ? How many who suppose that they have always loved the Saviour; that their natural dispositions were affectionately inclined to him? Beware! you are deceiving your own soul; you are building your house upon the sand: when the floods come, and the waves beat, and the winds

blow, instead of affording you shelter, it will fall and crush you in its ruin! You are confiding in a "refuge of lies which will perish when God taketh away the soul." A true love to Christ can be founded on nothing short of a renewed mind and a changed heart. Do you doubt of this? Follow me in my investigation, and you will find that your love is radically defective. Attend whilst I pass from considering the origin, to an examination of the *properties* of a true love to Christ, and you will find that you do not possess this heavenly grace.

First Property of love to Christ: It is *enlightened*: that is to say, it knows and delights in the real character of the Saviour. There are many who form partial and unscriptural notions of Christ; who conceive of him as all mercy, without justice or holiness; who strip him in their conceptions of those attributes which are opposed to their corruptions, and retain only those to which the natural heart has no repugnance; and because they feel some affection for this phantom of their own creation, they call this affection a love for Christ. The believer, on the contrary, looks only to the sacred scriptures to find the character of Christ; his desires, his wishes, the bias of corruption, are not permitted to alter the portrait drawn by the pencil of heaven; he adds no trait, he detracts no feature, in order to lull himself to security and rest. The Christ whom he loves is not that fantastic image which sinners have formed, who connives at guilt, who permits men with impunity to trample on the authority of God, and is armed with no thunders. No, the Christ who has engaged the affection of believers is a being in whom spotless holiness is united with the tenderest compassion; who regards the honour of his Father as

well as the miseries of mortals; who has not only manifested his grace by dying when we must have died eternally without his interposition, but who will also display his justice by sentencing the impenitent to endless despair.

My brethren, it is of vast importance for you to attend to this property of love. Many souls are in hell, who doubted not that they would have entered the kingdom of joy, and who with equal surprise and terror awoke in the eternal flames. They formed to themselves an idol which they loved and worshipped. In this idol were reserved those perfections of Christ against which the enmity of the heart is not excited; those holy and pure perfections of the Redeemer which are opposed to corruption, were laid aside, and in their stead qualities were substituted which would not be inconsistent with the reign of sin. This visionary being, which has no prototype in nature, was called Christ; they indulged affection towards it, they supposed it would save them; alas! it was an idol which had no existence, except in the imagination of the framer, and which perished together with him.

Second Property of love to Christ: It is *ultimate*; that is to say, it terminates on this Saviour as its end, and does not regard him merely as a means to further blessedness. It is very possible for an unregenerate man to feel certain glows of affection when he sits down and considers the inestimable benefits which Christ has procured for our race; but this, instead of being a spiritual attachment, is only a disguised self-love. If I love Christ merely because he can rescue me from hell, and bring me to heaven; if I love him only because he can benefit me; it is plain that this pretended attachment to

him, is only an attachment to my own interests and happiness. Christians have a more generous love than this; they love their Redeemer, not merely because he can procure for them incalculable benefits, but because in himself, and without any consideration of his benefits, he is worthy of all their desires. If there were no heaven to hope, no hell to fear, their attachment would still continue, because those qualities of Jesus which are the foundation of it are immutable. It is true that the remembrance of the benefits which he has bestowed or promised, gives new warmth to their attachment; nevertheless, it is the giver, and not the gift, which engrosses their heart; Christ is preferred before his benefits. We do not regard him as a real friend who loves us only so far as we can subserve his interest; we do not regard her as an affectionate wife who loves only the portion, and not the person: in like manner we cannot regard that as a true love to Christ, which is founded only on a consideration of the blessings which he brings, whilst his personal excellences are forgotten. "Not thine, dear Lord, but thee." This must be the exclamation and the feeling of our soul.

Third Property of love to Christ: it is *supreme*, and predominates over every attachment to the objects of earth. Believers behold in him infinitely more beauty and excellence than the world can afford, and they therefore see nothing here below that can rival him in their affections. Their heart is the image of heaven, where Christ reigns supreme, and all is submissive to him. Though other affections are indulged by them, yet it is always in subordination; earthly objects which bear the stamp of imperfection cannot dispute their heart with the adorable Son of God. Christ himself enumerates

those objects to which we are most justly and most strongly attached, and assures us, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." And St. John also, speaking of a supreme love, says, "Love not the world, neither the things of the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father," which co-exists with that of the Son, "is not in him." Except therefore you have such an affection to Christ, that you would sacrifice the dearest earthly enjoyments, nay, life itself, rather than abandon him, you have not that love which he requires.

Fourth Property of love to Christ: It is *permanent*. It is not like those streams in the desert, of which Job speaks, which sometimes rushed forward in an impetuous torrent, and at others, were entirely dried up; it resembles rather a mighty stream, steadily rolling its waves along, and growing deeper and wider, till it empties itself in heaven, the ocean of love. What indeed should cause it to cease? It is not wonderful that human attachments should be dissolved: we soon get to the bottom of a creature's perfections, and enjoy all that is to be enjoyed; but it is otherwise with the Redeemer. As we advance, glories rise upon glories, beauties after beauties develop themselves, and throughout eternity excellences before unknown will be meeting our eyes, and affording new aliment to the flame of love. No! love to Christ is not a dazzling meteor which endures for a moment, and then leaves us in darkness; like the sun, it steadily pours forth beams which enlighten and warm. It endures in every period of life: it attends us to the tomb, and is unhurt by the stroke of death. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or per-

secution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loveth us." It is true that this love is not always in the same vigour, that it sometimes languishes and puts forth but few acts; but the principle always remains; the soul still tends towards the Saviour, thirsts and longs for a closer union with him, and will not repose till it reclines on his bosom.

These appear to me the principal properties of love to Christ: let us now consider a few of its effects.

First Effect: *A cheerful, constant, and universal obedience to his commandments.* "If any man love me, he will keep my words," says the Saviour. Yes, love to Christ is always attended with a holy fear of offending him, and a holy desire of obeying him; believers therefore are serious in inquiring what is the will of their Lord, and diligent in obeying it. This obedience is *cheerful*, because it is the labour of love, the service of a dutiful child, to which he is impelled by affection, and not the constrained performance of the affrighted slave. He who loves Christ finds a present sweetness, as well as a future reward, in fulfilling the laws of his master. This obedience is *constant*: those who are animated by this heavenly flame are not satisfied with a perpetual vicissitude of sins and repentance, of repentance and sins; they are not contented, like those mentioned by the prophet, to swear now by the Lord, and then by Malcham; to speak now the language of Canaan, and then that of Ashdod; to go now one step forward in the path of duty, and then to recede another in the path of guilt: no, they strive for a uniform service, they desire steadily to per-

form the laws of Christ, and to have their whole lives devoted to him. This obedience is *universal*: they do not select from the commandments of Christ, those that are most agreeable to them, and neglect others; as Christ died for all sin, so they strive to die to all sin. They make war upon the whole host of iniquities; there are no Agags whom they wish to spare from the general devastation; no Delilahs or Drusillas, favourite vices which cling around the heart, that they are not willing to throw from their arms with loathing; no sins so small, that they can view them without emotion; the very infants of this Edom they seize, and dash against the stones. Difficulties, dangers, afflictions will not deter them from obedience: like the martyrs of old, they will not count even their lives dear unto them that they may win Christ; they will follow whithersoever he leads, "through evil report and good report," through terrors and temptations, through a sea and a wilderness, through fiery serpents and sons of Anak. When in the discharge of their duty, they meet with sorrows from which nature recoils, love stronger than nature urges them forward, and makes them force their way through a host of woes rather than forsake their Master.

Second Effect: *A love to every thing whereby Christ is displayed.* This effect embraces many particulars. If Christ be loved, the *Holy Spirit* who "takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto us," will be loved also; we shall gladly cherish his dictates and motions upon the heart; we shall listen to his voice directing us in our duty, with joy receive his testimony in the inner man, open our souls for the reception of his influences, and be careful not to quench, to grieve, or resist him. If Christ be loved, his

scriptures, which contain his will, his promises, his threatenings, will be loved also: "O how love I thy law; it is my meditation all the day;" is the language of him who has this affection. If Christ be loved, his *ordinances*, where he is wont to meet with his people, will be most dear: "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts; a day in thy courts is better than a thousand!" this is the sentiment of *their* hearts whose affections are fixed upon Jesus, and who attend his ordinances, not to pay him a cold formal visit, but to enjoy delicious intercourse with him. If Christ be loved, his *children*, who bear his image, will be loved: "By this," saith the Saviour, "shall men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love to one another." If we admire the perfections of the Lord, we must delight to see these perfections enstamped upon any of his creatures; if we love him, we cannot be indifferent to those who are the objects of his tenderest affection. If Christ be loved, his *cause* and *interest* will lie near our hearts; if his mercies be despised, his authority contemned, his glories overlooked by a thoughtless world, his friends are deeply grieved, and exclaim with David, "Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because men keep not thy law;" or with Jeremiah, "Because you will not hear, my soul shall weep in secret places for you." On the contrary, if the cause of Christ flourish, if sinners be converted unto him, and his people excited to new diligence in his service, the souls of those who love him swell with higher and purer joy "than when their corn and their wine increase." In one word, whatever displays Christ, though it be but a glimpse of him, is precious to those who love him; whatever bears his

impress, though it be in a faint manner, is most dear to their souls.

Third Effect: *A longing for his presence*; which is, necessarily, accompanied with a delight in his society, and a grief for his absence. There can be no love in us, if we do not thirst and pant after his presence; if we do not desire that here below he would come to our souls with richer communications of his grace and love, and that beyond the grave he would cause us ever to be with him. And if these be our sentiments, our hearts are frequently breathing forth such language as this: ‘Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly; come, take possession of this cold and senseless heart; subdue it to thyself; destroy those sins which render me so unlike to thee; speak to me, tell me I am thine; reveal to me more clearly the glories of thy person, the smiles of thy face; let me once be assured of my interest in thy love, and then hasten the period when I shall be delivered from the thralldom of flesh, and borne to that better world where I cannot but be happy, since I shall be with thee.’ These are the natural expressions of a heart that is inflamed with love; and if such be our sentiments, we must mourn and grieve whenever the Saviour appears to depart from the soul; then the greatest profusion of outward blessings cannot comfort us; in the midst of them we shall still sorrowfully seek the Beloved of our souls, exclaiming, ‘O that I knew where I might find him; I would go even to his mercy-seat!’ And when at last he lifts upon us the light of his countenance, when he says, “Fear not, I am thy salvation:” oh! then his friends experience a pleasure which they never did find, and which they never will find, in earthly delights; they cry out with rapture, “We have found him whom

our soul loveth; we have found him, and will not let him go!" their exulting hearts break out into strains of thanksgiving, joy, and praise.

Thus I have shown you, my brethren, the nature of true love to Christ. I pray you to apply the tests which have been given, to your own consciences; to suffer this matter no longer to be in suspense; to form an immediate decision of this question, 'Do I love Christ, or do I not?' It is too important a matter to be in suspense, for heaven or hell hangs upon its determination. Be impartial, since yours is not the final nor supreme judgment; since your judgment must be reversed, if it be not according to truth. Do you still hesitate whether to form this decision? Attend to the

IId. head of our discourse,

In which we will give you some *motives* to this love; motives which are sufficiently powerful, if you will act as a reasonable being, to induce you no longer to protract a decision on this point.

From the variety of motives which occur to me, I select only two: love to Christ is *reasonable* and *pleasant*.

1. Love to Christ is a *reasonable* duty. When we urge you to the practice of piety, we urge you to nothing but what can be defended upon the principles of the coolest reason, but what is incumbent upon you as rational beings. It is essential to the heart to love; it must cease to beat before it can cease to love: the only question then is, what shall be the object of its supreme attachment, the things of earth or the great Redeemer? I reply, it is reasonable that the Redeemer should possess this attachment, because he has incomparably greater excellences, has conferred upon us inconceivably greater bene-

fits, and can do for us infinitely more than the things of earth. These three ideas are so many proofs of the reasonableness of a supreme love to Christ.

He has incomparably greater excellences. Accumulate, heap one upon another all the qualities which can captivate a feeling heart, they are all perfectly combined in him. He is "the brightness of his Father's glory, the express image of his person." Every perfection is found in him in a degree far beyond the conception of the most exalted seraph; the splendid host of glorified immortals can devise no higher source of felicity than to behold, admire, and serve him. Summon up all the objects of earth on which your heart is fixed; place them by his side; do you not see that they diminish, that they contract to a point, to a nothing, when compared with him. On what article will you institute a comparison between these idols who possess your affection, and the mighty Saviour? On that of *power*? His arm upholds the universe; upon it universal nature fixedly hangs. On that of *wisdom*? His eye at one glance pervades all being, and runs through the past, the present, and the future. On that of *permanence*? "From everlasting to everlasting he is God." On that of *mercy*? Angels confess that their faculties are too weak to comprehend his goodness, and their tongues too feeble worthily to celebrate it. Yes, if excellence and perfection be the ground of attachment, Jesus must have our hearts.

But besides this, he also demands your attachment from the consideration of *what he has done for you*. Think of his benefits, and then tell me, is it not reasonable you should love him? A few years ago you did not exist; a few years ago this body which is so admirably constituted, this soul which

is endowed with such noble faculties, were not in being: who then called you from the womb of non-existence and made you what you are? Who but Christ, "without whom not any thing was made, that was made?" Having created us, he also preserves us. This nice and complicated machine which he has formed, would soon run into disorder if he did not continually touch its springs. If he were at this time to withdraw his supporting influence, in an instant, in the "twinkling of an eye," the voice of him who speaks to you would falter, would expire in death, and the ears of you who hear me, would be closed by the touch of dissolution. Is this all that he has done for us? No, he paid the price of our redemption; he submitted to woes unutterable to raise us to glory. Behold him in the garden crushed down under the weight of our sins, and experiencing agonies unutterable: see him on Calvary; justice can find nothing in him to condemn, yet "he is smitten for us, and afflicted:" the cross is red with his blood; our iniquities encompass him and stab him to the soul; the vials of divine indignation are poured out upon his sacred head, and he exclaims in agony, "My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" Which of those earthly objects, which steal away your soul from Christ, has done as much as this for you?

And finally, what can they do for you in comparison to *what Christ can and will do*, if you give him your affections? They can bestow on you only trifling gratifications whilst you are on earth, and they make no provision for that eternity which lies beyond the grave. All those things which you here love, and eagerly pursue, cannot, when you leap the gulf of time, interpose between you and eternal

misery. The delicacies of Dives, the full barns of the rich fool, the great possessions of the young ruler, have long since ceased to delight them. The pomp of Herod, and the rhetoric of Tertullus, have not been able to hinder the flames from enwrapping their tortured bodies. Foolish men! had they fixed upon the Saviour those affections which were given to the world, they had now been triumphing in the regions of glory, instead of lamenting their misery in the dungeons of despair! Foolish men! while they now cast a mournful look across the impassible gulf which separates them from heaven, they are obliged to confess that the world mocks its followers with delusive promises of happiness, while Jesus alone affords a felicity commensurate with the faculties, coeval with the existence of the soul. Unite all these ideas, and you cannot hesitate to acknowledge that it is reasonable for you to love the Saviour. I present you with a

Second Motive: It is *pleasant*. Ye mortals, who in search of pleasure are pursuing airy phantoms which cannot satisfy you, are embracing vain shadows which elude your grasp, come and learn where true delight is to be found. The exercise of a true love for Christ, and nothing short of this, will render you happy. If earthly love affords delight, how much more rapturous must be the sensations resulting from divine love! What joy springs from the interchange of affection between the soul and its Redeemer! What joy, to behold his smiling face and pour out before him the warm effusions of the heart! Yes! in every situation of life the exercise of love to Christ affords the purest satisfaction; but its effects are more especially seen in those seasons

when earthly loves can profit us little—in *affliction*, in *death*, in *judgment*.

When *adversity* presses hard upon us, and the clouds of *affliction* lower around, he who has placed his supreme affection upon the earth, must be unhappy. When worldly enjoyments are wrested from him, he must cry out with the Danite, “Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more?” How different the situation of him whose soul glows with love to Christ! Like Job, when bereft of every temporal delight, he can look upward and behold his Redeemer living: he can exclaim, ‘I have still a friend to go to, who has wisdom to guide me in my perplexities, who has mercy to solace me in my sufferings, who has power to deliver me from my distresses, and who has engaged to deliver me so soon as it shall be best for me. This tender friend beholds me contending with sorrows, and he mingles with them the consolations of grace; why should I repine or be dejected? I have always found that his help is nearest, that his sympathy is greatest, when earthly supports have been torn from me. In such seasons I have often found him charming my griefs to rest, and causing me to rise above the pressure of outward sorrows. The remembrance of his past goodness inspires me with confidence in my present sufferings, and knowing that he loves me better than I love myself, I lean without disquietude on his promises, his providence, and his grace.’

Pass from the season of affliction to the hour of *death*. When the man who has no love for the Saviour comes to this eventful hour, his situation is indeed dreadful. He is about to be torn from all that he loved and valued: earth recedes from his eyes, and with it recede all his enjoyments: he struggles

still to remain, but the stronger arm of death prevails, and pulls his shuddering, reluctant soul into unknown and unloved regions. How different are the sentiments of him whose soul burns with love to Christ! ‘Behold me then,’ he exclaims, ‘just ready to touch the object of my hopes and desires; just ready to enter into the presence of that Saviour whom, though now I see not, I love; beholding whom I shall rejoice with “joy unspeakable and full of glory.” Vain world! I quit you without regret; I leave you with joy. My soul is flying to its centre, is returning to its rest. Death! let the wicked tremble at thee; I hail thee as my friend. Why, why dost thou delay thy stroke? The voice of my beloved calls me, and my heart longs to rest in his embraces!’ It is with such transports of joy and holy impatience that his soul leaps into the presence of God, that his heart springs into the arms of Jesus.

And when the trump of God shall assemble the world to be judged, oh what pleasure will it afford to remember that our Judge is our friend! How will this enable us to stand unappalled amidst the shrieks of the despairing, and the dissolution of worlds! Oh! will it be worth nothing to have a warm affection for the Redeemer at that decisive day when we shall feel all the emphasis of that apostolic denunciation, “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema-maranatha,” (1 Cor. xvi. 22.) accursed when the Lord comes. The great point of examination for those who have enjoyed the gospel, then, will be, whether they have truly loved the Saviour; and if we be found without this grace, either Omnipotence must be subdued, or we be cast down into hell. But while the doom of those who neglect the Redeemer shall be so awful, his friends shall view

him with adoring gratitude, and shout, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." They shall hear from his lips those cheering words, "Enter ye into the joy of your Lord;" and shall love him throughout eternity without weariness, without intermission, without imperfection.

SERMON CXLVIII.



REMEMBRANCE OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST.

A Sacramental Discourse.



CANTICLES i. 4.

We will remember thy love.

"IF I forget thee, O Jerusalem," exclaimed the pious Levite when at a distance from his beloved country, and in captivity at Babylon; "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem! let my right hand forget her cunning: if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth: if I prefer not Jerusalem before my chief joy." With how much greater warmth and energy should Christians, who are here below in a state of exile from their true country, and weighed down by fetters of flesh, pro-

nounce similar vows with respect to their Redeemer. Since it is through the blood of his cross that every temporal enjoyment, every spiritual privilege, every eternal hope flows to them; since from it result all that they have, all that they are, and all that they expect, with what emphasis should they cry, ‘ If I forget thee, compassionate Saviour, let my right hand forget her cunning: if I do not remember thee, bleeding, suffering Jesus, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth: if I prefer not thee before my chief joy!’ These should be our habitual sentiments; we should never forget the glories or the mercies of that Redeemer who has ransomed us with his blood: but especially on such a season as the present, when we have met together to celebrate a sacrament which was instituted by those tender and solemn words, “ Do this in remembrance of me;” a sacrament whose great design it is to be a memorial of the dying love of Christ; on such a season we should surely drive from our minds all inferior objects, and centre our thoughts and desires solely on the mercy and kindness of our Lord. On such a season we should resolve with the mystical spouse, “ We will remember thy love.” Be still then, worldly cares, solitudes, and pleasures, while we meditate on the grace of our Saviour: awake up, every faculty of our soul, whilst we are considering this delightful subject. And do thou, blessed Jesus, assist us by thy grace; give us clearer views and a more feeling sense of thy wondrous love: may it fill us with admiration, gratitude, and affection, and constrain us to offer ourselves to thee at thy table, a holy and a living sacrifice. Amen.

As it is the spouse of Christ who utters the words of our text, it is plain that the *love* of which she

speaks, does not mean that general love of benevolence which the Redeemer entertains for all mankind, but that intimate, special, complacential regard which he indulges towards his real followers. Taking the text in this, which is obviously its true sense, we shall,

I. Inquire into the nature of the Saviour's special love.

II. Prove that it is the duty of Christians to remember it.

III. Show how this remembrance should regulate the sentiments of the heart, the words of the mouth, and the actions of the life.

I. We are to *inquire into the nature of the Saviour's special love*. And here, my brethren, I so much feel my insufficiency to do justice to this part of my discourse, that fearful of degrading it by my feeble representations, I am almost ready to leave it unhandled. "The angels" themselves, as the apostle informs us, "desire to look into it;" in contemplating it, they feel the weakness of created wisdom; they feel that nothing but Divinity can comprehend the full extent of divine love. Standing on the brink of this abyss of mercy, these exalted intelligences cast forth their most penetrative views; but unable to fathom it, are constrained to exclaim with adoring wonder, "O the depths of the riches of the goodness of Christ!" If angels then, who dwell in the source of light, whose capacities are so inconceivably expanded, find nevertheless their conceptions too limited properly to estimate a Saviour's love, and their tongues too weak worthily to celebrate it—O how little can poor ignorant mortals know!

But whilst this reflection would discourage us from proceeding, let a sense of duty and the plea-

santness of the task, induce us to follow the guidings of the holy scriptures, and to inquire into the properties of the Saviour's special love.

1. This love is *everlasting*; that is to say, it did not commence in time, but existed from eternity; and it will not terminate while eternity endures: like its divine source, it has neither "beginning of days nor end of years."

That the special love of Christ towards his children has existed from eternity, is proved by all those texts which speak of the everlasting covenant between the persons of the most sacred Trinity for the redemption of man, and of the consent of the Son to become our pledge and surety. It is proved by all those texts which speak of him, as having his delight with the children of men, and as a Lamb slain in the counsel of God before the foundation of the world. It is proved by all those texts which speak of "the choice of his people according to the eternal purpose which the Father purposed in him." I do not enlarge on this part; I merely mention this fact that it may warm and enliven our devotions; for say, Christians, what strains can rise sufficiently high to celebrate such love as this? Shall a few faint and interrupted emotions of gratitude be esteemed a sufficient return for that rich tide of divine love, which, having no source in time, springing from the abyss of everlastingness, runs parallel with the duration of God? Shall nothing but a few transient remembrances be given for an affection which resided in the heart of the Saviour, before a single note of adoration to his Maker had fallen from the harp of the first-created seraph; before "the morning stars had sung together" at the birth of nature; or "the sons of God," the splendid host of angels

had "shouted for joy" at the manifestation of creative power; for an affection which thought of us with compassion, and devised the stupendous plan of salvation long, long before we started from the womb of nothingness; long before time begun its course, and when nothing existed throughout the universe but the presence and perfections of the adorable Trinity? No, my dear brethren, let our whole "souls and all that is within us" unite in shouting praises to that Saviour whose "mercy is from everlasting to everlasting unto them that fear him."

This mercy is "*to everlasting*;" it is fixed and unchangeable, and, like its author, "is the same to-day, yesterday, and for ever." "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my loving kindness shall not depart from thee; neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed; saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." "In a little wrath he may hide his face from his children for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will he have mercy upon them, saith the Lord their Redeemer. If they break his statutes and keep not his commandments, then will he visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes; nevertheless, his loving-kindness will he not utterly take from them, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail." That love which drew them to repentance when they were wandering from God, shall much more preserve them when they are penitent, and shall never be taken from them. Other unions may be dissolved; the union between soul and body, intimate as it is, must for a time cease at death; but the union between Christ and believers never will be dissolved; neither life nor death shall be able to separate them

from him. Friends and connexions may be taken from us; but whilst our tears flow because the ties which united them to us are broken asunder, and the hearts which once beat high with affection to us lie cold and senseless in the grave, we are consoled by the recollection that Jesus still lives, still lives for us, still lives to make us happy by his love. "Having loved his own, he will love them to the end;" to the end of life, to the end of time, throughout eternity. Though man, the slave of error, whim, and caprice, may become the relentless enemy of his fellow-man, whom he once caressed as a friend, yet Jesus will "set his friends as a seal upon his heart," and "preserve them by his power through faith unto salvation." Long after the angel of the Lord "shall have lifted up his hand to heaven, and sworn by Him who liveth for ever and ever, that time shall be no longer;" long after the earth shall have been consumed by the flames of the judgment-day, shall you, believers, received to the palace of the King of kings, enjoy those raptures which result from your Redeemer's love; and as your souls shall continually dilate and your capacities enlarge, so shall the manifestations of his kindness be more abundant, and your joys more elevated and full. O how precious is such a Saviour! how inestimable is such unfailing love! Let the men of the world busy themselves in the eager pursuit of perishable vanities. Alas! when "the fashion of this world shall have passed away," with what bitter, what unavailing anguish will they lament that they did not secure an eternal love on which their eternal souls might rest!

2. The love of Christ is *most generous*; since it was *undeserved, unsolicited, and disinterested*.

It was *undeserved*. This necessarily results from the former property. Before we existed, nothing could be due unto us: a love, therefore, which had respect to us from eternity, must be unmerited. Besides, believers as well as others are born corrupted and defiled, with no loveliness to excite the affection of a holy Redeemer. Believers, as well as others, are "by nature children of wrath;" and before their renovation by his blessed Spirit, lived in a constant course of enmity and disobedience to God. Surely such persons could merit nothing from the Saviour. I mistake; they merited much; they merited the flames of divine wrath, eternal perdition in hell. Yet even in this condition, Jesus communicated to them the riches of his love and the blessings of his covenant. But why do I stop to prove that the love of Christ is undeserved? It is a truth which is written on almost every page of the scriptures with a sunbeam; the great object of this sacred volume is to point out the free grace of the Saviour, as the only hope of the guilty, the undeserving, and the perishing. Christians, your sentiments accord with these representations. You abhor the thoughts of being saved, otherwise than by free and unmerited grace; you joyfully lie down in the dust, that the crown may be placed upon the head of your Saviour; you renounce all self-righteousness and self-dependence, and build your hopes on undeserved mercy. Alas! ill would be our lot, did the Saviour regulate his love to us by our merits! How soon would he dart forth his thunders and sink us in the flames? My brethren, how much does this trait ennoble the love of the Saviour! He was moved, not by our merits, but by our miseries; he had com-

passion upon us, though we were enemies, rebels, slaves of Satan, heirs of hell.

But though we were thus undeserving, yet perhaps our solicitations were so strong as to move him to this display of mercy: By no means; for it is a new proof of the generosity of this love, that it was *unsolicited*. What creature urged him to undertake for sinners, and to enter into that stipulation with the Father, which was made infinite ages before a creature lived? In answer to what petition of mortals was it that he cried, "Lo, I come;" I come to fulfil thy law and undergo its penalty; "I delight to do thy will, my God?" Who is the mortal that ever offered to the eternal Son a prayer to descend from his throne and assume our nature? No, no! It was his own self-moving goodness which alone induced him thus to act. He saw that we were perishing, and, without waiting for our cries, reached forth deliverance and proffered us salvation.

But was not the Saviour induced thus to act by interested or selfish views? No! his love was entirely *disinterested*. The Creator of all things, creatures could not add to his glory; possessed of infinite happiness, we could not increase his felicity. He enjoyed supreme beatitude from the immensity of his own being and perfections, and from the bosom of his Father, before we had an existence; and he would have retained this beatitude, though we had never lived. He had then no selfish motive to lead him to interest himself for us: it was only the overflowings of his benevolence which made him interpose in our behalf. And does not such love deserve love? Shall we bury such kindness in ungrateful forgetfulness?

3. This is an *efficient* and *powerful* love. However sincere the affection of mortals for us may be, yet so impotent are they that they can supply but an inconsiderable portion of our wants, or afford us but a trifling share of blessedness. We have the guilt of sin to be purged from our conscience; the dominion of sin to be overthrown in our souls; the punishment of sin to be averted from us. We have a God offended by our iniquities, to whom we must be reconciled; an unholy heart to be sanctified; the Christian graces to be implanted and cherished. We have to conflict with the king of terrors; to pass into an awful eternity. We have the diversified needs of an indigent nature to be satisfied; the void of a heart which sighs after perfect felicity to be filled. Where can we find succours sufficient for the supply of these necessities, and the attainment of these blessings? Where, merciful Saviour, but in thy powerful love? If conscience condemn us, his peace-speaking blood can assure us, and enable us to shout with the apostle, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" If our corruptions rage and struggle, his Spirit can subdue them, and render us more than conquerors over them. If the curses of the broken covenant hang over us, and hell gape to receive us, yet sheltered in his wounds, no curse can smite us, no flames kindle around us. If we tremble to look upwards to an offended Judge, we are comforted when we reflect that "he hath reconciled us to God in the body of his flesh through death." If we groan over an unholy heart, he has power to mould it anew and to fill it with the Christian graces. If we be called to pass through the gloomy vale of death, this Sun of Righteousness can enlighten it, and cause us even there to "lift up our

heads, knowing that our redemption draweth nigh." If we go into a strange and unknown world, he can there fill our souls with joys far above all our thoughts or desires. O blessed period! when will it arrive. Then, and not till then, shall we be able to see the power of that love, which stormed and vanquished our obstinate hearts; which overcame our raging lusts and corruptions; which threw open the doors of heaven for our reception, and closed the gates of hell against us; which drew us up to glory through a host of furious devils and ungodly men. O let us now begin to shout those hallelujahs which will then dwell upon our tongue, and to sing, "Unto him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God, to him be glory and dominion for ever!"

4. Finally: to crown all these properties, this love was *painful* and *suffering*. Jesus did not content himself to display his kindness only by words or by deeds which cost him nothing. His love has stronger proofs; it is attested by the sorrows to which it induced him cheerfully to submit. These sorrows were incalculable in number, and inconceivable in degree: every step that he took through life, from the sordid manger to the bloody cross, was marked with misery. Poverty, pain, reproaches, slanders, these were his ordinary portion; and to consummate it all, he closes his mortal life in ignominy and pain. Let us turn aside for a moment and behold this great sight. Christians, raise your eyes to the accursed cross; behold extended upon it the eternal Lord, the Creator of heaven and earth, the Judge of quick and dead! Why does he remain hanging upon it? By a single word he could cause the nails which

fasten him to drop, and the soldiers who guard him to sink in the agonies of death. Ah, Christians! he is retained by stronger bonds; he is secured by safer guards: the firm cords of love fasten him to the cross; the eternal purposes of mercy form that powerful guard which even his omnipotence cannot resist. Behold his livid mouth, his hands and his feet changed into streams of blood, his whole frame torn by the scourge, the nails, and spear. View the crowd which surround this victim of love; and listen to their reproaches, their contumelies and curses. Do you shudder at considering these woes? Alas! this was but the smallest part of what the Saviour underwent. These outward tortures were joy, were ecstasy, compared to the agonies of his soul. Standing as the substitute of sinners, he endured the wrath of God due to sin; wrath which none but he who was united to the Godhead could have sustained. So inconceivable, so infinite, were the woes of his soul, as by their endurance for a few hours to counterpoise the everlasting damnation of all the millions of the redeemed, who shall hereafter surround his throne. To all this, Jesus submitted for you. These were the powerful proofs of his love, the tender expressions of his mercy; he joyfully consented to lay down his life, that you might live eternally; to be painfully crucified, that you might be glorified.

Such is the nature of that love to which the spouse has respect, when she cries, "We will remember thy love." That it is our duty to imitate her resolution, and, like her, to remember this rich love, is to be shown in the

¶ Id. Division of our discourse.

It may seem almost unnecessary, my brethren, formally to prove this truth; it may seem that it is so firmly established by the impulse of feeling, as to render any reasoning useless. Nevertheless, as we see there are many who entirely forget the grace of the Saviour; as we all of us are too cold and infrequent in our recollections of it, it will not be improper or unprofitable, to consider for a few minutes these two ideas:

It is the duty of believers to remember the love of Christ, because,

I. All those circumstances which tend to produce permanent and firm impressions upon the memory, are to be found in this love; and because,

II. The remembrance and sense of this love is the fountain whence all holy actions and good desires proceed.

1. All those circumstances which tend to produce permanent and firm impressions upon the memory, are to be found in this love.

We carefully observe and faithfully remember those things that are wonderful; those things which are calculated to excite our love; and those which are absolutely necessary for us.

We carefully observe and faithfully remember those things that are *wonderful* and beyond the ordinary course of nature. "Common events pass through the mind as common persons through the streets, without attracting particular notice;" whilst those events that are rare and astonishing, fasten upon the mind, and leave a durable impression. Now where can a greater complication of wonders be discerned, than in the love of your Redeemer? Examine it in every part, and you will find prodigies which nature cannot parallel. That the second

person of the adorable Trinity should leave his heaven, and dwell with agonies, that God might be reconciled to us; that the Eternal, should become an infant of days; the Infinite, be circumscribed by a human body; the essentially blessed, be the man of sorrows; the Ruler of the universe, the babe of Bethlehem! Are not these sufficiently wonderful to arrest the attention and to fix the remembrance: That he who is God should be forsaken by God; that he who is inseparably united to the source of blessedness, should be sorrowful and distressed; that, by a painful and ignominious death, heaven should be unbarred, the flames of hell quenched, the world, the flesh, and the devil, vanquished? Behold a small part of the wonders which marked the love of Christ; wonders so great, that, at beholding them, nature was amazed; the sun, in sympathy with the source of its light, shrouded himself in darkness; and even those who were sleeping in the tomb sprang into new life! Surely, then, there are wonders enough connected with the love of the Saviour to cause us constantly to remember it.

We easily retain and frequently meditate on all those things *which excite our love*. Do we love any object? Memory constantly presents it to us; in our more retired moments, and even amidst the bustle of the world, the object of our attachment is the theme of our meditation. Now, what is more calculated to excite our love than the love of Christ? It contains, in an inconceivable degree, every thing that can engage the soul. If we compare with him any earthly objects of affection, how infinitely inferior do they appear? Ought not then the perfection, the infinitude, the utility of his love, to obtain love from us? And if we love him, we must remember

him. No business can be so urgent, no sorrows so oppressive, no cares so weighty, as to make us forget a Saviour who is beloved. In the intercourse with our fellow-men our thoughts will frequently be directed to him; and when the world is shut out from our closets, he will still be present, will be the subject of our reflections, the centre towards which our souls will run.

We easily remember those things that are *beneficial* to us, and *necessary* for us. And what is there so beneficial, so necessary, as the love of Christ? If it be beneficial to be delivered from the power and punishment of sin, to be made like unto God, to be fashioned on no lower pattern than that of the all-perfect Jehovah, to enjoy a felicity infinite in degree, eternal in duration: if these things be beneficial, and if things which are beneficial deserve our remembrance, then surely we should remember the love of Christ, which procured all this for us. If it be necessary for our felicity to be shielded from the vengeance of God, to be rescued from eternal damnation, to be saved from those woes which no tongue can describe, no heart can conceive: then surely the love of Christ, which procured this exemption, should never escape from our mind. Infinitely more reasonable would it be to forget our dearest earthly friends, our highest temporal enjoyments, the things absolutely necessary for the preservation of our life, than to forget the love of our Saviour.

2. We are bound to remember the love of Christ, because the remembrance and sense of this love is the fountain whence all holy actions and good desires proceed. It is this love which animates the Christian to obedience; it is this love which, in the

strong language of the apostle, "constraineth him" to labour for his master. Look over all the exercises of the Christian, and you will find them as closely connected with the Saviour's love, as the nerve is with the member which it moves. Does the Christian exercise *love to God*? He is enabled to do it from a believing view of a bleeding Saviour. Faith contemplates this gift of a Father's love, and the soul is ravished into love, and inflamed with a desire of serving and enjoying him who spared not the Son of his bosom for us. Does the Christian exercise *hatred for sin*? It is from the sufferings of Christ that he discerns its infinite guilt and odiousness; it is from viewing it as the murderer of his Lord that he is led to execrate and avoid it. 'Shall I remain in sin?'—this is his language—'shall I remain in sin and crucify my Lord afresh? Shall I join with Judas to betray him, with Pilate to condemn him, with the brutal populace of Judea to outrage and insult him? Shall I retain a single darling lust, when there is not one in the whole circle of iniquities which did not combine with the others to crucify my Redeemer; not one which did not weigh him down in the garden, and stab him on the cross?' Does the Christian exercise *patience and resignation* in affliction? He is enabled to do so only by looking unto Jesus. He is "not wearied, neither faints in his mind, because he considers him who," urged by love, "endured such contradictions of sinners against himself." He would often sink, were it not for the remembrance that he has a merciful and affectionate High-priest, who has gone before him in the path of sufferings, and who, having been tried like as we are, knows how to pity and relieve us when we are tried. In our weakness and distresses,

the consideration of this love is a firm prop to the soul; whilst the storm rages dreadful around us, it is an ark in which we may rest in safety. Does the Christian form an act of *self-resignation* to God? He is incited to do it by the remembrance of the love of an expiring Jesus. 'I am not my own, I am bought with a price, even with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. Though I am thine, Lord, by creation and preservation, yet I am peculiarly thine by the endearing title founded on redeeming love; I therefore resign all claims to myself, and give myself up unreservedly to thee.' Does the Christian *hope* for the heavenly inheritance? This hope is built only on the love of Christ, who, having paid a ransom for our sins, has entered into glory as our forerunner, to prepare there mansions for us; and who, when the wearisome period of our pilgrimage shall have past, will send his messenger to carry us from this world to the Father. If you will in like manner review the other Christian graces, you will find that they have the remembrance of the Saviour's love as their root and their principle. Hence it results then, as a necessary consequence, that if Christianity be any thing except a mere name, if it require any pious acts or holy exercises, the frequent remembrance of the love of Christ is essential to it.

But, my brethren, it is not every species of remembrance that is thus useful. Those who scorned, derided, crucified, and rejected him, will throughout eternity retain the memory of the love of Christ, which they despised. This recollection will ever attend them; will fill them with anguish unutterable, will constitute the very hell of hell. The remembrance which the spouse in the text resolves to ex-

ercise, is not such a mere historical, far less such a distressing memory; but it is a remembrance accompanied by gratitude in the heart, productive of the praises of the lips, and manifested by the obedience of the life. Let us resume these ideas—they constitute the

Last division of our discourse.

Our remembrance must be accompanied with gratitude in the heart. To have some loose, faint recollections of the love of Christ floating in the mind; or even to discourse most profoundly upon it, while the affections remain unmoved, is not to perform an acceptable service, but to outrage and insult the Saviour. It is base and odious to suffer the amazing kindness of Jesus to escape our minds; but to meditate on his grace, on the benefits procured by it, on the price they cost him, and yet to remain unthankful, is conduct worthy only of a fiend. Oh! what warm emotions should fire our souls, when we remember but a small part of the effects produced by the love of Christ. Man was guilty, exposed to all the vengeance of an Almighty God: he was destitute of all means to preserve himself from eternal death, subject not only to the terrors of conscience, that bosom-hell, but to the strokes of infinite and inflexible justice. The creatures were his enemies, the Creator was his judge, his own heart a witness against him; there was no other limit to his misery but eternity: there remained to him no hope of succour or deliverance. Jesus flies to his aid; he not only delivers him from all his miseries, he procures for him an eternal felicity; and he obtains this deliverance by miseries far more excruciating than mortals can conceive. O my soul! canst thou remember all this without feeling and gratitude? Does

not this astonishing mercy require from thee ecstasies of affection? Why then art thou so cold and insensible? Does God require too much of thee, when he demands a thankful remembrance? This duty is not painful; this duty is the source of the highest joy: dost thou fly from pleasure, my soul? The reception of the benefits of thy God affords satisfaction, but the indulgence of gratitude for them produces a much higher felicity. Then let thy transports and thy rapture testify that thou feelest the value of a Saviour's love. Go, carry thy gratitude to the throne of God. But, eternal Source of love and of grace, what shall I say? I feel thy benefits, but I cannot express them. O let my heart ever burn with gratitude for them! O let it never be affected by other enjoyments!

1. If this remembrance be thus accompanied by gratitude in the heart, it will manifest itself by the praises of the lips; it will shine in our discourse. A man who is truly affected with the love of Jesus, cannot content himself to think in secret of this love, and neglect to declare to others the sentiments with which his soul is inflamed: "From the abundance of his heart, his mouth will speak." Gratitude, which loosed the tongue of Zechariah, at the birth of John the Baptist, will loose his tongue also, and cause him to publish the mercies and perfections of his Lord. He loves to declare in the temple and in the world, in worship and in conversation, the blessings he has received from his compassionate Redeemer: he is desirous to employ, in the praise of the Saviour, the best part of the breath which he has received from his goodness. Like David, he says, "I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness, and thy sal-

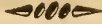
vation; I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and thy truth from the great congregation." The believer, far from being ashamed to confess his obligations, invites the heavens and the earth, the different classes of men, all creatures, even those that are inanimate, to join in the concert which he wishes to form to the glory of the God whom he adores, and the Saviour whom he loves. After all his efforts, he is afflicted only because he expresses so feebly all the gratitude and affection which he feels for his Redeemer. Ah, my brethren! what cause of self-reproach have we on this point; where are the persons amongst us, whose words and discourses prove that the love of the Saviour has made a proper impression upon their hearts? How many millions of times have we indulged in vain, useless, sinful conversations, rather than speak of our Saviour? Think you that that slanderous, that profane, that indecent, that frivolous language, which is often observed in your interviews, affords a proof that you have been properly affected by the love of Christ?

2. Finally: to these emotions of the heart, to these words of the mouth, must be added the actions of the life, if we would manifest a true remembrance of the love of the Saviour. In the language of the scripture, to forget God and to sin against him, are used as synonymous expressions. Unaccompanied by active obedience, all glows of the affections, all professions of the lips, will be a hollow and hypocritical sacrifice, which God will reject with abhorrence. Let us then be careful that whilst with the angels our hearts swell with gratitude, and our tongues cry, "Holy is the Lord of hosts:" let us be careful also, like them to fly to execute the orders of God. No, my dear brethren, it is a foolish contra-

diction to say that we gratefully remember the love of Christ, whilst at the same time, by our iniquities, we crucify him afresh; and endeavour, as far as possible, to frustrate the effects of this love. Purity of life is the gratitude which God demands. Beware then, all those of you who suppose that you imitate the conduct of the spouse in the text, because you have certain glows of affection when you remember the sufferings of Jesus, and because you talk much of this Redeemer, whilst at the same time your life is marked by no holiness or charity. The time is coming in which you will find, to your eternal confusion, that "not those who cry, Lord, Lord, but those who do his commandments," are the persons that remember the Saviour's love, and will be admitted to his kingdom.

Happy will it be for us, my brethren, if we all thus attest our remembrance of the Saviour, by the sentiments of the heart, the words of the mouth, and the actions of the life. He will continually afford us new blessings; he will be our light and our salvation on earth, and our support in the hour of death; and when his grace shall have admitted us to a blissful eternity, we will still, but with infinitely warmer gratitude, with infinitely more lively sentiments of joy and love, celebrate our Saviour. And when our bodies, waked from the slumber of the grave, shall be re-united to our happy souls, we will shout, 'Saviour, we no more can forget thy love; each moment, as it passes, will recall it to us; the full ocean of blessedness which pours upon our souls, will ever remind us of thy cross; and throughout the ages of eternity, each breath that we draw shall be an aspiration of praise to thee.'

SERMON CXLIX.



THE LORD OUR SHEPHERD.

PSALM xxiii.

The Lord 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. Yea, 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. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies : thou anointest my head with oil ; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life : and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

IN the season of affliction and bereavement, we feel most sensibly the effects of the divine compassion. When we are sinking under the pressure of sorrow ; when those earthly objects which had afforded us pleasure are torn from our embraces ; when the world presents nothing but a dreary waste, incapable of conferring any enjoyment ; then it is that God is nearest to us, and that his comforts are most sensibly felt by us. In a single month of affliction and distress, we experience more of the supporting and consolatory influences of the blessed Spirit, than we do in whole years of prosperity.

And when God, after his benevolent purposes in afflicting us are accomplished, interposes in our favour and rescues us from misery, our hearts glow with much warmer gratitude than if we had always remained in felicity. It is for this reason that the most tender and affecting psalms of David were written, when he had just been delivered from some of those calamities of which his life was full. At such periods, with a heart overflowing with gratitude, he joyfully celebrated the mercies of God, acknowledged him as the only source of true felicity; and, acquiring a firm trust in him from the past experience of his mercy, looked forward with confidence to the future, assured that this God, who had already conferred so many blessings upon him, would never forsake him.

You perceive the truth of these observations in this delightful psalm, which is now to occupy your attention, and which was probably written at that period of his life when the rebellion of his son Absalom obliged the royal psalmist to retire from Jerusalem, and flee to the borders of Lebanon. Dispirited and hopeless, wounded by the ingratitude of his son, forsaken by his friends, and driven to an uncultivated region, he was overwhelmed with sorrow, and trembled lest himself and the small remains of his army should perish with famine; but the event was more happy: his veteran troops, acquainted with his virtues and personally attached to him, flocked to his standard, and the good and opulent citizens afforded him liberal support.

Full of gratitude to that God who had thus unexpectedly led his subjects to espouse his cause and supply his necessities, he exclaims, “*The Lord is my shepherd.*” The sheep, a timid, defenceless animal,

unable to foresee danger, and incapable of resisting an assault, indebted for its preservation to the vigilance of the shepherd, was a fit emblem of David left without support, until the good providence of God interposed in his behalf. And on the other hand, the care of a tender shepherd beautifully shadowed forth the active beneficence of God towards his afflicted servant.

There were several circumstances that would naturally induce David to represent the Lord under this image. It was an image familiar to the Jewish people, who were greatly employed in pastoral occupations; the trembling sheep and the attentive shepherd were immediately before the eyes of David on the mountains of Lebanon, at the time that he wrote this hymn of praise; and he knew the feelings of a shepherd, having himself in his youth watched over the flock, and been so solicitous for its preservation as to expose his own life in its behalf.

After he had considered God in this character, he could not but conclude, "*I shall not want.*" With so wise and powerful a protector I know that I shall enjoy every thing necessary for my support or defence. Unlike those earthly shepherds, who, notwithstanding the warmth of their affection for their flock, are often constrained to leave it in want through poverty, through weakness, through the sterility of their fields, or the rigour of the season; unlike these earthly shepherds, he to whom I belong is so rich and powerful, that I shall need nothing. He is the Master and Disposer of the universe and all that it contains, and his infinite love is sustained by infinite power. There is not a want of my heart which he cannot supply, not an inquietude of my spirit which he cannot relieve, not a desire of my soul which he

cannot gratify. “*The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want.*”

Lebanon, on the borders of which, as we have already said, David now was, is in part rough, craggy, and barren; and from its top, at certain seasons, cataracts of melted snow descend, which render the water turbid and insalubrious. The psalmist contrasts the provision which the earthly shepherds who dwelt there made for their flocks, with that which his divine Shepherd made for him. “*He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters.*” ‘Bounteously providing for me, he shelters me from the heat of the noon-day sun, where the pastures are, not like those before my eyes, craggy and barren, but green and fertile; and at night he leadeth me, not to troubled and impetuous torrents, but to pure and quiet waters that gently flow.’

The paths conducting to the top of the mountain were devious and crooked, and in traversing them the sheep were exposed to many dangers, and were frequently bewildered and lost. But the Shepherd of Israel follows David in his wanderings; and causes him to walk in plain and secure paths: “*He restoreth,*” or bringeth back “*my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness.*” When I wander from him, the only preserver of my felicity, the only source of my safety, he doth not abandon me to misery and destruction; he tenderly seeks me, he snatches me from danger, he plucks me from the edge of the precipice to which I had thoughtlessly strayed, he saves me from the ferocious beasts of the desert that were ready to devour me, and compassionately guides me in those pleasant paths where no dangers need appal me, where no foes can injure me, ‘where pro-

ceeding under his eye, and secured by his care, I shall advance forward in safety and felicity. And this he does, not through any interested motives, not for the sake of any profit that can be derived from me, or from any merit in me, but from the impulse of his mercy, "*for his name's sake.*"

In the mountain of Lebanon, as in almost all the mountains of Judea, there are numberless dusky holes and caverns; some of which are natural and others artificial. Many of them were at different times devoted to the use of war; of this we have several instances in the life of David himself, who more than once employed them as places of refuge and as strong fortresses.* Besides this use, these caves were ordinarily chosen by the Jews as the repositories of the dead: and as from their construction they were peculiarly fitted for it, so they in reality became the haunts of the most ferocious animals, and the retirements of the most determined robbers. Nothing could be more terrifying than a valley skirted by such caverns; a person in passing through it would be perpetually pained by the recollection of the blood which once had stained it, by the sight of the mouldering carcasses corrupting around it, and by the apprehension lest some ferocious beast or bloody assassin was lying in wait just ready to deprive him of life. Such a place David,

* Josephus affords us several confirmations of the same fact. I will quote a single example from him, in which he describes their construction. Speaking of those formed by Hyrcanus in Peræa, he says: "In the rock that was against the mountain he formed caves of many furlongs long. He made their mouths so narrow, that one only could enter at a time, and this he did for security, and to avoid danger if he should be besieged by his brethren."

by a strong and elegant figure, calls "*a valley of the shadow of death*;" that is, a valley as gloomy and dismal as though death visibly hovered over it, and obscured it with his shadow, large and horrible, totally obstructing the few gleams of light which it might otherwise enjoy. In it nothing but the extreme and unremitting vigilance of the shepherd could preserve his defenceless flock: yet such was the confidence of David in the guardianship of his divine Shepherd, that even in it he was free from apprehensions and alarms, since the crook of his heavenly protector could guide him amidst all its darkness, and his rod defend him from all its perils. "*Yea, 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.*"

"*I will fear no evil.*" Though I behold before me every thing that can affright the heart, every thing most distressing to nature; and though I feel myself frail and impotent, yet my soul is calm, and instead of trembling with apprehension, firmly leans upon its God. "*Thou art with me:*" thou, whose power is unlimited, whose compassion is unspeakable. Thou beholdest all my perils; thou pitiest me amidst my dangers and infirmities, and thou art able to deliver me. Often have I experienced thy care and defence in years that are past. Often has thy flock in the most disastrous circumstances been guarded and comforted by thee. Why then should I tremble, since my faith beholds thee present? "*Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.*" Amidst all the darkness and perplexity of my path, thy staff shall direct my steps; thy rod shall drive away the enemies that threaten me. Yes, my Shepherd, in those desolate moments when the kindest human friend can bestow

only an ineffectual pity, and shed useless tears, thou canst defend and sustain me, and fill my soul with consolations unspeakable.

The Psalmist here leaves his figurative language, and celebrates the goodness of God which has liberally supplied his wants, to the confusion of his malignant foes. “*Thou preparest a table for me in the presence of mine enemies : thou anointest my head with oil :*” this was a ceremony used among the Jews previous to their participation of a festival : “*my cup runneth over.*”

In the conclusion of the psalm, he declares his full confidence in the future protection and favour of God, and his assured trust that he would be restored to Jerusalem, where he might quietly worship in the holy temple : “*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life ; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*”

Having thus illustrated at some length the occasion and import of this psalm, let us now inquire more in detail in what respects God may be compared to a tender and careful shepherd. It is the duty of a shepherd to *guide* his flock ; to *supply* their wants ; to *heal* them when they are languishing and sick ; to *defend* them from danger. And all this is abundantly done by the Lord towards his people.

1. It is part of the pastoral office to *guide* the flock, to prevent it from wandering, or to lead it back in safety when it has strayed. And say, believers, does not our God fully discharge this tender office ? In order that we might be safely guided through this thorny maze, he has given us his holy word, a more sure director than the rod of the shepherd ; a director which in every circumstance of perplexity and doubt, cries to us, “*This is the way, walk ye in it.*”

He has given us his Son to go before us, and mark out the road which we must tread, in order that we may at last eat of the fruit of the tree of life, and drink of that river of delights which flows at God's right hand. He has given us his blessed Spirit, not only to induce us to follow the directions of this scripture and the example of this Saviour, but also that he himself may "lead us in the paths of righteousness." What flock, then, is guided with greater care than the flock of the Lord? Yet, notwithstanding this, they sometimes wander from the narrow path, and stray into the perilous wilderness: in these instances their Shepherd forsakes them not; he flies to "seek and to save that which is lost;" he hastens to restore the straying soul, and to bring it back to his secure fold. Can we not testify to this, my brethren? When we were wandering and lost, did not our careful Shepherd seek us with solicitude, draw us from the very brink of the precipice on which we were thoughtlessly straying, bring us back rejoicing, and so tenderly guide us, that we have been kept in safety to the present day? Can we not testify that God has fulfilled to us that gracious promise: "Behold I, even I, will both search my sheep and seek them out; as a shepherd seeketh out his flock, so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the dark and cloudy day: I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away." (Ezek. xxxiv. 11, 12. 16.)

2. It is a part of the pastoral office to *supply* the flock with all things necessary for sustenance and convenience; and God has graciously promised respecting his people, (Ezek. xxxiv. 14.) "I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains

of Israel shall their fold be : there they shall be in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel." Believers, God has more than fulfilled this promise ; he not only supplies his flock with what is necessary for its sustenance, but seems to delight in making it taste of the profusion of his bounty ; whilst here he feeds us not with the husks of earth, but with the hidden manna of heaven ; he gives us to taste of those rich blessings which flow from a sense of his favour, from the communications of his love, from the influences of the Holy Ghost, from a foretaste of the joys of heaven. He gives now to every member of his flock that portion which is best for him, and leads them one by one into those blissful regions where every want shall be supplied, every desire satisfied ; where God himself, with all his glories and with all his mercies, shall be the rich and never-failing portion of their soul. Ah ! where is the earthly shepherd who is either disposed or able, so abundantly to satisfy the necessities of his flock ? No ; there is none but God who can bestow on hungry and famished souls those rich provisions which will fully satisfy them here below, and fit them for that state, where " they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more," since their divine Shepherd " shall feed them, and lead them to fountains of living waters." (Rev. vii. 16.)

3. It is part of the pastoral office to *support* the flock when weak, and to *heal* it when sick. And is not this too done by our God ? In innumerable parts of the scripture he represents himself engaged in this benevolent employment : in the language of Ezekiel, " he bindeth up that which is broken, he strengtheneth that which is sick." In the still more tender expressions of Isaiah, he " gathereth the lambs in

his arms, carrieth them in his bosom, and gently leadeth those that are with young." Christians, how often have you experienced the truth of these declarations! When you were bowed down with a sense of your guilt, and went on your course sorrowful and sighing, who was it that bound up your broken heart, that gave you comfort and joy? Who but the Shepherd of Israel saying unto you, "Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you?" When you first entered upon the Christian course, advancing with trembling steps, fearing that you might be overcome by the power of temptation, feeling yourself to be feeble and helpless as the lamb; who was it that supported your tottering steps, that fanned the "smoking flax" into a flame, that had compassion on your weakness? Who but the Lord our Shepherd? In those gloomy seasons when you have had fearful apprehensions of futurity, have lost the cheering light of God's countenance, and questioned the sincerity of your love to him; who was it that in this desolate condition restored joy and gladness to your soul? It was your divine Shepherd who shed upon you the beams of his love, and whispered to your troubled heart: "Fear not, thou of little faith; I am thy God." In periods of outward sorrow, of sickness, of poverty, of contempt, what is it that has supported you; what but the communications of heavenly grace, the consolations of the blessed Spirit, a tender feeling of the love of God towards you? "Truly then, God is good to Israel: he healeth all his sicknesses, he redeemeth his life from destruction;" "he strengtheneth him upon the bed of languishing, he maketh all his bed in sickness;" "He healeth him when broken in heart, and bindeth up his wounds."

4. Finally: it is part of the pastoral office to *defend* the flock from dangers. And where is the protector to be compared with the Lord? Review your lives, believers, and you will immediately behold a thousand instances in which he has interposed in your behalf, and rescued you from the most imminent perils. But were your faculties so enlarged as to contemplate the whole plan of his providence towards you, what a crowd of deliverances would you behold! in each moment of your life you would see some instance of his *defending* goodness. At this period you would see him so arranging events in his providence, that a violent temptation might be checked just at the moment your piety was wavering: at that, presenting to you some circumstance that would tend to rekindle your virtue. Here, you would contemplate him encompassing you as with a shield, to enable you to resist an assault of Satan; there, warding off from you some calamity which you were not able to endure. *Every where* you would behold him so managing all your concerns, that nothing should befall you which would not work together for your greatest good. O, who is a defender like to our God? Who has equal *power* with him, or equal *love* to impel that power to action?

Do you wish to see an illustrious example of his willingness to defend you in every situation? View for a moment that miracle of goodness which astonished heaven and earth. The ungrateful flock of the Lord, rejecting his guidance, rebelling against his authority, wandering from his paths, was ready to become the prey of Satan, and the subjects of eternal sorrow; but in this situation, when none else could defend them, they found a defender in their injured Shepherd; he procured a deliverer in the

Son of his love; and although they had advanced so near to the abyss that they could not be saved, unless Jesus threw himself into it, he, urged by his compassion, hesitated not to perform this divine act of mercy. After viewing this deliverance, shall we fear that God will not interpose for our defence, when we are threatened by danger? Oh no! confident of his guardian care, we will securely sing, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?"

Should we not naturally suppose, my brethren, that all mankind would imitate the example of David, and seek, in the kindness and protection of the Most Merciful, a support in their afflictions, a refuge in their distresses? But, alas! we need only look around us to behold thousands of the feeble and unhappy children of men, who are still "as sheep going astray;" who still refuse to "return to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls." (1 Pet. ii. 25.) Poor sinners! since you will not attach yourselves to his flock, "you shall want;" want all the consolations of his grace, all the joys of his Spirit, all the splendours of his heaven. Since you choose to trace the downward road to hell, rather than permit him to "lead you in the paths of righteousness," you shall not have him as a supporter when you "walk through the valley of the shadow of death." In that awful moment, whilst the darkness of the tomb gathers round you, the remembrance of your past wanderings from God and from happiness, shall fill you with agony; and, in anticipating the future, you can have no hope of "dwelling in the house," the heavenly temple "of the Lord for ever." And where will you find consolation, when, after your

final groan, your soul shall fall, naked and defenceless, red with unexpiated guilt, and destitute of the heavenly Shepherd's protection, before the tribunal of the thrice holy God. Oh! in time avoid this fearful doom. Let the happiness which David experiences from the care and tenderness of the Shepherd of Israel, induce you to leave the paths of sin, and submit yourselves to him; he affectionately calls you; he assures you that he is willing to receive you, to guard you, to fill your hearts with joy. Resist no longer his tender invitations.

Flock of God! ever *be contented* with your lot in life; remember that your Shepherd, who tenderly loves you, orders all things and all events so as to promote your greatest good. To murmur at any of his dispensations, is criminally to rebel against him, and presumptuously to doubt of his power or affection. Since you "are the sheep of his pasture," submit implicitly to his tender guidance.

Live in constant *dependence* upon him. We, his feeble flock, weak, liable to err, incapable of defending ourselves, can nowhere find safety but in his protection. Like David, build your hopes of support in life and death, for time and eternity, not on yourselves, but on God; on his love, his faithfulness, the endearing relations he sustains towards you.

Confide in your Shepherd. In all your afflictions, recollect that his presence is with you, that his cloud covers you, that his pillar of fire goes before you, that his rod and his staff can comfort you. With the psalmist conclude, that, as he bears this tender office, and has hitherto protected and guarded you, so he will continue his loving-kindness towards you, and cause his "goodness and mercy to

follow you all the days of your life." Those fears and apprehensions for the future, which you sometimes feel, show but little faith, but little reliance upon the pastoral care of the Lord. "Why then are ye cast down, O our souls, and why are ye disquieted within us? Trust in God." Trust in him, Christians; he will safely conduct you through this vale of tears, render you triumphant in death, and then receive you to that better world where your Shepherd "shall feed you and shall lead you unto living fountains of waters;" where he "shall wipe away all tears from your eyes."

SERMON CL.



ABRAHAM OFFERING UP ISAAC.



GENESIS XXII. 1, 2.

And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: And he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

My brethren, the event related in the text is no less affecting and instructive, than astonishing. I am not surprised that the worshippers of Moloch

should offer their children in sacrifice to this pretended deity: these worshippers were superstitious; this god was cruel. But that our merciful Father, who willeth only the happiness of his creatures, should impose such a trial as this upon a tender parent; that this parent should so overcome the strongest feelings of nature as to comply with it without murmuring; these are events which fill me with admiration, till I recollect on the one hand the wise ends which God hereby accomplished, and on the other the power and strength of that faith which upheld the pious Abraham. But cold admiration is not the only sentiment which this history should excite; it is calculated to awaken the tenderest feelings, and to afford us the most useful lessons. I propose, that this purpose may be answered, to review the circumstances of this event, and then to inquire what practical instructions may be derived from it.

God of Abraham and of Isaac, eternal Father of that Saviour whom Isaac weakly prefigured! let our meditations on this subject tend to increase our holiness, and to inspire us with that faith, which will make us victorious not only over the world and sin, but also over the improper indulgence of those powerful feelings of nature, which become criminal only through excess.

It is pleasing and useful to contemplate pious men, supported in the midst of difficulties and distresses by the consolations of religion, and the exercise of faith. From such examples we are taught more compendiously and forcibly than we could be by precept, the value of piety, the duty of submission to the will of God. Such instructions we may derive from this event in the life of the patriarch Abraham.

He had now arrived to an advanced old age, and living in strict communion with his God, hoped to descend in peace to the house of silence. He was surrounded by temporal enjoyments; he had received from the Almighty that noblest and most endearing of titles, the "friend of God;" he saw his memory about to be perpetuated, in a son dearly and deservedly beloved, a son given him by miracle, a son in whose seed the nations were to be blessed. But, human hopes, how fallacious are you! Earthly bliss, how easily art thou destroyed! God will not suffer his children to remain in this world without afflictions and sorrows, lest they should forget that this is not their abiding city, lest their desires after the heavenly inheritance should be cooled or extinguished. It was thus that he acted towards Abraham: "And it came to pass after these things that God did tempt Abraham." The word, *to tempt*, is generally used in an ill sense, signifying *to incite to sin*; in this sense, God cannot, as St. James asserts, tempt any man: when he is said to tempt his children, the meaning is, that he so orders events in his providence, that their piety may be strongly attacked, and its warmth and sincerity attested by a victory over dangerous assaults. It would be better perhaps to translate the original word, *did try*; which is its primitive signification. God then "did try Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham, and he said, Behold, here I am." We are ignorant in what precise manner the Lord revealed himself to this his faithful servant; he did it however in such a manner as to assure Abraham that he was addressed by God. It was a voice that was familiar and dear to the patriarch; he had often been blest by such intimate intercourse with his Master; the most

precious promises had in this manner been made to him; he listens to it now with eagerness, expecting perhaps new favours. What is it then which the Lord announces? "Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest." Ah! when Abraham heard only these words, his attention became more fixed; he supposed doubtless that this dear object of his affection was about to partake of new mercies from his Lord, was to receive either new promises, or to obtain the confirmation of those that had already been made to him. What a stroke was this order which follows! Take this son, so dearly, so justly beloved by thee, "and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains that I shall tell thee of." Holy Abraham! what a trial was this; how great was that faith which could triumph over it!

It would have been much, had the pious patriarch merely been told that Isaac must die; it had been much to relinquish all those fond hopes which he had cherished, and which he had believed that he was authorized to entertain from the promises of God. But then his grief would be mitigated by watching around the sick bed of his son, by assuaging his pains, and performing for him the last offices of affection: but this feeble consolation must be denied him, for Isaac must be slain, must die by violence. Even then it might be possible that Abraham might remove at a distance from this bloody spectacle, and avoid beholding the last agonies of his son: No! this alleviation is not granted to him; he must not only behold Isaac struggling with the pangs of death, but must himself inflict the mortal blow; the hand that, it would seem, should only be employed in his defence, must be dyed with his gush-

ing blood ; the final groans of an only son must vibrate through the ears of a parent who has wounded him ; and after he is cold and senseless, this parent must light the wood on which he is extended, and behold the body of his offspring slowly reduced to ashes. Ah, holy patriarch ! hadst thou been less devoted to God, what various pleas mightest thou have urged to excuse thy compliance with this painful duty. But, my brethren, Abraham was not of the number of those persons who suppose that they may violate the laws of God, because they cannot perfectly comprehend the reasons of them : as soon as he knew the will of God clearly and explicitly, he prepared not to argue, but to obey it without hesitancy or delay. He stifles the feelings of nature ; he suppresses the suggestions of doubt ; he goes to perform the command of his Lord, and says with resignation, “ Not my will, but thine be done.” “ And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass,” (for this, in the earlier ages of the world, was the manner in which persons of the greatest distinction travelled,) “ and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son ; and clave the wood for the burnt-offering, and rose up and went towards the place of which God had told him : and on the third day he lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off.” What sorrows must have wrung the heart of the parent during these three mournful days. Whilst Isaac was addressing him with filial affection and tenderness, or speaking of the wonders that had been wrought in their behalf by the God whom they worshipped, what keen regrets must have agitated the afflicted father in reflecting that in so short a period this affectionate child must be sunk in the grave by his arm. Nevertheless, he still prosecutes his jour-

ney with a determined soul. His trial was indeed great; but he was not crushed by it, for God who inflicted it upon him, always wisely proportions the trials of his children to the strength of grace which they have received. Having arrived at the foot of the mount, he left the servants there, “and took the wood of the burnt-offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand and a knife, and they went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, my father: and he said, here am I, my son. And he said, behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering.” What force is there in this tender address and this simple question of Isaac! “The heart alone can comment upon these words.” “And Abraham said, my son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering: so they went both of them together.”

Having ascended the mount and built the altar, Abraham “bound Isaac his son, and laid him upon it.” It will be recollected that Isaac had now arrived to years of discretion, and was probably about the age of thirty-three; he must of consequence have been bound by his own consent. Nothing then could be more affecting than their interview when, having arrived to the appointed place, Abraham informed his son of the orders he had received from God; and forgetting the Father in the believer, urges him unreservedly to submit to the will of the All-merciful. Isaac yields, submits without a murmur, and prepares to lay down his life with calmness at the command of God.

The final embrace has been given and received; the solemn and affecting farewell has been mutually pronounced; Isaac is extended upon the wood; the

arm of Abraham is raised to strike the fatal blow; in another moment the knife will be dyed with the blood of his son. O Christians! it is in such seasons of gloom and perplexity, when all hope is relinquished, that our God appears for our succour. God by his angel called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham! lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him, for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." A victim is provided in the place of Isaac; God renews his covenant with the faithful parent, and confirms it by an oath; and Abraham returns home rejoicing in these new displays of divine goodness. It is always thus, my brethren; when an obedience to the commands of God seems to lead us to misery and death, we find peace and joy: whilst in following the world which promises us prosperity and delight, we find death, eternal death.

This interesting history affords us,

I. An instruction for Christians.

II. A reproof to sinners.

III. A consolation for mourners.

I. Christians, you are here taught some of the characteristics of that obedience which you owe to God. It should, like that of Abraham, be *universal, willing, prompt*.

1. Our obedience to the commands of God must be *universal*. Our dearest gratifications must be relinquished, the severest pains endured rather than violate his orders. Having learned the will of our Lord, we must prepare to perform it, even though our hearts are to be torn by the sacrifice of an Isaac. How many are there, my brethren, who forget this great characteristic of Christian obedience: they

are willing to obey God to a certain point, but beyond this they say to him with the guests of the parable, "I pray thee have me excused." They will be willing, for instance, to acknowledge the truth of religion and to contend warmly against its enemies: but to practise it sincerely, this is making too great a sacrifice. They will be willing to abstain from gross crimes, but not to perform painful duties: they will be willing to attend to all the external rites of religion, but to demand from them vital heartfelt piety, is to demand too much: they will be willing to comply with all fashionable virtues, but not with those that are contemned by the world. There are innumerable other such examples of partial obedience which will immediately occur to you. How different a lesson are we taught by Abraham: he is commanded to perform an action, in comparison with which he would with joy lay down his own life; an action which seemed contrary to the character of God, the spirit of his religion, and the promises he had made. Yet God commands; all scruples must be silenced; Isaac must be sacrificed. God, my brethren, does not command us now to offer up our children to him, but if you have not the same sentiments which induced Abraham to comply with the divine orders, if you resolve that if you were placed in his situation, you would act differently, you are no Christians; for there is no principle more plainly or unequivocally asserted in the word of God than this: that a deliberate refusal to obey any one command of the Lord, is a proof that our obedience in other respects did not spring from a regard for his authority, but from motives purely human. "Who-soever," saith St. James, "shall keep the whole law, and yet offend." deliberately and resolvedly. "in

one point, he is guilty of all." Let your obedience then be universal; extending to those things most painful, as well as to those most pleasing to nature. Be as ready to sacrifice as to cherish an Isaac, if God should command you.

2. Christian obedience must be *willing*. All murmurs must be silenced, and the heart acquiesce in the duty. This is a second characteristic of Christian obedience taught us by Abraham. It is not sufficient to perform those actions which God bids us, if we do them with repinings and regrets; if like slaves under the rod of a tyrant we are driven involuntarily to do what we hate: these are not the servants whom God approves; he rewards those only who love him; and it is one of the first effects of love to him, to make us delight to perform his commands. Behold Abraham once more: he received an order at which nature shuddered; yet though he feels as a father, he submits as a believer. The severity of the trial does not excite any improper sentiment against God; it is a bitter cup, but still it is a cup given by the hand of the Father, and he prepares to drink it with willingness and resignation. The succours of grace assuage the pains of nature, and he says with a composed, a resigned, a willing soul, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good."

3. Christian obedience must be *prompt*. All unnecessary delay must be carefully avoided; the moment God speaks, the injunction must be complied with. "To-day, if ye will hear his voice; harden not your hearts." Behold this exemplified in Abraham: God had commanded him to sacrifice his son; he does not delay the execution of this order till he might, in the course of time, become more reconciled to a separation that was rendered

doubly poignant, by being unexpected; for "Abraham rose up early in the morning," and prepared immediately to execute the painful duty assigned to him. Imitate his example, Christians; when the Lord calls, do not say with those who neglected the gracious invitations of the Saviour, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father:" your first duty is to obey the voice of your Master.

II. Whilst Christians are thus instructed, sinners are reprov'd by this subject. The God who spake to Abraham, speaks to you also. He does not, it is true, address you immediately; but through his word, his spirit, his ministers, and his providence; yet his address is not on this account less real or less binding. He said to Abraham, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and offer him as a burnt-offering unto me." He cries to you, 'Sinners, seize those iniquities which you love; your sensuality, your worldly-mindedness, your injustice, your revenge, your intemperance, your unholy passions and affections; slay them that they may not lead you to destruction; let the fire of divine love penetrate to your hearts, and consume them entirely,' that they may be a burnt-offering to the Lord. Ah, my brethren! Abraham had a harder trial than this, yet he did not hesitate to perform it; and will you, who live under the clear light of the gospel, which shows you obligations to obey God, which Abraham knew but faintly; will you, from whom nothing is demanded half so rending to the heart as what was demanded from him—tell me, will you fall so far beneath this father of the faithful in obeying the voice of God? Imitate this holy patriarch, or he will rise up against you in the day of judgment.

III. And you, mourners, who are weeping over the tombs of those who were dear to you, come and behold in Abraham a model and consoler. Were you more attached to the parent, the child, the friend whom you lament, than this tenderest of fathers was to this most beloved of sons: yet he resigns him to death with calmness and submission. Do you wish to know what was that powerful principle which enabled him thus to bear so afflictive a separation? You are taught it by the apostle Paul: "*By faith* Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac." Believing in the power and wisdom of God, he knew that all things were wisely ordered by him, and that the highest duty, as well as the greatest wisdom, of feeble, short-sighted man, is to submit unreservedly to omniscience, guided by fatherly affection. Faith taught him that the glories of the unseen world were reserved for his pious son; and that, however dark and perplexing the schemes of Providence may appear, "it shall always be well with the righteous." Cultivate this faith in the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of God; it will be a prop to your soul when all earthly supports shall fail; and by it you will be enabled to offer up your friends to God, when he calls for them, with resignation and calmness.

But, my brethren, all these lessons are taught us with greater force, when we contemplate Him, of whom Isaac was so illustrious a type. Will you learn the characteristics of obedience, the necessity of renouncing sin, the duty of submitting without murmuring to the most afflictive providences? Leave Moriah and ascend to Calvary: behold there the true Isaac ascending the hill, bearing the wood on which he is to be offered as a sacrifice; behold him

extended upon it: He, like the son of Abraham, is not constrained to lay down his life; the offering is voluntary. The hand of his Father is raised to smite him: ah! no voice is now heard which restrains the stroke; no other victim is provided by God; the life-blood of Jesus gushes from his wounds. Whilst we see this Saviour thus despoiling himself of his glory, submitting to every indignity and pain, and at last laying down his life for our sakes; shall we not obey him *without reserve or limitation*? Shall we esteem any duty too painful, any trial too severe, to be undergone for the sake of this Saviour? Shall not our obedience to him be *willing*? He is too dear a friend, he has done too much for us to permit that we should serve him heartlessly and grudgingly. Shall not our obedience to him be *prompt*? He delayed not to work our deliverance; when he was for us to be baptized with the baptism of suffering and death, he was straitened and afflicted until it was accomplished; he hastened to consummate his mediatorial office by the oblation of himself. And shall we then, who call ourselves his disciples, delay and procrastinate the performance of our duties?

Sinners, turn to this same object, that you may learn to sacrifice all your criminal passions and pursuits to God calling upon you to destroy them. Whilst you see this divine victim pierced by your sins, murdered by your transgressions, will you not, in return, immolate these sins and transgressions? Whilst you see Jesus "bruised and put to grief for your iniquities," smitten by the hand of a Father, whilst he stands as your pledge and surety; will you not bring these iniquities to the foot of the cross, and there slay them before him?

Finally: do you, mourners, direct your eyes to this sad spectacle; and, seeing the sorrows of him of whom Isaac was so feeble a type, learn to bear your griefs with resignation and composure. What! will you repine at your small portion of sorrows, when your Master has undergone so much keener agonies? What! when God gave the son of his love to such inconceivable tortures for our sakes, shall we be unwilling that he should afflict us in so much smaller a degree, and with the design that we “may be made partakers of his holiness?” O no! let the tears, the anguish, and the blood of Jesus, suspend our sighs, and silence our murmurs; let us even rejoice that he calls us to a fellowship in his sufferings, in order that we may be fitted for his glory, and be prepared “to sit down with Abraham, with Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of our heavenly Father.”

SERMON CLI.



THE SINNER HIS OWN DESTROYER.



HOSEA xiii. 9.

O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself.

My brethren, if we beheld a person murdered and weltering in his blood, or the smoking ruins of a city which had been fired by incendiaries, there is not one of us who would not be desirous to discover the cause of these miseries; there is not one of us who would not immediately and anxiously inquire who were the authors of these horrid deeds. Thus affected by temporal distresses, shall we look with indifference upon eternal agonies? Prying with solicitude into the nature and origin of smaller evils, shall we content ourselves with casting a cool and rapid glance on the tortures of the accursed, and neglect to inquire into the origin and source of these tortures? Let us not act thus contradictorily; let us strip off the covering from the infernal pit, and, looking down into it, behold those "chains of darkness," that "smoke which ascendeth for ever," that "fire which never is quenched," that "worm which never dieth." Let us listen to those groans and lamentations which re-echo round this dreary abode; and while with fearfulness and trembling we con-

sider these agonies, let us reverently cry to the Fountain of light, Who is it, holy God, that hath dug this abyss? Who is it that hath pushed these sufferers into it? Who, who is the author of this unutterable wo? To this question the God of truth replies in our text: "Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself." Sinners, you are the authors of your own perdition; you have forged those chains which bind you; you have kindled those flames which consume you; you have pulled down that vengeance which fills you with horror and sinks you in despair.

This is the decision of that God "who cannot be deceived," and who cannot deceive. When he speaks thus clearly, surely it is the duty of sinners to acknowledge his truth, and believe his declarations. But do they make this acknowledgment? Do they exercise this belief? No; in their hearts, and sometimes with their lips, they dare blasphemously to cast the blame of their destruction from themselves upon God. Sometimes it is his decree which constrains them; sometimes it is the withholding of his grace which excuses them; sometimes it is the force of temptation and their own inability, which exempts them from blame.

Since by such pleas the sinner quiets the clamours of his conscience and dishonours the God whom we love, let us strive to strip him of these pleas, and vindicate the cause of God. These objects will be attained by a careful meditation on the following proposition, which naturally flows from the text:

The destruction of impenitent sinners is procured by themselves; or, in other words, the accursed must lay all the blame of their perdition, not on God, but on themselves.

Two things are requisite for the illustration of this proposition :

I. We must establish its truth by arguments.

II. We must answer the objections that are made against it.

You have before you the whole division of the ensuing discourse.

I. That the destruction of the impenitent is procured by themselves, will be evident to you if you attend to the *attributes*, the *word*, the *conduct of God*, the *sentiments of believers*, and the *confessions of sinners*.

1. The attributes of God. Every perfection of Deity must be prostrated and trampled upon, before the blame can be cast upon him for the perdition of sinners. Where would be his *justice*, if the miserable victims of despair could address him as they sunk into the flames, and say with truth: ‘Thou art the procuring cause of that wo which I am about to suffer; it is owing to thee alone that I have not escaped this torment!’ Where would be his tender *mercy*, his infinite *love*, his abounding *grace*, if the helpless, hopeless inhabitants of hell could look up to his throne and cry, ‘There sits the Being who sent me hither: it is his fault and not mine, that instead of a tortured fiend, I am not an holy angel!’ Where would be his *veracity*, if the plain assertion in our text, and many others equally express, might be charged with untruth? Look over his other attributes, and you will find that in a similar manner they must all be violated by the denial of this proposition. Sinners, is it a small matter, think you, thus “to charge God foolishly;” thus blasphemously to strip him of his perfections, and represent him as a monster of injustice, of cruelty, and of falsehood?

2. After thus considering the *attributes*, attend to the word of God. What terms does it use when it speaks of his *nature*? When he makes his name known unto Moses, he proclaims: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." And elsewhere he declares, "I am the Lord, who exercise loving-kindness, righteousness, and judgment; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." When the church of Israel worshipped him, they declared, "Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness." When his eternal Son would give us a true view of his Father's character, he assures us that his goodness so infinitely exceeds that of any creature, that on a comparison it may be said, "There is none good, save God." When John would teach us the nature of Him for whom his heart burned with such warm affection, he exclaims, "God is love." Now, if God be to blame for the sinner's perdition, these and a thousand similar texts, are not merely unmeaning—they are false.

When God beholds sinners obstinately despising his calls, scorning his proffered grace, and rushing on to destruction, what is his language? "O that they were wise; that they understood this; that they would consider their latter end!" "O that my people had hearkened unto me!" "O that thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace!" "Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil way, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zebœim?" Now

if God be to blame for the sinner's perdition, all these tender expostulations must be only a pompous display of unreal feelings; all these pathetic complaints must be only vain and delusive mockery.

Besides, God gives us many express and unequivocal assurances that he would "have all men to be saved;" "that he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to the knowledge of the truth:" and lest these assurances should not satisfy us, he has confirmed them by his oath; and "since he could swear by no greater, hath sworn by himself," saying, "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." Now, if God be to blame for the sinner's perdition, these assurances and this oath must be untrue: the God of heaven must not only be a deceiver, he must also be perjured.

You shudder, my brethren, and you justly shudder, at so impious a conclusion: but it is a conclusion which we must necessarily embrace, unless we maintain that the ungodly are themselves the authors and procurers of their eternal wo. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself!"

3. From considering the word, let us pass to an examination of the conduct of God; and whether we reflect on the manner in which he has acted towards our *race in general*, or towards *each one of us in particular*, we must be convinced that if we are lost, the blame of our perdition must rest entirely on ourselves.

He created our race pure and holy, enstamped with his own image, having no criminal desires, no tendency to evil, no irregular appetites. He endued us with reason to direct our conduct, with

conscience to point us to duty, with affections which could be satisfied only when fixed upon the sovereign good. He barred against us the gates to perdition; and it was man, not God, which burst open these gates to make a passage to wo. When we had thus fallen, when the flames already were kindling around us, when the curses of a violated covenant were just descending on our heads, and we could find no refuge, the Lord interposed and rescued us. Entering into a covenant of grace, he made salvation possible; he gave up the Son of his bosom to fulfil the law in our behalf, and to bear the punishment due for our sins; he offers the righteousness and merits of this Son, to all, without exception, who will accept him as their Ruler and Redeemer. The sentiments of conscience, the declarations of his word, his fearful threatenings, the instructions of the pious, the attractive displays of heavenly glory, the dreadful denunciations of future misery, are so many mounds and barriers with which he has guarded the avenues to destruction. The transgressor must leap over these mounds before he can plunge into destruction; he must force these barriers before he can seize on death. Besides all this, God has freely offered his blessed Spirit, as a safe and unerring guide to heaven, to all who will ask for him sincerely, humbly, and under a sense of their need: He has caused the blood of the Saviour to flow, an ocean of mercy, between us and hell. And after thou hast done all this, O my God, shall we still dare to say, that thou art the cause of our destruction? No, no: "To thee belongeth righteousness" and mercy; "but to us shame and confusion of face."

After thus thinking of his conduct towards our race in general, think of his conduct to *you in particu-*

lar. How much has he done to deter you from misery, to allure you to happiness? How many times has he called to you by his providence, by his word, by his ministers, by his people, by his Spirit; how many times has he called to you in all these different manners, "Why will ye die?" Though his dealings have been diverse, yet there is not one of you to whom he has not given numerous assistances and encouragements in the path to heaven. To this person he has given a pious parent; to that a holy wife or husband; who have with earnest solicitude and with bitter tears, besought their sinful relatives to think of the concerns of eternity. You have received from him riches and pleasures, that he might draw you through gratitude to devote yourself unto him. You have received from him disappointment, affliction, poverty, and pains, that finding no joy upon earth, you might be driven to seek spiritual pleasures. You were in imminent danger of sudden death whilst you were unprepared for it; but his providence warded off the stroke, and lengthened out your season of probation. You were brought by sickness to the borders of the grave, and standing on the brink of the pit were just ready to take the final plunge. God stretched forth from heaven the arm of his power, pulled you from the brow of the precipice, set you at a distance from it, and waited to see whether you would be instructed by the peril from which you had been delivered. My brethren, let each of you fill up this sketch for himself. Let each of you silently review the conduct of God to you, from the time that you first laid on the bosom of your mother to the present moment. Mark attentively the mercies you have received, the dangers from which you have been saved, the long-suffering compassion

which has been exercised towards you, the calls and invitations of God which have sounded in your ears, the means of grace, the public instructions and the private helps which you have enjoyed, the movings of the Spirit upon your hearts inciting you to obedience. Let each of you mark these circumstances, and you cannot fail to be convinced, that if you perish, you must be the authors of your own perdition. "O Israel thou hast destroyed thyself."

4. The *sentiments of all believers* establish this same truth. Inquire of them why they so long remained in the road to destruction: ask them whether God, or they, were to blame, that they did not sooner abandon it. They will without hesitancy reply to you that they alone were in fault; that God invited them and was willing to receive them; but that their own obstinacy and impenitence, made them reject his invitations, and refuse to come unto him. And can it be conceived for a moment that Christians of all ages, of all conditions, of all denominations, should without a single exception concur in embracing a sentiment so mortifying to the pride of human nature, unless, this sentiment were established by scripture and confirmed by their own feelings?

5. Finally, remember that this testimony of believers is corroborated by the *confessions of sinners themselves*. With whatever confidence and ingenuity transgressors, while in health and strength may assert their blamelessness; with whatever impiety and boldness they may charge God as the author of their destruction, yet their language will be changed in that honest hour when they shall have to struggle with the king of terrors. I have more than once heard the sinner, while he supposed that death was yet at a distance from him, quieting his con-

science by sophistical reasoning, and excusing himself for his continuance in guilt. I have beheld this same sinner stretched on the bed of sickness, pale, feeble, languishing, in the midst of the tears and the sighs of his relatives, expecting each moment that death would arrive to tear his unwilling soul from his body, and bear it to the tribunal of his Judge. Ah! his faltering tongue no longer dared to extenuate his crimes; his trembling lips abstained from their unholy charges against God: but shuddering and affrighted by considering the misery which awaited him, he exclaimed, ‘Fool that I was, to have rejected an offered salvation; to have closed my ears against a wooing Redeemer; to have slighted the importunities of a compassionate God! I perish, and I perish under the agonizing reflection, that none but myself is to blame.’

And could we follow sinners beyond the grave; could we behold them in their torments, and hear the sad accents which burst from their lips, with what emphasis, what energy, would they confirm the truth that we are establishing. Oh! were it in their power, they would give millions of worlds to be freed from the dreadful reflection that their own folly brought them to that state of wo. This torturing remembrance, ‘we have destroyed ourselves,’ preys like a serpent upon their souls, and stings them to madness.

Unite all the reflections which have been made, and you will, we trust, be convinced that *the accursed must lay all the blame of their perdition, not on God, but on themselves.*

Nevertheless, sinners object to this truth; and they found the principal of their objections on the

decrees of God, and on the inability of man. We are to examine these objections in the

IId. Division of our discourse.

The first objection which the sinner makes against the doctrine that we have been establishing is this: *Since God has decreed whatsoever comes to pass, and since his decrees are irreversible, it will follow that if I am destroyed, it will be through the compulsive power of the divine decree, and not through my own fault.* On this very common objection we make the following remarks:

1. The proofs of our doctrine have been drawn from plain and simple sources: the principles on which we built our reasoning were clear; the deductions from them were intelligible, and level to the weakest capacity. But on the contrary, the objection is drawn from a subject of which we have very inadequate conceptions, in which we soon get beyond our depth, and feel ourselves involved in difficulties and darkness. Is it not then most clear, that an objection of this nature, even though it were insurmountable to us, ought nevertheless to have but little weight against such a body of clear and perspicuous evidence?

2. The principle on which this objection is founded is not a just one. What is this principle? That when two doctrines are affirmed in the scripture, which to our limited capacity appear irreconcilable, we are authorized to embrace the one and reject the other. Why is this principle unjust? Because another person, on precisely the same ground, may reject the doctrine which we embrace, and embrace the doctrine which we reject. Let me illustrate my meaning from the case before us. Here are two doctrines which we suppose to be taught by the scriptures: that the sinner is the author of his own

perdition, and that God has decreed whatsoever comes to pass. The sinner says, 'I cannot reconcile these doctrines, and therefore I will reject the former.' And the Arminian, on precisely the same principle, may say, 'I cannot reconcile these doctrines, and therefore I will reject the latter.' Now then, that cannot be a just principle, which is so vague and uncertain in its application, as to lead two different persons to conclusions and sentiments diametrically opposite.

3. Permit me again to present to you the interesting reasonings of an excellent divine on this subject.* When the sinner asserts that these two propositions, *God has irreversibly decreed whatever comes to pass, and the accursed can blame none but themselves for their perdition*—when the sinner asserts that these two propositions are irreconcilable, there are only two ways in which we can answer him: the first is, accurately and minutely to compare the decrees of God with the conduct and dispositions of sinners; and to make it evident from this comparison, that sinners notwithstanding these decrees, have a perfect freedom of will, and are not compelled to embrace perdition: the second is, to refer this question to the decision of a Being of unsuspected knowledge and veracity, whose testimony is unexceptionable, and whose decisions are infallible. Now the first of these methods is impracticable: since we do not know the arrangement, the extent, the combinations of the decrees of God, we cannot possibly accurately compare them with human conduct. The second way is possible: there is a Being, capable of deciding this point; a Being who has decided it: this Being

* This whole paragraph from Saunin.

is God, from whose decisions there can be no appeal. I will suppose you to put up this petition to God: 'Doth the eternal destination which thou hast made of my soul before I had a being; do what they call in the schools predestination and reprobation, destroy this proposition: that if I perish, my destruction proceeds alone from myself? My God, remove this difficulty, and lay open to me this important truth.' Suppose, my brethren, that having presented this question, God should answer in the following manner: 'The frailty of your minds renders this matter incomprehensible to you; it is impossible for men, finite as you are, to comprehend the whole extent of my decrees, and to see in a clear and distinct manner the influence they have on the destinies of men: but I who formed them perfectly understand them; I am truth itself, as I am wisdom; I do declare to you then, that none of my decrees offer violence to my creatures, and that your destruction can proceed from none but yourselves. You shall one day perfectly understand what you now understand only in part; and then you shall see with your own eyes, what you now see only with mine. Cease to anticipate a period which my wisdom defers; and laying aside this speculation, attend to practice; fully persuaded that you are placed between reward and punishment, and may have a part in which you please.' Is it not true, my brethren, that if God had answered in this manner, it would be carrying, I do not say rashness, but insolence, to the highest degree, to object against this testimony, or to desire more light into this subject at present? But God has given this answer, and in a manner infinitely more clear than we have stated it: he has given it in all those passages of his word

which attest his willingness to save man ; and therefore, notwithstanding this objection, it still appears true that the sinner has destroyed himself.

But a second objection is urged. It is founded on *the inability of man*. ‘God,’ says the sinner, ‘does not deal fairly with us ; he is a “hard master, gathering where he has not strawed ;” he requires of me certain duties which I cannot perform ; and then, because I do not perform them, sentences me to wo.’ This is the objection in its full force. We make but a single observation in reply to it. This inability, instead of extenuating your crime, is the very essence of your guilt.

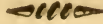
Inability is of two kinds, natural and moral. Natural inability consists in a defect of rational faculties, bodily powers, or external advantages ; this excuses from sin. Moral inability consists only in the want of a proper disposition of heart to use our natural ability aright ; this is the essence of sin. We shall illustrate this point by a familiar example. A beggar applies for relief to two different persons : the first says to him, ‘I perceive your misery ; I know that you ought to be relieved, but I do not possess any property, and therefore I am totally unable to relieve you.’ Here is an instance of natural inability, and it perfectly exempts the person from the sin of uncharitableness. The second says to him, ‘I perceive your misery ; I know that you ought to be relieved ; I have a sufficiency of money ; but I have such a dreadful hardness of heart that I cannot pity your distresses, and that I am totally unable to relieve you.’ Here is an instance of moral inability ; instead of excusing from sin, it is that which constitutes the very essence of the sin, and which renders the man uncharitable.

Now then, sinners, let us examine under which species of inability you lie. If under the first, you are excusable; if under the second, you are inexcusable. Natural inability then consists in a defect of rational faculties, bodily powers, or external advantages. If you were without any reason to understand the truths of the gospel, without any external senses by which these truths could be conveyed to your mind, without any opportunity of ever hearing of these truths, you would not be blameable for not closing with the gospel offers of salvation. But that understanding which is employed in the investigation of natural truths, is capable of being employed in the investigation of spiritual truths; but that love which is exercised upon the creature, is capable of being exercised upon the Creator; but your outward senses and external situation are such that you have known these things; there is then no natural inability in your case; you labour only under a moral inability. The question then recurs, does this excuse you? On the contrary, it is this which constitutes your sin. Moral inability consists, as we have said, in a want of a proper disposition of heart to use our natural ability aright. Moral inability consists in viciousness of heart and depravity of disposition. When you say, therefore, 'I am excusable, because I am morally unable to repent, to believe, to love God;' you say, in other words, 'I am excusable, because I have so dreadfully guilty and corrupted a heart, that I have no disposition to repent, to believe, to love God.' What says conscience to this plea? What would a civil judge say to such an apology in the case of murder or theft? No, sinner; this impotency is so far from excusing you, that it aggravates your guilt; the greater our moral in-

ability, the greater is our disposition to evil, and therefore the greater our crime. Notwithstanding this objection then, it still appears that the sinner destroys himself.

And now, sinners, what shall henceforth be your conduct? You have seen that, if you are lost, you must voluntarily embrace perdition. Will you still act so much against the instincts of nature, so worse than brutishly, as to choose destruction? Do you say, 'I do not choose destruction; destruction is hateful to me?' In itself I grant that it is so; but he who knows that perdition is inseparably connected with any course of conduct, and yet will pursue this course of conduct, loves perdition; if not for its own sake, yet for that which is annexed to it. He that will drink a pleasant potion, though he knows it to be impregnated with poison, surely chooses death. I affectionately and importunately beseech you not to act so cruelly to yourselves. In the name of my Master, I once more offer to you all the benefits purchased by Christ, and all the glories of heaven. If you neglect this proffer, remember that we must soon meet at the tribunal of God, and I summon this assembly then to bear testimony that you have rejected an offered Jesus.

SERMON CLII.



LAST JUDGMENT.



REVELATION XX. 11, 12, 13.

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

Such, my brethren, are the circumstances of that final, infallible, irreversible judgment which we must all undergo. Time, as it rapidly flies, bears us nearer to this decisive bar. In a very little while, the period afforded us for preparing to appear there with joy, will be past. In a very little while, our pulses shall cease to throb and our hearts forget to beat. Our friends shall follow our lifeless corpses to the tomb; and the dust of the church-yard shall press upon our cold and unpalpitating breasts. Even

before our friends shall perform these last offices of humanity for us, and hide our corrupting bodies in the grave, our souls shall stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, shall be by him acquitted or condemned, and shall enter upon their endless state. After the souls of successive generations shall have been thus acquitted or condemned, and their bodies shall have mouldered in the dust; after the period appointed from eternity for the duration of our system shall have elapsed, then the end shall come; then that general judgment shall take place, which shall confirm all the particular judgments before pronounced, and show to the assembled universe the justice and mercy of the King of kings: It is this general judgment on which we are now to meditate. The Lord grant that this exercise may be so accompanied by his Spirit, that we may be enabled to stand then fearless and undaunted amidst the wreck of nature.

When the purposes of God, with respect to mankind, shall have been accomplished, then "a mighty angel shall descend from the skies, clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow upon his head, and his face shining as the sun; and standing upon the sea and upon the earth, he shall lift up his hand to heaven, and swear by Him that liveth for ever and ever, that time shall be no longer:" (Rev. x. 1. 5, 6.) The oath shall no sooner proceed from his lips than it shall be ratified by the God of heaven. The voice of the archangel and the trump of God shall resound through the universe; shall penetrate the lowest graves and the depths of the sea, and shall cause the sleeping dust to spring into new life. At this delightful moment, light shall beam upon the tombs of the saints; for "the dead in Christ shall rise first."

The particles of their frames, which in all their various changes have been preserved by omniscience, shall re-assemble at the command of God. Their bodies shall rise from the dust, clothed with new properties and with heavenly attributes, shining like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Their souls which have rested during the state of separation in the bosom of Jesus, shall rapidly fly to be re-united to their former companions, and to obtain with them the consummation of bliss. At the same instant, all the believers that are then alive upon the earth, shall be "changed in the twinkling of an eye," and caught up to meet their Saviour. The righteous being thus collected, the loud peal of the trump shall again float on the air, shake the earth to its centre, and re-echo through the dreary abodes of hell. The ungodly well know the portentous sound; and shuddering, trembling, and unwilling, rise from the dust; whilst their souls are dragged from the place of torment to meet those bodies once partakers of their sin, now to be partakers of their punishment. Thus united, they, with the sinners that are upon the earth, are borne through the air to meet their offended Lord. All mankind being thus assembled, the loud clangour of the trump again is heard, and re-echoes round the extensive vaults of heaven. Hell vomits forth its victims, and the apostate spirits, with Satan at their head, are dragged, oh! how reluctantly, to the dreadful bar! Thus two worlds are collected to be judged; and the third is advancing as an assistant spectator.

Whilst these preparations are making, the Judge approaches. At the brightness of his presence, the sun hides its beams and shrouds itself in darkness. It covered itself with sackcloth when the humbled

Jesus expired upon Calvary; it starts back with astonishment and terror when he comes in the splendour of his glory. The moon lays aside its brilliancy and changes into blood: why should it continue to measure times and seasons when eternity commences? The stars of heaven shake and fall from their spheres; the expiring earth trembles in mighty throes and convulsions, and is enwrapped in flames; the heavens shrink like a shrivelled scroll from the face of their Creator.

In the midst of circumstances so august and terrible, the Judge descends. This Judge is Jesus Christ, to whom, according to the appointment of the most sacred Trinity, this sublime office is made appropriate; Jesus Christ, who being both God and man, is properly constituted the Judge between God and man; Jesus Christ, who is our owner as Creator, our purchaser as Redeemer, and therefore has a just authority to judge us by both these titles. With what lustre and glory this Saviour now appears! how different from the despised Nazarene! Instead of the manger at Bethlehem, he sits on the throne of the universe; instead of the humble son of Mary, he comes as the eternal son of God; instead of a few swaddling cloths as the sign of his advent, the sun eclipsed and the moon darkened precede his appearance; instead of appearing in the silence of midnight, he comes in the midst of thunders and lightnings and dissolving systems; instead of being unjustly cited to a criminal bar, he summons the whole world to answer to him; instead of the crown of thorns, he bears one beaming with glory; instead of the insulting reed, the emblem of mock-majesty, he wields the sceptre of the universe; instead of being surrounded by a reviling crowd,

who pour upon him their reproaches, their contumelies, their curses, he is attended by myriads of the angelic host, who prostrate themselves before him, blessing him for his mercies, and adoring him for his perfections.

Such is the appearance of the Judge. He comes dressed in that body which was crucified on Calvary, and which now, inconceivably glorified and exalted, is taken into union with divinity, and remains in heaven the eternal monument of redeeming love. In this he comes to decide the destinies of men. The prints of the nails, of the thorns, of the spear, are still manifest, and a flood of glory beams from these precious wounds. O joyful spectacle to the righteous, who see in the sufferings of which these wounds are the memorial, the remission of their sins! O terrible view to the wicked, who have crucified to themselves afresh the Son of God, and trampled upon his sacred blood!

Such will be the aspect of the Judge. He shall be seated, the apostle tells us, "upon a *great white throne*." His judgment-seat is denominated a *throne*, to express his supreme power, and to show that there can be no appeal from his decision to a higher tribunal. It is called a *white throne*, to denote the bright glory, the illustrious light, the unspotted purity, and the awful holiness of him that sits upon it. The Judge then being seated, and all the dead small and great standing before him, "the books are opened." This is a figurative expression, the import of which is however very plain. The book of *divine omniscience* shall be unfolded, and display to every individual of the vast assembly, all the thoughts, words, and actions of himself and others: the book of *conscience* shall attest the accuracy of this record: the books

of *nature*, of the *law*, and of the *gospel*, shall be expanded, that by them our conduct may be tried: and finally, "the book of *life*" shall be unclosed, which contains the names of all those who, according to the divine declarations, have a title to the heavenly inheritance.

Every thing being thus prepared, the Judge summons the righteous to the tribunal; and as they were raised, so they will be judged first, in order that they may then be assessors with Jesus Christ in judging men and angels. (1 Cor. vi. 2, 3.)

It is a question on which divines are divided whether the *sins* of the pious shall be publicly proclaimed and manifested in the great day. From the near relations that Jesus sustains to his people, and the tender love he bears to them; from the account of the proceedings in the judgment, which he has given us in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, and in which the *good deeds* of the righteous alone are mentioned; from God's promising to "blot out the transgressions" of his people, and to "remember their sins no more," (Is. xliii. 25.) to "cast them into the depth of the sea, and behind his back;" (Mic. vii. 18. Is. xxxviii. 17.) from the exalted joy and unmingled triumph that the saints will feel on that day; from these and similar considerations, some have concluded, that none of the offences of the justified will be mentioned. Others however, supposing that, from the feebleness of our powers, and the narrowness of our views, we cannot tell how infinite love, directed by infinite wisdom, and aiming at the everlasting good of the universe, will be exercised towards us; considering the description of the judgment given by the Saviour as containing only the great outline of those solemn transac-

tions; interpreting the promises of God only as an engagement that the iniquities of his people should not be remembered to their condemnation; relying on those numerous texts which declare that all our actions upon the earth shall then be manifested; thinking that a full display of the divine grace and power in the salvation of rebels, would render a view of their former conduct and feelings requisite; knowing that in heaven the redeemed remember their sins without impairing their bliss, and by the recollection of them feel more their obligations to redeeming love: others, for these reasons suppose that the iniquities of the children of Jesus will be exhibited, not to fill them with misery, but to make them rise higher in their admiration of that mercy which plucked them as brands from the everlasting burnings. Such a view would inspire them with sentiments similar, but far superior to those which Paul so often expresses, when assured of the love of his Redeemer, yet recalling his crimes, his overflowing heart labours in vain to declare all the emotions of gratitude, all the ardours of love with which it is penetrated and inflamed.

But whatever we may think on this question, it is certain that their *good deeds* are recorded in the book of remembrance, and will be proclaimed to the universe; not as the ground of their acceptance, for the only plea for justification which a sinner can offer is the blood of Jesus; but as the evidence of their union to Christ, as the fruits of the Spirit dwelling within them, and as the measure of their future glory. Then every penitential tear that they have shed, every groan over their corruption that they have uttered, every act of faith, every sigh after heaven, every work of charity, every emotion of love,

every trait of obedience, every exercise of zeal, every holy duty, every suffering they have undergone for their Lord, every renunciation of sinful enjoyments, every conflict with their spiritual foes, will be manifested to the vast assembly of men, angels, and devils. Then the mouths of those who once derided them, and treated them as hypocrites or fanatics, shall be closed, and it will evidently appear that, with all their lamented imperfections, they were the faithful followers of the Lamb.

Their piety being thus made so manifest that the most malignant are forced to acknowledge it, the Judge turns to them, and with infinite benignity and love addresses them, saying, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." In vain shall we attempt to conceive the transports which will swell their breasts at this acquittal by their beloved and almighty Redeemer. 'What!' they exclaim in ecstasy, 'What! are we indeed declared by our Saviour to be blest? we, who deserved everlasting perdition; we, against whom the thunders of the law had been directed; we, whose destruction was sought by Satan, sin, and the world; we, who so long resisted the efforts of mercy, and who lived so far below our duty and our engagements, even after we had fled for refuge to the cross; we, whose eyes have often been filled with tears, and whose hearts have often trembled with apprehension lest we should not stand the scrutiny of this solemn day! But now our last tear has been shed; never shall our hearts again tremble, except with gratitude and joy. We shall for ever dwell in the palace of the King of kings, enjoying our God without a possibility of being separated from him. We shall for ever

behold the face of our blessed Redeemer smiling upon us, and taste that fulness of pleasures which is at his right hand for evermore. From our full hearts even now shall burst that song, which will be ever continued and ever new : Glory, infinite and eternal, to that grace which hath crowned us with such unmerited mercies.'

The righteous being thus openly acquitted and acknowledged by their Lord, and a manifestation of the propriety of his conduct in raising them to glory having been made to all the spectators, he will next prove to the assembled universe, and to sinners themselves, his justice in condemning them to eternal perdition. The books are again opened, and all the iniquities of the open sinner and unfruitful professor are fully revealed. On earth they can delude themselves into a belief that their hearts are not opposed to God ; that by nature they are not so unholy as the scriptures represent ; that their crimes have been few and venial. But then God, by a forced conviction, will show them their true character ; will cause them to feel that their hearts were full of iniquity, that their affections were totally alienated from him, and that they were enemies to him by wicked works. However ingenious they now are in blinding and deceiving themselves, God in an instant will convince them of their deep pollution, and their full desert of hell. The flames that are prepared for the ungodly will not only scorch, but enlighten the impious, and teach them the demerit of sin and the holiness of God ; and the splendours of divine justice and purity with which they will be encompassed, will make them shudder at their character and their doom.

But it is necessary, for the vindication of the justice of God, that not only they, but also the spectators, have this conviction. The Judge will therefore compel them to confess what they feel in their hearts, and openly to bewail their folly in continuing in sin and despising the proffered grace of God. In the agony of their souls they shall cry, 'O that we had been wise, and lived in the believing prospect of this awful day! Cursed be those sins in which we indulged, and for which we sacrificed our God, our Redeemer, our souls, our everlasting felicity! O that we could cease to exist, or could comfort ourselves in the midst of the flames by the reflection that our sufferings were undeserved, and inflicted only by an arbitrary tyrant! But this consolation is denied us; for we feel, we confess, that our condemnation will be just.'

Innumerable witnesses will also be produced to show the guilt of the unrighteous. All the ministers of the Lord Jesus, who once pointed them to the cross, and expostulated with them on the folly and madness of their conduct, and told them of the infinite mercy of God and the riches of grace in the Saviour, and exhibited to them the glories of heaven, the pains of hell, the solemnities of judgment, and prayed and wept over them, will then be obliged to testify that they wilfully rejected offered mercy and everlasting salvation. All their pious friends and relatives, whose hearts they so deeply wounded on earth by their forgetfulness of God and their eternal destination, will then lift up their voices for the condemnation of those to whom they were once so tenderly attached. The parent will testify against that ungrateful child whom he now loves as himself, and for whose neglect of his pious admonitions

and entreaties, his "soul now weeps in secret places." The husband will testify against that wife to whom he is united by the tenderest affection, who shares his earthly cares and joys, but who is deaf to his solicitations to form ties for eternity. The wife shall testify against that thoughtless husband, who disregards her gentle but warm and heartfelt supplications, that he will have mercy on his soul. In one word, all the children of God will be compelled to bear witness against those to whom they were connected by the most tender and endearing human bonds, but who persisted in remaining the enemies of Jesus. The persons whom they have injured will testify against them. The blood of Abel shall still cry against Cain; and that of Naboth against Ahab. Drusilla will imprecate the divine vengeance against Felix; and the unwary who have been seduced by the conversation or the writings of the libertine and the infidel, will declare their guilt. The poor whom they have suffered to perish, the afflicted whom they would not comfort, the persecuted whom they would not defend, the widow and the orphan whom they would not console, will proclaim these neglected duties. Even inanimate things will testify against them: the sacred desks where the truths of religion have been announced; the temples dedicated to the Lord, in which they heard of the dying love and the everlasting righteousness of Jesus; the baptismal fonts, over which they were devoted to the Sacred Trinity; the sacramental tables, which they have despised or profaned; the temporal enjoyments which they have abused to sin; the places where their iniquities and their deeds of darkness were committed; all these will be "swift witnesses against them." The angels

of God will testify against them: they will declare that these guilty men rejected their ministrations, and gave themselves up to the control of evil spirits. Satan, who now tempts them, will testify against them; he now watches them; he seduces them into guilt, and he will remember their crimes, and declare them then with a malicious joy. The Spirit of God will testify that he often moved upon their hearts, and, by his secret suggestions and influences, wooed them to abandon their iniquities and turn to the Lord; but that they grieved, resisted, and quenched him, and chose rather to comply with the temptations of the devil than with his incitements.

Unhappy men! what will you do, where will you hide your blushing heads, when such a crowd of witnesses appear against you? But there is still another witness: it is your Judge himself; who, opening the book of remembrance, will show to you and to the vast assembly, every unholy thought, every irregular desire, every criminal motive, every impure wish, every unhallowed design, every libertine, slanderous, or blasphemous word, every mercy that was abused, every judgment that was contemned, every duty that was omitted, every warning that was despised, every sin of others produced by your conduct, every work done in secret or at midnight, and seen by no eye but that of God. Millions of crimes which had never been observed, or were long since forgotten, will be then remembered, will show the deep guilt of your souls, and the terrible nature of that punishment which awaits you. Unhappy men! thus shall you stand, in vain "calling upon the rocks and the mountains to fall upon you and hide you from the wrath of the Lamb," the in-

jured, insulted Lamb of God. The saints will view you as the enemies of their Lord. Though they now weep over you, yet they then will adore the just judgments of God. It is the same Abraham that interceded for Sodom, who refuses to listen to the supplications of the rich man in the flames. The damned will regard you with malicious triumph, as condemned to the same everlasting torments with them. The devils, who now tempt you, will laugh you to scorn for having listened to their delusions, and will rejoice as the fierce executioners of God's wrath for ever to glut their fury upon you. Your Judge will then turn upon you his eyes burning with indignation, and pronounce upon you that decisive sentence, 'Depart from me, and all hope of future joy; depart, bearing the curse of Him who shed his blood to redeem you, who made you the offer of salvation, and importunately besought you to accept it: you have despised this blood and scorned this offer; depart then into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels!'

Sinners, where will you then look for succour? Above you, will be the God, who now "calls while ye refuse; who now stretches out his arms, while ye regard not; but who then will laugh at your calamity, and mock at your fear." (Prov. i. 24—26.) With him will be seated those saints with whom you now refuse to associate, but whom you shall then behold possessed of a glory and felicity from which you shall be eternally excluded. Around you, will be none but the sharers of your guilt and the partakers of your punishment. Below you, will be only the dreadful glare of the flames in which you must for ever abide. Within you, will be a forced illumination, which will torture you by compelling you

to feel that your condemnation is just, that you have drawn down this vengeance upon yourselves. Wherever you cast your eyes, you will behold nothing which will not fill you with horror.

Miserable souls! what will ye do? In vain will you cry, 'Spare us, O Lord; spare us for a little time: suffer us again to live; again to pass our period of trial; and then we will live to thee and renounce the world and sin.' Alas! these supplications will be useless! 'Remember,' your Judge will reply, 'remember that I once entreated and wooed you by motives tender as my dying love, awful as eternity; and you would not listen. Tears, supplications, prayers, are now useless, for justice is inexorable: depart from me, ye workers of iniquity!' The sentence is fulfilled; heaven vanishes from their eyes; hell gapes to receive them; their shrieks vibrate on the ears of the redeemed as they rise with their Saviour to glory; and the "smoke of their torment ascendeth for ever and ever."

And now, my brethren, in concluding this discourse, let us seriously inquire if we are prepared for this judgment-day? If the last trumpet were this moment to sound, if "the sign of the Son of man" were now to appear in the heavens, if the angels who shall attend our Judge were now to display themselves to us, tell me, or rather answer to your own consciences, what would be your emotions? Would this sacred place resound with that cry of joy, 'Let us go out to meet our Saviour;' or should we not rather hear that agonizing exclamation, "Whither shall we go from his presence? Whither shall we flee from his vengeance? Mountains and rocks, fall upon us, and hide us from the wrath of the Lamb!"

Oh! let us in time secure an acquittal in this "great day for which all other days were made." By embracing the salvation offered through the atonement of Jesus, by the cultivation of every grace, and the practice of every virtue, let us prepare to appear before the judgment-bar with confidence. Let us keep the remembrance of these awful scenes which we are to behold, ever fresh upon our hearts. This remembrance will powerfully deter us from sin, stimulate us to the discharge of duty, elevate us above the world, cause us to avoid all dissimulation and deceit, and induce us thoroughly to search our hearts, and to try the foundation of our hopes.

Impenitent men! we weep when we look on you, and see you abusing the patience and long-suffering of God, as encouragements to persevere in guilt. The divine forbearance will not for ever endure. Think, solemnly think, of that tremendous day, when if you remain in your present condition, you shall hear a sentence of perdition from the lips of the compassionate Saviour, and be blasted to the abyss by the thunders which issue from his throne.

Blessed be God! it is not yet too late for you to avoid this fearful destiny; your life is still preserved; mercy is still proffered to you. Flee then to the great Redeemer, who is still waiting to be gracious unto you; to the fountain of his blood, to the throne of his grace. He still extends his arms to embrace you; he still entreats, beseeches, importunes you to turn and live; he still gives his promises to allure, his ministers to call, his Spirit to excite you; he still stands before the throne of the Eternal Father, presenting to him the sacrifice of Calvary, and interceding for you; he still cries unto you, "Why, why

will ye die?" Can you resist longer these condescending exhortations, entreaties, importunities of the Son of God? I beseech you no longer to refuse admission to the Saviour thus standing and knocking at the door of your hearts. He offers himself to you as your redeemer and portion; receive the divine offer humbly, thankfully, joyfully. I adjure you thus to act: I adjure you by the love and terrors of the Lord; by the solemnities of the day of judgment; by a regard to the eternal destinations of your souls. Flee to the blood of Jesus for the remission of your iniquities; to the righteousness of Jesus for the justification of your persons; to the grace of Jesus for power to resist sin; to the blessed Spirit of Jesus as a fountain of holiness and happiness. Thus shall your life be peace, your eternity joy; you shall appear without dismay at his bar, and be admitted by him to that kingdom of glory where you shall sing, with the heavenly host, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever!"

SERMON CLIII.



CHRIST MUST INCREASE.



A Missionary Sermon, preached before the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America ; by appointment of their standing Committee of Missions, May 23, 1803.



JOHN iii. 30.

He must increase.

THESE are the words of that illustrious personage who, in fulfilment of ancient prophecy, issued, from the deserts of Judea, preaching repentance to a degenerate people, and preparing the way of the Lord. The occasion on which they were uttered was this. The Jews, struck with the splendid miracles, and attracted by the sublime instructions, of Jesus, crowded to *his* baptism, neglecting that of his forerunner. The disciples of John, afflicted at this preference, and jealous of the honour of their master, went to him and said, “ Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold the same baptizeth, and all men go unto him.” John had the temper of a believer. Humble and disinterested, he was willing to be unnoticed and disregarded, that the glory of the Saviour might shine more brightly. Far more solicitous for the honour

of God and the happiness of mankind than for his own reputation or aggrandizement, he assured his disciples, that what filled them with pain and inspired them with envy, was the cause of his joy. "My joy is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease." "I was only the morning-star to usher in this Sun of Righteousness, and my light must be lost in the splendour of his beams. I rejoice, in anticipating the future, to perceive that whilst I vanish from observation, his name and influence shall widely extend."

"*He must increase.*" This prediction has already been verified in an astonishing degree.

The hill of Calvary had scarcely ceased to smoke with the blood of Jesus, before thousands in Jerusalem acknowledged him as the expected Messiah, and were ready to lay down their lives for his cause. From Jerusalem his doctrines were carried to the Gentiles. The band of apostles, animated by the Spirit of God, and fortified by the protection of heaven, flew from nation to nation, proclaiming the grace of the Lord, and holding up the cross red with the blood of the Saviour as the only hope of a perishing world. Their preaching, like a stroke of thunder, crumbled to ruins the temples of the heathens, cast down those idols that had usurped the place of God, and shook to its centre the empire of the powers of darkness. The world trembled at its guilt, and blushed at those profane and impure fables which it had received as doctrines of religion. Systems consecrated by time, and flattering to depravity, were abolished, and the pure principles of Christianity substituted in their place. In vain did policy and power unite their influence to prevent the extension of this new religion. The devices of policy were

confounded; the arm of power was withered. In vain did persecution loose its furies. In the midst of all the tortures which the rage of men or the malice of devils would suggest, the martyrs were serene and triumphant: heaven was let down into their souls: heaven shone upon their faces; the sacred name of their Redeemer, and the accents of hope and joy vibrated on their stiffening tongues; the spectators departed glorifying God, and in crowds embracing that religion which rendered feeble man so superior to pains, agonies, death itself. These were the triumphs of apostolic days. Since that period one nation after another has embraced the religion of Jesus: and when a new world was discovered, his cross was planted upon it. If then the kingdom of the Redeemer should extend no further, if no other people except those who now profess his name should hail him as their Lord, the assertion in our text would be fully verified: for *he has increased*. But he is still very far from having attained that point of elevation to which he is predestined to rise. Other nations must bow to his sceptre. Zion is yet further to “enlarge the place of her tent, and to stretch forth the curtains of her habitation.” Notwithstanding what has been done, we still take our stand at this present moment of time, and looking forward to the future, exclaim with confidence, with certainty, *he must increase*.

We shall consider these words in three different points of view:

- I. As an *irrefragable truth*.
 - II. As a *source of consolations*.
 - III. As a *directory to duty*.
- “*He must increase.*”

I. This is a truth resting on such firm foundations, that the mind must give to it an unwavering assent.

II. This is a truth which will comfort the heart when pained by the contemplation of the present disordered state of the world.

III. This is a truth which imposes upon us sacred obligations.

You have before you the whole division of the ensuing discourse.

I. That Christ must still increase would appear *probable*, even though we had no express assurances of it. Since God has abolished a dispensation that was calculated only for a particular people, and given a revelation suited to all mankind, fit for the instruction, the consolation, and happiness of every nation, it seems reasonable, that before the consummation of all things, every nation should enjoy this revelation. Since God delights to magnify his power and grace by bringing order out of confusion, light out of darkness, it seems reasonable to suppose, that he will make the commotions, the afflictions, and the sins which now disturb the world, subservient to the establishment of a glorious kingdom of righteousness. Since by the atonement of Christ a sufficient satisfaction has been made for the sins of the world, it seems reasonable to suppose that this God who is most pleased with unbloody conquests, will, before winding up the schemes of his providence, carry to the remotest nations the tidings of salvation through the great Redeemer.

But we acknowledge that if we had no other grounds of our belief than these, we should rather *hope and desire*, than be *firmly persuaded*. We know so little of the ways of a sovereign God, we are so incompetent to tell what will be the operations of

Omniscience, or what are the requirements of infinite holiness, that the mind could not give a full assent to this truth, if it rested upon no other foundations. But, blessed be God, we are not left to uncertain conjectures; we have the plain and unequivocal promises of God. Relying on the promises, we are assured that after the long miseries of the church a period of prosperity will ensue, that after the long darkness of the nations they will be cheered by the beams of gospel day. These promises are strewed through the whole of the sacred volume. We have only to open the scriptures to behold them. "Let then him that has ears to hear, hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Let him listen to the predictions of those prophets between whose eyes and futurity no veil interposed.

Now *David* cries with transport, "All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee." (Psalm xxii. 27.) Messiah "shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. All kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him." (Ps. lxxii. 8. 11.) "Yea, all nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name." (Ps. lxxxvi. 9.)

Then *Isaiah*, looking down through succeeding ages, exclaims, "It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it." (ii. 2.) "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." (xl. 5.) "Yea, the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (xi. 4.)

Now *Daniel*, smitten by a prophetic ray from the Father of Lights, declares, "I saw in the night-visions, and behold one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him. And the kingdom, and dominion, and greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." (vii. 13, 14. 27.)

Then the same cheering prospects open upon the eyes of *Malachi*. "From the rising of the sun even to the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering." (i. 11.)

And when the future fortunes of the church were displayed to *John*, he "saw an angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people; and he heard the seventh angel sounding, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." (Rev. xii. 10.)

These are but a very small part of the prophecies that relate to the increase of the church of Christ. That they *have not yet* been accomplished is certain. Cast your eye over the world, and see what a multitude of nations still lie buried in pagan darkness, or deceived by the Eastern impostor. And in those

countries professedly Christian, behold how many millions are perishing, how many false worships are prevailing, how many schisms and factions are tearing the church to pieces. Surely the *present* state of the world is not such as to correspond with these predictions; neither can you point to any *past* period in which the prevalence of Christianity has been in any degree so universal as to justify the strong language in which these promises are conveyed.

That they *will* be accomplished is equally certain. It is God that hath promised, and what shall prevent the execution of his designs? *Want of wisdom?* All nature, the work of his hands, is naked before him, and he knows how to regulate its most secret springs. All possible circumstances are continually in his view, and he always sees how they may be so arranged and combined as to effect his plans. When human reason, baffled and confounded, sees no method to accomplish these promises, his infinite wisdom sees how they may be accomplished in a thousand different manners. *Want of power?* His hand steadily rolls along the mighty wheels of providence: heaven, earth, and hell, are obedient to him. What though all creatures should combine to oppose his purposes? Ah! a worm raising its head in defiance against the heavens, an atom boasting that it will heave the earth from its centre, affords but an infinitely feeble emblem of the vanity and arrogance of such a combination. *Want of faithfulness?* "He is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" (Num. xxiii. 19.) He has already fulfilled such glorious promises as to merit our full confidence

in the accomplishment of those which he hath not yet pleased to execute.

Resting then upon the promises of a God, omniscient, almighty, infinitely faithful, the church may with security bid defiance to all her enemies. "Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken to pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken to pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall come to naught; speak the word, and it shall not stand, for God is with us." (Isaiah viii. 9, 10.) Let her foes be never so numerous or powerful, "the daughter of Zion will shake her head at them, she will laugh them to scorn." Let some new Diocletian declare that he will destroy the Christian superstition, and attempt to exterminate religion by the sword of persecution. It will again be found, that these attempts, like the arrows which the Parthians vainly shot against the sun, return winged with destruction on the heads of those who aimed them: it will again be found that *the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church*. Let the united strength of earth and hell assail her, she will be serene and undaunted: for her feet are fixed upon the rock of ages, Jehovah, God of hosts, throws his buckler before her, and his faithfulness is her "rereward."

This is not a mere speculative truth, which the understanding may investigate while the heart is unmoved. It is a truth *full of the richest consolations*. We are to present some of these consolations in the -IId. Division of our discourse.

The triple flame of *love to God, love to the Redeemer, and love to mankind*, burns in the breast of every Christian. These sentiments afford a pure pleasure, and if piety and virtue had that influence in the world which they deserve to have, they would afford

nothing but pleasure to those who cherish them. But in a state so disordered as the present, in a world so deluged with iniquity, they inflict many pains upon the soul : pains, however, which are mitigated by the reflection that the kingdom of Christ will illustriously increase.

I. Can a man whose soul is inflamed with *love to God*, fail to be grieved when he looks around on the world, and sees so many nations ignorant of the true nature of this God, debasing him by unworthy conceptions, dishonouring him by idle superstitions? Can he without anguish cast his eyes upon Christendom, and see even there the prevalence of vice and iniquity, the authority of God contemned, his professed favour despised, his tremendous indignation provoked? The more intense his love to God, the keener will be the regrets which such a prospect will excite. Whither shall he go for consolation? If from the present he turns back upon the past, similar scenes are exhibited, and his gloom only thickens. His mind finds no repose, till looking to the future, he beholds that a time is coming in which God will no longer be contemned by his own offspring. Cheered by this prospect, he breaks forth into joyful accents, and exclaims: ‘What! a period is then surely and rapidly advancing, when the uncreated glories of Jehovah shall beam upon all parts of his world; when men shall every where use the faculties which he has given them in advancing his praise; when earth shall respond to heaven, and mortals emulate the splendid host of angels in the worship of their common Lord. Oh! let my thoughts rest upon this blissful period; let me hasten it by my wishes and my prayers; let me turn my eyes from the dreary spectacle before me, and live in the constant pros-

pect of that day when my heavenly Father shall be no longer dishonoured, when the vast family of mankind shall feel for him the affection of children, when the sun in his splendid career shall behold no heart which does not beat high with affection to its Maker.

2. If this truth thus allays those griefs produced by love to God, it is no less effectual to heal those wounds of the soul which in a world of darkness and disorder proceed from *love to the Saviour*. Who that loves the Redeemer can behold with a dry eye and an unmoved heart the reception given to his gospel in the world which he came to redeem? Rejected by the Jews, esteemed a mere prophet by the disciples of Mahomet, daily crucified afresh in countries which profess to obey him; this is the reward of his agonies, and tears, and death. Mourn, Christians, well may ye mourn for ungrateful man; but mourn not as those without hope. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." Yet a little while, and the Jews shall be brought in with the fulness of the Gentiles; yet a little while, and "Jesus shall receive the heathen as his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth as a possession;" yet a little while, and the whole world, forsaking their errors and their sins, shall own him as their Lord, and press his cross to their hearts as their only hope and only joy. Be not then dejected, Christians. However dark the cloud which now hangs over the world, there will yet be countless multitudes to celebrate the praises of your Saviour, and to feel his grace.

3. Finally: can he whose heart glows with *charity unfeigned*, behold without grief the sufferings and sins of mankind? Can he listen to those groans which in every quarter burst from the wretched, can he see so many eagerly pressing forward in the path of

guilt, and hastening to seize on perdition, without bewailing almost with tears of blood the woes of the human race? But O! what consolation to the heart sick of the crimes, weary of the follies, pained by the woes of man, to remember that these crimes and follies shall at last cease, and that those woes which they draw in their train shall be known no longer! Where is the soul so insensible, that it does not even leap for joy, when it considers that the earth shall yet smile like a renovated Eden, which seraphs will again delight to visit; that man shall once more have the temper of angels, and bear the impress of God; that the whole world shall be an image of heaven, in which God will reign supreme, and shed forth nothing but benedictions.

He must increase: This truth is a source of consolations. But it also *incites us to many duties, it imposes upon us many obligations*. This is the

III^d. Division of our discourse.

The promises of God are not designed to render us negligent or inactive, but to induce us to strive with vigour, with cheerfulness, and hope. When God assures his people that Amalec shall be destroyed, the hands of Moses must immediately be lifted up in prayer, and the sword of Joshua must be courageously wielded. In like manner, when he assures us that Christ shall increase, we should *pray earnestly, labour diligently, and give liberally* for the attainment of this glorious object.

1. We should *pray earnestly*. The blessings that are promised are sufficiently great to excite our utmost ardour. If the glory of God, the interest of the Redeemer, and the felicity of mankind, will not put fire into our devotions, what will have this effect? Besides, in numberless parts of the scripture, we are

assured that it will be in answer to prayer that the church will increase. Can you then remain careless of this duty? Remember, Christians, that the holy angels are waiting with earnest expectation till you by fervent and persevering prayer procure greater influences of the Spirit for the church, and give them liberty to shout, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ." Remember that the Saviour is waiting till Christendom pour forth its supplications, that he may "see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied." Awake then, slumbering Christians! "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence and give him no rest, till he establish and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." O! did we see you acting thus, we might hope for better days; did we see you thus besieging the throne of grace with armies of supplications, thus laying hold on the promises of God, and securing the interposition of Omnipotence, then the church might "lift up her head and rejoice, knowing that her redemption drew nigh." But,

2. Besides praying earnestly, you must *labour diligently*. As it is a denial of God to labour without praying for his blessing, so also it is a tempting of God to pray without using those exertions naturally fitted to accomplish the end. If then you wish Zion to rise from the dust, labour to increase the influence of piety in your own hearts, and in the hearts of your neighbours. Content not yourselves with "crying Lord, Lord:" hasten to "do his commandments." You have every motive to animate you to exertion; you are sure of success; you know that "your labour will not be in vain in the Lord." "You run not as uncertainly; you fight not as those beating the air:" and whose exertions should be vigorous, if not

his who is assured of obtaining, not only the object for which he strives, but also a glorious recompense in the heavens?

3. Finally : we must *give liberally*, for the accomplishment of this great design. It is not without incalculable expense that the gospel can be carried over all the world; and he who pretends that he wishes it thus to be carried, and yet withholds that pecuniary aid to Missionary Societies and exertions, which it is in his power to afford, and which is absolutely necessary for the attainment of this end: let him say what he please, let him think what he please, he is a hypocrite, professing sentiments which he does not feel; and though he should be perpetually upon his knees petitioning for the spread of the gospel to darkened nations, his petitions will be viewed by God as false, hollow, insincere, and be rejected with abhorrence. “If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,” saith St. James, “and one of you say unto them, depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, and notwithstanding give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?” In like manner, when you see whole nations perishing, and say with an appearance of zeal and affection, “be ye converted, be ye enlightened, and, notwithstanding, give not what is needful for the accomplishment of this end, what doth it profit?” What effect doth it produce, except to show that you have merely that dead, barren faith, which is manifested only by words and professions, and which will not stand the test of the judgment-day?

We rejoice, my brethren, that you have, this evening, an opportunity presented to you of performing this sacred duty; of exercising the noblest benevo-

lence, and of proving that you do not exhaust all your zeal in desires and prayers. The venerable body before whom I speak, have been, for some time, labouring to increase the kingdom of Christ. Touched with commiseration for perishing millions, they resolved to make the most strenuous exertions to support missionaries on the frontiers, and in other parts of our country that are destitute of the means of grace, to afford the instructions and consolations of religion to the blacks, and to carry the gospel of Jesus to the benighted Indian tribes upon our borders. God has smiled upon their exertions. Much has been done by them; but much also remains to be performed. To carry their plans into execution, great pecuniary resources are indispensably requisite; and, though individuals have contributed with a generosity which is honourable to themselves, and which will not be forgotten before God, their funds are not yet sufficient to extend the blessings of the gospel as far as their hearts desire. They therefore come to you, at this time, with full confidence that you will contribute your just proportion for the attainment of objects so important.

Consider, for a moment, for whom we plead, in whose behalf we solicit donations; and then judge whether your liberality can more worthily, more profitably be exercised.

We plead for the persons who inhabit our frontier settlements. They are your brethren; your ancestors are theirs; the same blood which flows in your veins runs also in theirs. They lift to you a supplicating voice; they cry to you, with emphasis and importunity, to pity their distresses, to send to them those ordinances of religion which you enjoy, to have compassion on the souls of their children, who, with-

out your aid, will grow up ignorant of religion, and unprepared for eternity. To their cry God joins his voice, and addresses us in language which cannot be misunderstood, "Since it is well with you, think of your brethren."

We plead for the unhappy blacks that dwell in our land. They are exposed to many calamities; they are labouring under the pressure of many sorrows. Though you, surrounded by so many sources of enjoyment, may not feel the necessity of religion as a comforter of the afflicted, as a cheerer of the desponding soul, yet they need the consolations of piety. Their path through life is dark and dreary; humanity loudly commands you to gild it by the prospect of immortality, by the hopes that it will issue in a world of rest, and of joy. Besides, they have souls to save as well as we; they must exist for eternity as well as we. Already have we contracted awful guilt in remaining so negligent of their immortal interests; already has this sin cried to heaven for vengeance. It is time for us to strive to avert the judgments which we have deserved; it is time for us to awake from that criminal indifference with which we have seen this miserable race treading the path which conducts to the chambers of wo; it is time for us to stretch forth a succouring hand, and pluck them from eternal damnation.

But especially we plead for the wretched savages, who, in a situation still more deplorable, have never heard of a Saviour's love. Think, think, of the misery of their state. Covered with guilt, and ignorant of the atonement provided by eternal love, they pass through life without any solid comfort, they expire without any well-founded hope, and awake with astonishment and anguish in a hell of which

they had never heard.* Where is the heart so obdurate, that it does not compassionate this distress, and sigh to relieve it? The nations of Europe have not been able to consider it without emotion. Their sensibilities and good wishes have reached over the vast Atlantic: and, not contented with barren lamentations, with fruitless desires, many persons have left father, and mother, and house, and home, and have come with the burning zeal of apostles, and the high intrepidity of martyrs, to preach salvation to the pagans. O! when I think of those generous men, whose devotion led them to sacrifice the pleasures of civilized life, to pass over interposing seas and mountains, and to moisten the turf of America with their blood—when I think that they did all this for the sake of those Indians that are our neighbours, that dwell upon our very borders: when I compare with the heroism of these martyred missionaries our coldness and indifference, I blush for the crimes of my country, I tremble at the account which it must render at the decisive day. Shall not the liberality of your contributions prove that there are, at least, some hearts in America, which can listen to that cry

* I do not mean to assert that the whole Pagan world will be consigned to perdition. Though it is certain that no persons will be saved, except through the atonement of Christ, and the renovating influences of the Holy Spirit, yet still I think that it does not become a shortsighted man to decide how far this atonement may be applied to those who live in Pagan lands, or how far this Spirit may operate upon those who never heard of his existence. Nevertheless, scripture and reason concur in teaching us, that the proportion of those who perish in heathen countries is greater than in countries enlightened by the gospel. If this were not the case, it would be cruelty to attempt to propagate Christianity, since those who are lost under its calls and instructions, receive a severer punishment, enter into a hotter flame, than those who have never added to their other iniquities that greatest of crimes, the rejection of an offered Saviour.

from the wilderness, which struck the ears of these generous Europeans?

Are you still unmoved, unresolved to mitigate those woes? Remember that, a few centuries past, your fathers were in the same state of wretchedness with those unhappy pagans; and had not missionaries gone forth to them, carrying the word of life in their hands, and the Saviour of men in their hearts, you had now been bowing down to stocks, and to stones, and perhaps besmearing the altars of devils with human blood. Is there any heart so brutal, that it does not throb with gratitude to these great benefactors? And, if you are grateful, you will manifest it by making them the only recompense which is in your power, or which they demand, by striving to promote that cause for which they toiled, and suffered, and died.

Is there one solitary individual who feels not the weight of these motives? Let me pray him to consider the transactions of the judgment-day. There you, my brother, must appear together with those savages for whom we are pleading. Would it not then be a source of delight, if some savage, washed in the blood of the Lamb, and shining with celestial glories, should fly to accost you, pour forth the accents of gratitude, and declare to the heavenly host, that you, by your generous donations, contributed to rescue him from perdition, and raise him to immortal blessedness? O! tell me, is it not reasonable that you should employ some part of the riches which God has given you, in securing such pure pleasures; pleasures of which you may taste when the fountain of earthly joys is dried up for ever. But on the contrary, how much will it increase the terrors of that dreadful day, if some miserable, condemned pagan.

just ready to sink in the eternal flames, shall turn his despairing eyes upon you, and exclaim, in a voice that shall rend your heart, ‘ Why, why did you not warn me of this day? Why did you not exhort me to flee from this vengeance? You knew the terrors of the Lord; you knew of those chains of darkness which enfeather the damned; of that torrent of fire which for ever pours upon the souls of the accursed. Though I perish deservedly, yet it is through your neglect that I suffer. But you shall not escape my vengeance. Through eternity my shrieks and execrations shall vibrate in your ear, shall thrill through your soul: through eternity’—Holy God! my heart melts within me: I cannot, I dare not pursue this dreadful scene.

I pause, my brethren, not because new motives to liberality are wanting, they crowd upon my mind: but because it would be to insult your feelings to suppose that it would be necessary to present new motives unto you. Seize, with avidity, the opportunity now offered of restoring to Jesus, of devoting to the increase of his kingdom, a part of what his beneficence has conferred upon you. Manifest your gratitude to him, who, “ though he was rich, yet for your sakes became poor.” Rejoice that you are permitted to have a fellowship of employment with the angels, whose constant occupation it is to advance the cause of the Saviour, and to mitigate the miseries of men. Rejoice that you are honoured with the unspeakable privilege of being “ workers together with God.”

I forbear, after begging forgiveness for so long detaining your impatient minds from expressing their willing charity.

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