



*J. M. Stevenson*

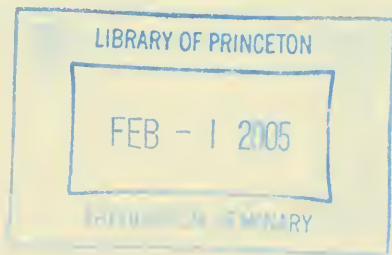
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Andrew Fuller

THE  
COMPLETE WORKS

OF THE

REV. ANDREW FULLER:

WITH A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE,

BY

ANDREW GUNTON FULLER.

REPRINTED FROM THE THIRD LONDON EDITION; REVISED, WITH ADDITIONS,

BY

JOSEPH BELCHER, D. D.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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MEMOIRS, SERMONS, ETC.

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## ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE

### FIRST COLLECTED ENGLISH EDITION.

THE editor, in presenting to the public what has been long called for, viz. a complete edition of the works of his revered father, thinks it unnecessary for him to offer any remarks on the character of writings, most of which have for many years been before the public, and must now be supposed to stand on their own merits. It may however be proper to state, that the present edition not only contains a great number of valuable pieces which had before been unavoidably omitted, but also a portion of original manuscript, part of which is interwoven in the Memoir, and part inserted in the miscellaneous volume. He is not unaware of the fact that some individuals, of whose judgment he entertains a high opinion, would have preferred a selection of those pieces possessed of the greatest permanent interest. Yet, to say nothing of the extreme difficulty, or perhaps impracticability, of making such a selection as should afford general satisfaction, ample opportunities have presented themselves, during the last few years, of ascertaining that such a course would by no means meet the public wishes.

On the other hand, he does not profess to have inserted every fragment of Mr. Fuller's writings, some pieces being totally destitute of present interest, and others superseded by the insertion of the substance of them in another form by the author. Of the latter description, indeed, are the letters to the late Dr. Ryland, relative to the controversy with Mr. Booth, published in the Baptist Journals in 1827; and in the insertion of these the editor confesses he has rather consulted what he thought to be the wish of the public than his own private judgment.

The Memoirs of the Rev. S. Pearce, containing so large a portion of auto-biography, are by some considered as possessing a doubtful claim to insertion in the works of Mr. Fuller. In attempting, however, to avoid extremes, the editor has rather wished to steer clear of the error of *omission*; while it must be borne in

mind that the rejection of every piece the interest of which might be considered temporary and local could have had little influence on the price of the work, which, considering the number and fulness of the pages, he trusts is entitled to rank among the cheap editions of celebrated writers for which the present period is so happily distinguished.

In arranging the materials of the present edition,\* the editor has aimed as much as possible to preserve a similarity of character in the subjects of the respective volumes. This will be found more especially exemplified in the second volume, which comprises the Controversy on Faith, in its various aspects; the third, which contains the Expository matter; and the fourth, which includes the Sermons and Sketches.

In the compilation of the Memoir little more is professed than a selection, arrangement, and compression of the ample materials to which the editor has had free access.

In concluding this brief announcement the editor cannot omit his grateful acknowledgments to those friends who have kindly furnished him with original manuscript sermons and other valuable materials. And he feels his thanks especially due to R. Bowyer, Esq., whose kind superintendence of the engraving accompanying this volume has enabled him to present to the public a portrait of his father far surpassing in correctness, as well as execution, any that has yet appeared.

*West Drayton, October 5, 1831.*

\* Originally published in five volumes.—B.

# PREFACE

TO THE

## COMPLETE AMERICAN EDITION.

THE Committee of the American Baptist Publication Society having favoured me with a request to prepare a full and complete edition of the Works of the venerated and excellent ANDREW FULLER, I should be wanting in justice to myself if I did not avow the very high sense I entertain of the honour thus conferred upon me, the highest I have known during many years of literary labour; though favoured, even in this way, beyond the larger portion of my brethren. Mr. Fuller was the object of my reverence in the days of my boyhood, (how often have I looked upon him, and listened to his voice, which made me both tremble and weep!) and now nearly thirty years after his removal, I have sought to make his labours still more acceptable than heretofore in the new world, where I rejoice to find his name stands deservedly high.

The first edition of his Works was published soon after his death in nine or ten volumes, chiefly prepared by his widow, under the superintendence of the late estimable Dr. Ryland. But it was very far from perfect. Mr. Morris soon after published an octavo volume of articles omitted, chiefly gleaned from periodicals, including, however, a few papers from original MSS. He lamented in his preface that many things, published in Scotch and other Magazines, he could not obtain. The larger portion of these, if not the whole, I happened to possess, and when my estimable brother, the Rev. A. G. Fuller, the son of the venerated author, and now the successor of his father's friend, the Rev. Dr. Newman, a few years after published what was regarded the "Complete Works," I had the pleasure of transferring my treasures to him for the public advantage. The Works thus collected have subsequently been reprinted in one very thick imperial octavo volume, which has furnished the basis of the present edition.

Still, however, no English edition is yet "complete." The seven sermons numbered in the first volume of this edition XXX. to

XXXV., and XXXIX. are now first presented as an addition to the printed "Works." That they deserve to be so incorporated will, I am sure, be the opinion of every careful reader. Besides this, it was found desirable to enlarge the Memoir, by original and selected statements and anecdotes; I have performed this part of my task according to the best of my judgment. When the notes are borrowed I have always mentioned my authorities; for those marked with the initial B. I alone must be held responsible. These notes, for very obvious reasons, are most numerous in the first volume.

To descant on the excellencies of the Works themselves would be indeed a task of supererogation; especially in the United States, where, in addition to the esteem of many thousands of his own denomination, Fuller has been honoured with the warmest commendation of theologians of every Evangelical class, including Dwight, M'Ilvaine, and Beecher. Unless I am greatly mistaken, they will go down to posterity side by side with the immortal works of the elder president Edwards, a man truly like-minded with the English writer.

While I feel happy in being connected with the publication of the first really "complete" edition of the Works of Andrew Fuller, and by far the most elegant of the American reprints, I trust I may be permitted warmly to commend the volumes to my honoured brethren in the ministry, especially to the junior portion of them. They are called to act an important part in the great undertakings of the Church, and need to be strongly nerved and armed for the mighty warfare. These volumes, with the blessing of the Great Master, are admirably adapted to invigorate the mind, and prepare it for action.

Will the reader farther allow me to ask him to unite with me in fervent prayer that the Head of the Church may condescend to accept this attempt to advance his glory in the welfare of his servants.

JOSEPH BELCHER.

*Philadelphia, November, 1844.*

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# MEMOIR.

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## SECTION I.—1754 TO 1776.

His Birth—Ancestry—Narrative of his early religious impressions, conversion, theological difficulties, and entrance on the Pastoral Charge at Soham—Gradual change of sentiments—Narrative of the progress of his mind on Justification—Marriage.

THE celebrity attained by the subject of the following Memoir was in no degree attributable to adventitious aids of birth or education. Possessing no other advantages than were open to the son of any farmer in the middle of the last century, Mr. Fuller was indebted to no one, except for the barest rudiments of English instruction, as many of his earlier manuscripts sufficiently evince. He was born February 6th, 1754, at Wicken, near Ely, Cambridgeshire, for several centuries the residence of his paternal ancestors, some of whom, as well as those on his mother's side, had been distinguished for piety and sufferings in the cause of Christ. In order to avoid the persecutions of the heartless and profligate Charles II., they were accustomed to meet in the woods of Cambridgeshire, with Holcroft and Oddy, two eminent ejected ministers, the former of whom had been the medium of conversion to one of them.\*

His father, Robert Fuller, married Philippa, daughter of Andrew Gunton, by whom he had three sons, Andrew being the youngest. The others, Robert and John, followed the occupation of their ancestors, the former at Isleham, Cambridgeshire, where he died in 1829; the latter at Little Bentley, Essex, where he still resides; both having been for many years pious and respectable deacons of Baptist churches.

The account given by Mr. Fuller of his early religious impressions affords an interesting exhibition of the mysterious operations of divine grace in the midst of youthful depravity, while it also shows the gradual development of those traits of character which afterwards excited such admiration and esteem, and led to results of such importance to the religious world, and especially to his own immediate connexion. The system of doctrine which had at that time prevailed to a considerable extent was a caricature of Calvinism, exercising under some of its forms a peculiarly degrading and pernicious influence. From this he was the happy means of rescuing many of the churches, and of leading them to recognize the perfect consistency of the most elevated views of the sovereignty of Divine grace with the most extensive obligations of men to moral and spiritual duties, and the most unlimited invitations to unconverted hearers of the gospel.

\* Palmer, in his *Nonconformists' Memorial*, informs us that these excellent men, who both suffered a long imprisonment in Cambridge castle, were the founders of nearly all the congregational churches in that county.—They lie buried in an obscure garden in the little village of Oakington, about four miles from Cambridge, where a very decayed tomb marks the spot of their sepulture.—B.

The following extracts comprise the substance of two series of letters, which, being written to friends at different periods, and consequently containing in many cases a repetition of the same incidents, it is judged most expedient to reduce to a uniform and continuous narrative, preserving at the same time a scrupulous adherence to the words of the writer.

“You need not be told, my dear friend, that the religious experience of fallible creatures, like every thing else that attends them, must needs be marked with imperfection, and that the account that can be given of it on paper, after a lapse of many years, must be so in a still greater degree. I am willing, however, to comply with your request; and the rather because it may serve to recall some things which, in passing over the mind, produce interesting and useful sensations, both of pain and pleasure.

“My father and mother were Dissenters, of the Calvinistic persuasion, and were in the habit of hearing Mr. Eve, a Baptist minister,\* who being what is here termed *high* in his sentiments, or tinged with false Calvinism, had little or nothing to say to the unconverted. I therefore never considered myself as any way concerned in what I heard from the pulpit. Nevertheless, by reading and reflection I was sometimes strongly impressed in a way of conviction. My parents were engaged in husbandry, which occupation, therefore, I followed to the twentieth year of my age. I remember many of the sins of my childhood, among which were lying, cursing, and swearing. It is true, as to the latter, it never became habitual. I had a dread upon my spirits to such a degree, that when I uttered an oath or an imprecation, it was by a kind of force put upon my feelings, and merely to appear manly, like other boys with whom I associated. This being the case, when I came to be about ten years old, I entirely left it off, except that I sometimes dealt in a sort of minced oaths and imprecations when my passions were excited.

“In the practice of telling lies I continued some years longer; at length, however, I began to consider this as a mean vice, and accordingly left it off, except in cases where I was under some pressing temptation.

“I think I must have been nearly fourteen years old before I began to have much serious thought about futurity. The preaching upon which I attended was not adapted to awaken my conscience, as the minister had seldom any thing to say except to believers, and what believing was I neither knew, nor was I greatly concerned to know. I remember about this time, as I was walking alone, I put the question to myself, What is faith? there is much made of it, What is it? I could not tell, but satisfied myself in thinking it was not of immediate concern, and I should understand it as I grew older.

“At times conviction laid fast hold of me, and rendered me extremely unhappy. The light I had received, I know not how, would not suffer me to go into sin with that ease which I observed in other lads. One winter evening, I remember going with a number of other boys to a smith’s shop, to warm myself by his fire. Presently they began to sing vain songs. This appeared to me so much like revelling, that I felt something within me which would not suffer me to join them, and while I sat silently, in rather an unpleasant muse, those words sunk into my mind like a dagger, ‘What doest thou here, Elijah?’ I immediately left the company; yet, shocking to reflect upon, I walked home, murmuring in my heart against God, that I could not be let alone, and be suffered to take my pleasure like other young people!

\* It is a somewhat curious fact that while Mr. Eve was the Baptist minister at Soham, Mr. Adam was settled as the pastor of the Congregational church in that village.—B.

“Sometimes I was very much affected, in thinking of the doctrines of Christianity, or in reading such books as Bunyan’s *Grace abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, and his *Pilgrim’s Progress*. One day, in particular, I took up Ralph Erskine’s *Gospel Sonnets*, and opening upon what he entitles *A Gospel Catechism for Young Christians, or Christ All in All in our Complete Redemption*, I read, and as I read I wept. Indeed I was almost overcome with weeping, so interesting did the doctrine of eternal salvation appear to me; yet, there being no radical change in my heart, these thoughts passed away, and I was equally intent on the pursuit of folly as heretofore.

“Yet I often felt a strange kind of regard towards good people, such of them especially as were familiar in their behaviour to young persons, and would sometimes talk to me about religion. I used to wish I had many thousand pounds, that I might give some of it to those of them who were poor as to their worldly circumstances.

“I was at times the subject of such convictions and affections that I really thought myself converted, and lived under that delusion for a long time. The ground on which I rested that opinion was as follows:—One morning, I think about the year 1767, as I was walking alone, I began to think seriously what would become of my poor soul, and was deeply affected in thinking of my condition. I felt that I was the slave of sin, and that it had such power over me that it was in vain for me to think of extricating myself from its thralldom. Till now, I did not know but that I could repent at any time; but now I perceived that my heart was wicked, and that it was not in me to turn to God, or to break off my sins by righteousness. I saw that if God would forgive me all the past, and offer me the kingdom of heaven on condition of giving up my wicked pursuits, I should not accept it. This conviction was accompanied with great depression of heart. I walked sorrowfully along, repeating these words:—Iniquity will be my ruin! Iniquity will be my ruin! While poring over my unhappy case, those words of the apostle suddenly occurred to my mind, ‘Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace.’ Now the suggestion of a text of Scripture to the mind, especially if it came with power, was generally considered, by the religious people with whom I occasionally associated, as a promise coming immediately from God. I therefore so understood it, and thought that God had thus revealed to me that I was in a state of salvation, and therefore that iniquity should not, as I had feared, be my ruin. The effect was, I was overcome with joy and transport. I shed, I suppose, thousands of tears as I walked along, and seemed to feel myself as it were in a new world. It appeared to me that I hated my sins, and was resolved to forsake them. Thinking on my wicked courses, I remember using those words of Paul, ‘Shall I continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid!’ I felt, or seemed to feel, the strongest indignation at the thought. But, strange as it may appear, though my face that morning was, I believe, swollen with weeping, yet before night all was gone and forgotten, and I returned to my former vices with as eager a gust as ever. Nor do I remember that for more than half a year afterwards I had any serious thoughts about the salvation of my soul. I lived entirely without prayer, and was wedded to my sins just the same as before, or rather was increasingly attached to them.

“Some time in the following year I was again walking by myself, and began to reflect upon my course of life, particularly upon my former hopes and affections, and how I had since forgotten them all, and returned to all my wicked ways. Instead of sin having no more dominion over me, I perceived that its

dominion had been increased. Yet I still thought that must have been a promise from God to me, and that I must have been a converted person, but in a backsliding state; and this persuasion was confirmed by another sudden impression, which dispelled my dejection, in these words: 'I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins.' This, like the former, overcame my mind with joy. I wept much at the thoughts of having backslidden so long, but yet considered myself now as restored and happy. But this also was mere transient affection. I have great reason to think that the great deep of my heart's depravity had not yet been broken up, and that all my religion was without any abiding principle. Amidst it all, I still continued in the neglect of prayer, and was never, that I recollect, induced to deny myself of any sin when temptations were presented. I now thought, however, surely I shall be better for the time to come. But, alas! in a few days this also was forgotten, and I returned to my evil courses with as great an eagerness as ever.

"I was now about fifteen years of age; and as, notwithstanding my convictions and hopes, the bias of my heart was not changed, I became more and more addicted to evil, in proportion as my powers and passions strengthened. Nor was I merely prompted by my own propensities; for having formed acquaintance with other wicked young people, my progress in the way to death became greatly accelerated. Being of an athletic frame and of a daring spirit, I was often engaged in such exercises and exploits as, if the good hand of God had not preserved me, might have issued in death. I also frequently engaged in games of hazard, which, though not to any great amount, yet were very bewitching to me, and tended greatly to corrupt my mind. These, with various other sinful practices, had so hardened my heart, that I seldom thought of religion. Nay, I recollect that on a Lord's-day evening about that time, when my parents were reading in the family, I was shamefully engaged with one of the servants, playing idle tricks, though I took care not to be seen in them. These things were nothing to me at that time; for my conscience, by reiterated acts of wickedness, had become *seared* as with a hot iron: they were, however, heavy burdens to me afterwards.

"Notwithstanding various convictions and transient affections, I was pressing on in a lamentable career of wickedness; but about the autumn of 1769 my convictions revisited me, and brought on such a concern about my everlasting welfare as issued, I trust, in real conversion.

"It was my common practice, after the business of the day was over, to get into bad company in the evening, and when there I indulged in sin without restraint. But after persisting in this course for some time, I began to be very uneasy, particularly in a morning when I first awoke. It was almost as common for me to be seized with keen remorse at this hour as it was to go into vain company in the evening. At first I began to make *vows* of reformation, and this for the moment would afford a little ease; but as the temptations returned, my vows were of no account. It was an enlightened conscience only that was on the side of God: my heart was still averse to every thing that was spiritual or holy. For several weeks I went on in this way; vowing and breaking my vows, reflecting on myself for my evil conduct, and yet continually repeating it.

"It was not now, however, as heretofore; my convictions followed me up closely. I could not, as formerly, forget these things, and was therefore a poor miserable creature; like a drunkard, who carouses in the evening, but mopes about the next day like one half dead.

"One morning, I think in November, 1769, I walked out by myself with an

unusual load of guilt upon my conscience. The remembrance of my sin, not only on the past evening, but for a long time back, the breach of my vows and the shocking termination of my former hopes and affections, all uniting together, formed a burden which I knew not how to bear. The reproaches of a guilty conscience seemed like the gnawing worm of hell. I thought surely that must be an earnest of hell itself. The fire and brimstone of the bottomless pit seemed to burn within my bosom. I do not write in the language of exaggeration. I now know that the sense which I then had of the evil of sin and the wrath of God was very far short of the truth; but yet it seemed more than I was able to sustain. In reflecting upon my broken vows, I saw that there was no truth in me. I saw that God would be perfectly just in sending me to hell, and that to hell I must go unless I were saved of mere grace, and as it were, in spite of myself. I felt that, if God were to forgive me all my past sins, I should again destroy my soul, and that in less than a day's time. I never before knew what it was to feel myself an odious lost sinner, standing in need of both pardon and purification. Yet, though I needed those blessings, it seemed presumption to hope for them, after what I had done. I was absolutely helpless, and seemed to have nothing about me that ought to excite the pity of God, or that I could reasonably expect should do so; but every thing disgusting to him, and provoking to the eyes of his glory. 'What have I done? what must I do?' These were my inquiries, perhaps ten times over. Indeed I knew not what to do! I durst not promise amendment, for I saw that such promises were self deception. To hope for forgiveness in the course that I was in was the height of presumption; and to think of Christ, after having so basely abused his grace, seemed too much. So I had no refuge. At one moment I thought of giving myself up to despair. 'I may (said I within myself) even return and take my fill of sin; I can but be lost.' This thought made me shudder at myself! My heart revolted. What, thought I, give up Christ, and hope, and heaven! Those lines of Ralph Erskine's then occurred to my mind—

'But say, if all the gusts  
And grains of love be spent,  
Say, farewell Christ, and welcome lusts  
Stop, stop; I melt, I faint.'

I could not bear the thought of plunging myself into endless ruin.

"It is difficult at this distance of time to recollect with precision the minute workings of my mind; but as near as I can remember I was like a man drowning, looking every way for help, or rather catching for something by which he might save his life. I tried to find whether there was any hope in the Divine mercy—any in the Saviour of sinners; but felt repulsed by the thought of mercy having been so basely abused already. In this state of mind, as I was moving slowly on, I thought of the resolution of Job, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.' I paused, and repeated the words over and over. Each repetition seemed to kindle a ray of hope mixed with a determination, *if I might*, to cast my perishing soul upon the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, to be both pardoned and purified; for I felt that I needed the one as much as the other.

"I was not then aware that *any* poor sinner had a warrant to believe in Christ for the salvation of his soul, but supposed there must be some kind of qualification to entitle him to do it; yet I was aware I had no qualification. On a review of my resolution at that time, it seems to resemble that of Esther, who went into the king's presence *contrary to the law*, and at the hazard of her life.

Like her, I seemed reduced to extremities, impelled by dire necessity to run all hazards, even though I should perish in the attempt. Yet it was not altogether from a dread of wrath that I fled to this refuge; for I well remember that I felt something attracting in the Saviour. I must—I will—yes, I will trust my soul—my sinful lost soul in his hands. If I perish, I perish. However it was, I was determined to cast myself upon Christ, thinking peradventure he would save my soul; and, if not, I could but be lost. In this way I continued above an hour, weeping and supplicating mercy for the Saviour's sake (my soul hath it still in remembrance, and is humbled in me); and as the eye of the mind was more and more fixed upon him, my guilt and fears were gradually and insensibly removed.

“I now found rest for my troubled soul; and I reckon that I should have found it sooner, if I had not entertained the notion of my having no warrant to come to Christ without some previous qualification. This notion was a bar that kept me back for a time, though through divine drawings I was enabled to overleap it. As near as I can remember in the early part of these exercises, when I subscribed to the justice of God in my condemnation, and thought of the Saviour of sinners, I had then relinquished every false confidence, believed my help to be only in him, and approved of salvation by grace alone through his death; and if at that time I had known that any poor sinner *might* warrantably have trusted in him for salvation, I conceive I should have done so, and have found rest to my soul sooner than I did. I mention this because it may be the case with others, who may be kept in darkness and despondency by erroneous views of the gospel much longer than I was.

“I think also I did repent of my sin in the early part of these exercises, and before I thought that Christ would accept and save my soul. I conceive that justifying God in my condemnation, and approving the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, necessarily included it; but yet I did not think at the time that this was repentance, or any thing truly good. Indeed I thought nothing about the exercises of my own mind, but merely of my guilty and lost condition, and whether there were any hope of escape for me. But, having found rest for my soul in the cross of Christ, I was now conscious of my being the subject of repentance, faith, and love. When I thought of my past life, I abhorred myself, and repented as in dust and ashes; and when I thought of the gospel way of salvation, I drank it in, as cold water is imbibed by a thirsty soul. My heart felt one with Christ, and dead to every other object around me. I had *thought* I had found the joys of salvation heretofore; but now I *knew* I had found them, and was conscious that I had passed from death unto life. Yet even now my mind was not so engaged in reflecting upon my own feelings as upon the objects which occasioned them.

“From this time, my former wicked courses were forsaken. I had no manner of desire after them. They lost their influence upon me. To those evils, a glance at which before would have set my passions in a flame, I felt now no inclination. My soul, said I, with joy and triumph, is as a weaned child! I now knew experimentally what it was to be dead to the world by the cross of Christ, and to feel an habitual determination to devote my future life to God my Saviour, and from this time considered the vows of God as upon me.

“In recollecting the early exercises of my mind, I see a great difference between *respect* and *love*. I never knew the time when I did not respect good men; but I did not always love them for Christ's sake. There was one poor man in particular, who used to travel about three miles on a Lord's-day morning to wor-

ship, and as I often attended at the same place, I was frequently very eager to get his company. I have run miles to overtake him, though when I was with him I had nothing to say. In the autumn of this year he became my father's thrasher, and I was delighted on account of it, though I scarcely knew for what reason. My mind was now at rest in Christ; yet I had never spoken to any one on the subject, nor did I think of doing so for the present. But whether the thrasher perceived some alteration in me as I went about my business, or how it was, I know not, he talked to me rather freely, and I told him all my heart. After this, other Christians conversed with me, and invited me to their prayer-meetings, and I engaged with them in prayer, and other religious exercises. It was in this accidental way, and not from my own intention, that I became known among serious people. But, having opened my mind to the thrasher, I often visited him in the barn; and, because I hindered him in his work, I made it up by thrashing for him sometimes for an hour or two together.

"From the month of November, 1769, I had entirely broken off all my ungodly connexions and courses; yet, being a boy under sixteen, I found at times boyish inclinations and strong struggles of mind respecting youthful follies. At Shrove-tide, in particular, when the young men met together, and practised various athletic exercises, their shouts, which were within my hearing, would throw me into agitations which rendered me very unhappy. But my good friend, the thrasher, warned me tenderly and solemnly to keep out of the way of temptation, and I was enabled, though with some difficulty, to follow his counsel. As the spring of 1770 came on, the young people of the town, as usual, would meet every evening for youthful exercises. This was especially the case at the wake or feast; and though I always kept at a distance, yet I found such times very ensnaring to my mind. To avoid this, I began a practice which I continued with great peace and comfort for several years. Whenever a feast or holiday occurred, instead of sitting at home by myself, I went to a neighbouring village to visit some Christian friends; and returned when all was over. By this step I was delivered from those mental participations in folly which had given me so much uneasiness. Thus the seasons of temptation became to me times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

"In March, 1770, I witnessed the baptizing of two young persons, having never seen that ordinance administered before, and was considerably affected by what I saw and heard. The solemn immersion of a person, on a profession of faith in Christ, carried such a conviction with it, that I wept like a child on the occasion. The words of the psalmist, in Psal. cxi. 10, 'A good understanding have all they that do his commandments,' left a deep and abiding impression on my mind. I was fully persuaded that this was the primitive way of baptizing, and that every Christian was bound to attend to this institution of our blessed Lord. About a month after this I was baptized myself, and joined the church at Soham, being then turned of sixteen years of age.

"Within a day or two after I had been baptized, as I was riding through the fields, I met a company of young men. One of them especially, on my having passed them, called after me in very abusive language, and cursed me for having been 'dipped.' My heart instantly rose in a way of resentment; but though the fire burned, I held my peace; for before I uttered a word I was checked with this passage, which occurred to my mind, 'In the world ye *shall* have tribulation.' I wept, and entreated the Lord to pardon me; feeling quite willing to bear the ridicule of the wicked, and to go even through great tribulation, if at last I might but enter the kingdom. In this tender frame of mind I rode some

miles, thinking of the temptations I might have to encounter. Amongst others, I was aware of the danger of being drawn into any acquaintance with the other sex, which might prove injurious to my spiritual welfare. While poring over these things, and fearful of falling into the snares of youth, I was led to think of that passage, 'In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.' This made me weep for joy; and for forty-five years I have scarcely entered on any serious engagement without thinking of these words, and entreating divine direction. I have been twice married, and twice settled as the pastor of a church; which were some of the leading ways in which I had to acknowledge the Lord; and in each, when over, I could say, as Psal. cxix. 26, 'My ways have I declared, and thou heardest me.'

"In reviewing the early years of my life, I see much ignorance, vanity, and folly. I feel the force of Paul's considering the terms *carnal, and babes in Christ*, as synonymous. But, amidst all my youthful follies and sins, I bless God that I was always kept from any unbecoming freedom with the other sex, or attempting to engage the affections of any female, except with a view to marriage.

"The summer of 1770 was a time of great religious pleasure. I loved my pastor, and all my brethren in the church; and they expressed great affection towards me in return. I esteemed the righteous as the excellent of the earth, in whom was all my delight. Those who knew not Christ seemed to me almost another species, towards whom I was incapable of attachment. About this time I formed an intimacy with a Mr. Joseph Diver, a wise and good man, who had been baptized with me. He was about forty years of age, and had lived many years in a very recluse way, giving himself much to reading and reflection. He had a great delight in searching after truth, which rendered his conversation peculiarly interesting to me; nor was he less devoted to universal practical godliness. I account this connexion one of the greatest blessings in my life. Notwithstanding the disparity as to years, we loved each other like David and Jonathan. My life this summer resembled the description given by Dr. Watts:—

'The day glides swiftly o'er their heads,  
Made up of innocence and love;  
And soft and silent as the shades  
Their nightly minutes gently move.'

But in the autumn of the same year an unhappy affair occurred in the church, which occasioned a breach between our pastor, Mr. Eve, and the people, which terminated in his leaving them; and, what rendered it the more afflicting to me, I was much concerned in it. The case was this: one of the members having been guilty of drinking to excess, I was one of the first who knew of it. I immediately went and talked to him, as well as I could, on the evil of his conduct. His answer was, 'He could not keep himself; and that, though I bore so hard on him, I was not my own keeper.' At this I felt indignant, considering it as a base excuse. I therefore told him that he *could* keep himself from such sins as these, and that his way of talking was merely to excuse what was inexcusable. I knew not what else to say at that time; yet the idea of arrogating to be my own keeper seemed too much. He, however, was offended, and told me that I was young, and did not know the deceitfulness of my own heart. Well, I went and told my pastor, who highly commended me, and said, 'We certainly could keep ourselves from open sins. We had no power,' he observed,



‘to do things spiritually good; but as to outward acts, we had power both to obey the will of God and to disobey it.’

“The business soon came before the church, and the offender was unanimously excluded: the excuse which he had made, too, was considered by all, I believe, as an aggravation of his offence. But, this affair being disposed of, the abstract question of *the power of sinful men to do the will of God, and to keep themselves from sin*, was taken up by some of the leading members of the church, amongst whom was my friend Joseph Diver. They readily excused me, as being a babe in religion; but thought the pastor ought to have known better, and to have been able to answer the offender without betraying the truth. They alleged that the greatest and best of characters, as recorded in Scripture, never arrogated to themselves the power of keeping themselves from evil, but constantly prayed for keeping grace; that, were it not for the restraining goodness and constraining grace of God, earth would be a hell, and the best of men incarnate devils; in short, that though we are altogether blameworthy for our evil propensities, yet, if they were restrained or conquered, it was altogether to be ascribed to God, and not to us. To support these ideas, they alleged the prayers of the faithful to be kept from evil, even from presumptuous sins, Psal. xix. 13; the declaration of the prophet, that ‘the way of man is not in himself: it is not in him that walketh to direct his steps,’ Jer. x. 23; the case of Hezekiah, whom the Lord *left*, that he might try him, that he might know all that was in his heart, 2 Chron. xxxii. 31; and the acknowledgments of such men as John Bradford the martyr, who, on seeing a man go to be publicly executed, said, ‘There goes John Bradford by nature.’

“On the other hand, the pastor distinguished between internal and external power. He allowed that men had no power of themselves to perform any thing spiritually good; but contended that they could yield external obedience, and keep themselves from open acts of sin. In proof of this he alleged a great number of Scripture exhortations; asking, If we had no power to comply with them, why were they given us? The opponents did not deny our being exhorted to do good and to avoid evil, nor that it was our duty to do both, and our sin to act otherwise; but they denied that this implied our being sufficient of ourselves to do any thing, even to think a good thought.

“In these disputes I continued for some time on the side of my pastor; but after a few months I felt difficulties on the subject which I could not answer, and which rendered me unhappy. I perceived that some kind of power was necessary to render us accountable beings. If we were like stocks or stones, or literally dead, like men in a burying ground, we could with no more propriety than they be commanded to perform any duty; if we were mere machines, there could be no sin chargeable upon us. Yet, on the other hand, the Scriptures expressly affirm that ‘the way of man is not in himself,’ and represent the godly as crying to Heaven for preservation from evil, ascribing all the good that was in them to Him that worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure. I prayed much, and laboured hard to solve this difficulty.

“My worthy friend Joseph Diver, who sustained a high character for wisdom and integrity, would reason thus with me:—‘We ought to hate evil, and love the Lord; but it is the grace of God alone that can make us what we ought to be.’ He would often speak of the equity of the divine requirements in the words of David, ‘I esteem all thy precepts in all things to be right; and I hate every false way.’ And again, ‘Thou hast *commanded* us that we should keep thy precepts diligently: O that my ways were *directed* to keep thy sta-

tutes!' 'Thus it is,' said he, 'that we should turn every precept into a prayer, instead of inferring from it a sufficiency in ourselves to conform to it. All our conformity to the divine precepts is of grace; it will never do to argue from our obligations against our dependence, nor from our dependence on grace against our obligations to duty. If it were not for the restraining goodness and preserving grace of God, we should be a kind of devils, and earth would resemble hell.'

"In October, 1771, our pastor, Mr. Eve, left us. I loved him, and he loved me, and took it hard that I had in some respects changed my views. I learned afterwards that he had entertained thoughts of me as being formed for the ministry, but this contention damped his hopes on that subject. He settled, when he left Soham, with a people at Wisbeach. I never look back upon these contentions but with strong feelings. They were to me the wormwood and the gall of my youth; my soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. But though, during these unpleasant disputes, there were many hard thoughts and hard words on almost all hands, yet they were ultimately the means of leading my mind into those views of divine truth which have since appeared in the principal part of my writings. They excited me to read, and think, and pray, with more earnestness than I should have done without them; and, if I have judged or written to any advantage since, it was in consequence of what I then learned by bitter experience, and in the midst of many tears and temptations. God's way is in the deep.

"About this time I met with a passage in Dr. Gill, (I think it was in his *Cause of God and Truth*,) in which he distinguished between a thing being 'in the power of our *hand*, and in the power of our *heart*.' This, thought I, is the clue to our dispute. Every man has it in the power of his hand to do good and abstain from evil; and this it is which makes us accountable beings. We can do, or forbear to do, this and that, if we have a mind; but many have not a mind, and none would have such a mind but for the restraining goodness or constraining grace of God. We have it in the power of our hands to do good, but we are disposed to do evil, and so to do good is not naturally in the power of our hearts.

"Mr. Eve having removed, and the church being divided into parties, it was thought by some that we should be dissolved; and I went several Lord's days to hear an Independent minister in the neighbourhood. Those members, however, who were of one mind, and who formed the majority, met together on Lord's days; and having no minister, and being situated too far from other Baptist churches to get supplies, they carried on the worship by singing, prayer, reading, and expounding the Scriptures. They also appointed a day for fasting and prayer, and invited all the members to unite in it. I went to this meeting, and from that time continued to assemble with them. My friend Joseph Diver was at that time chosen to be a deacon; and, having some talent for expounding the Scriptures, he used, at the request of the church, to take up a part of every Lord's day in that exercise.

"As the disputes in the church were the occasion of turning my thoughts to most of those subjects on which I have since written, so were they the occasion of my engaging in the Christian ministry.

"In November, 1771, as I was riding out on business, on a Saturday morning, to a neighbouring village, my mind fell into a train of interesting and affecting thoughts, from that passage of Scripture, 'Weeping may endure for a night; but joy cometh in the morning.' I never had felt such freedom of mind

in thinking on a divine subject before; nor do I recollect ever having had a thought of the ministry; but I then felt as if I could preach from it, and indeed I did preach in a manner as I rode along. I thought no more of it, however, but returned home when I had done my business. In the afternoon of the same day, I went to meet my mother, who had been to London, to see her mother, who was then very unwell. As we rode a few miles together, she told me she had been thinking much about me while in town, and added, 'My dear, you have often expressed your wish for a trade: I have talked with your uncle at Kensington about it, and he has procured a good place in the city, where, instead of paying a premium, you may, if you give satisfaction, in a little time receive wages, and learn the business. I thought (continued she) that as we had now lost the gospel, and perhaps shall never have it again, you could have no reason for wishing to continue here. In London you can hear the gospel in its purity.' That which my mother suggested was very true; I had always been inclined to trade; but, how it was I cannot tell, my heart revolted at the proposal at this time. It was not from any desire or thought of the ministry, nor any thing else in particular, unless it were a feeling towards the little scattered society of which I was a member, a kind of lingering to see what would become of the city. I said but little to my mother, but seemed to wish for time to consider of it. This was Saturday evening.

"The next morning, as I was walking by myself to meeting, expecting to hear the brethren pray, and my friend Joseph Diver expound the Scriptures, I was met by one of the members whom he had requested to see me, who said, 'Brother Diver has by accident sprained his ankle, and cannot be at meeting to-day; and he wishes me to say to you, that he hopes the Lord will be with you.' 'The Lord be with me!' thought I, 'what does brother Diver mean? He cannot suppose that I can take his place, seeing I have never attempted any thing of the kind, nor been asked to do so.' It then occurred, however, that I had had an interesting train of thought the day before, and had imagined at the time I could speak it, if I were called to it. But though I had repeatedly engaged in prayer publicly, yet I had never been requested to attempt any thing further, and therefore I thought no more of it.

"We walked on to the meeting, and took our places, when, after singing, one of the brethren went to prayer. After which the eldest deacon asked me if I would read some part of the Scriptures, and, if I found liberty, drop any remarks as I went on, which might occur. At first I was startled, but, conscious of what had passed in my mind the day before, I thought as brother Diver was absent it might be my duty to try, and therefore making no objections, which as it appeared to me would have been mere affectation, I rose and spoke from Psal. xxx. 5, for about half an hour, with considerable freedom. After this I was again invited by brother Diver to speak, and I did so; but, not enjoying that liberty which I did the first time, I was discouraged, and, though frequently asked, declined all such exercises for more than a year. But early in 1773, I think it was, brother Diver was absent again through an affliction, and I was invited once more to take his place. Being induced to renew the attempt, I spoke from those words of our Lord, 'The Son of man came to seek and save that which is lost.' On this occasion, I not only felt greater freedom than I had ever found before, but the attention of the people was fixed, and several young persons in the congregation were impressed with the subject, and afterwards joined the church.

"From this time the brethren seemed to entertain an idea of my engaging in

the ministry, nor was I without serious thoughts of it myself. Sometimes I felt a desire after it; at other times I was much discouraged, especially through a consciousness of my want of spirituality of mind, which I considered as a qualification of the first importance. As to other qualifications, it certainly would have been of great use to me, if for a few years I had had the instructions of some father in the ministry; and I have often since regretted that, from 1771 to 1774, I lived to so little purpose. But none of my connexions had any idea of the kind, and, being conscious of knowing about as much as those around me, I myself thought nothing of it. At one time, when seriously reflecting on my own defects and insufficiency, I was greatly relieved and encouraged by that passage, Psal. lxxxiv. 11, 'The Lord will give *grace* and glory.' It was now usual for my friend Diver to speak on one part of the Lord's day, and for me to be engaged on the other; and these exercises appeared to be blessed to several young people, who afterwards joined the church.

"In January, 1774, an elderly lady, a member of the church, died, and left a request that, if the church did not think it disorderly, I might be allowed to preach a funeral sermon on the occasion. As the members were nearly of one mind respecting me, they agreed to set apart the twenty-sixth of that month, which was previous to the funeral, for fasting and prayer; and they then called me to the ministry. From that time I exercised from the pulpit.

"Being now devoted to the ministry, I took a review of the doctrine I should preach, and spent pretty much of my time in reading, and in making up my mind as to various things relative to the gospel. Impressed with the importance of the connexions I should probably form in a few years, both as a man and as a minister, to my future happiness and usefulness, I earnestly besought the Lord to be my guide; and those words in Prov. iii. 6, were very sweet to me, 'In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.' In most of the important turns of my life, I have thought of that passage with renewed tenderness, as one would think of a friendly hint given him in early life, and make it a rule of conduct.

"Settling in a town where I had lived from the age of six years, I could not expect to be much respected by the inhabitants. In this, however, I had no occasion to complain. I had, indeed, more respect shown me than I looked for; partly owing to the prevalence of an opinion when I was at school of my being more learned than my master; an opinion which I am certain was far from being true. But it indicated a partiality in my favour, which perhaps was of some use in leading people to hear the word.

"With respect to the system of doctrine which I had been used to hear from my youth, it was in the high Calvinistic, or rather hyper Calvinistic, strain, admitting nothing spiritually good to be the duty of the unregenerate, and nothing to be addressed to them in a way of exhortation, excepting what related to external obedience. Outward services might be required, such as an attendance on the means of grace; and abstinence from gross evils might be enforced; but nothing was said to them from the pulpit in the way of warning them to flee from the wrath to come, or inviting them to apply to Christ for salvation. And though our late dispute had furnished me with some few principles inconsistent with these notions, yet I did not perceive their bearings at first, and durst not for some years address an invitation to the unconverted to come to Jesus. I began, however, to doubt whether I had got the truth respecting this subject. This view of things did not seem to comport with the ideas which I had imbibed concerning the power of man to do the will of God. I perceived that the will

of God was not confined to mere outward actions, but extended to the inmost thoughts and intents of the heart. The distinction of duties, therefore, into internal and external, and making the latter only concern the unregenerate, wore a suspicious appearance. But as I perceived this reasoning would affect the whole tenor of my preaching, I moved on with slow and trembling steps; and, having to feel my way out of a labyrinth, I was a long time ere I felt satisfied.

“My mind was also frequently diverted to other subjects of inquiry. In the first year of my ministry, books were put into my hands which led me to consider certain questions in divinity, which it might easily be thought were improper for me at the age of twenty. One of these, by Mr. Stockell, was on *the pre-existence of Christ's human soul*, before he was born of the virgin. Another, by Mr. Allen, was on the *Sonship of Christ*, or whether the character of the only begotten Son of God would ever have belonged to him if he had not been the son of Mary? These things would not have occupied my mind had they not been suggested by others. Yet I have reason to thank God that they were the occasion of fixing my judgment; and I have since perceived that every thing pertaining to the person of Christ is of more than ordinary importance.

“As to *the pre-existence of Christ's human soul*, it seemed to me, in itself, a strange conceit, and such as I should never have thought of in reading the Scriptures. The texts on which it was founded seemed to be forced into the service, especially Prov. viii. and Ps. cxxxix. 15, 16; and though some who profess to believe in the divinity of Christ were partial to the notion, yet I suspected it was invented to undermine that important doctrine. It is true, this notion was held by Dr. Watts, and I examined his reasoning, but without obtaining satisfaction. In consequence of the examination I made at that time I was enabled afterwards to repel an attack from a company of ministers, who were warm for that opinion. When they put it to me, I offered to prove that it led to atheism or relinquish the argument. They accepted my offer. I began by saying, ‘You suppose the human soul of Christ to be a party in the everlasting counsels of God?’—‘Yes, God could not take counsel with himself, for a council implies more than one; but God is one.’—‘Yet you do not suppose the soul of Christ to have *always* existed?’ ‘No; it was created, and therefore could not be eternal.’—‘Then you must suppose that, till the great God had a creature to take counsel with, he had no plan—prior to the act of creation he was without counsel, without plan, without design! But a being without plan, purpose, or design, is not God!!! Thus you are landed on atheism. The truth is, God never was without his plan, purpose, or design. By applying, too, those passages of Scripture which express the pre-existence of Christ, and thereby prove his divinity, to the pre-existence of his human soul, you undermine his divinity and favour the Arian hypothesis.’

“Concerning *the Sonship of Christ*, I had more hesitation. I conversed upon it with my friend Diver, who was favourable to Mr. Allen's idea, namely, that Christ is called the Son of God, not as a divine person, but as assuming human nature, and being both God and man. He, however, very generously advised me to read the New Testament with an eye to the question, and to observe, as I went along, whether in any instances where Christ is represented as the Son of God, it respected him as a divine person antecedent to his incarnation; and whether the Scripture name for Christ's pre-incarnate person was not the *Word* rather than the *Son* of God. In reading and thinking on the subject I found such proof as quite satisfied me that he was the Son of God, antecedently to his being born of a woman, and that in calling God *his own Father* he made him-

self equal with God. The following passages appeared to me to admit of no other fair interpretation than that which I was invited to reject, John v. 18; Gal. iv. 4; Heb. i. 8; v. 8, 9; 1 John iii. 8.\* Had I not been initiated into these principles at an early period, I should not have been able to write the treatise against Socinianism, which I have no cause to regret having written.

“ Besides these, I was much perplexed about the same time with the writings of Mr. John Johnson, of Liverpool, and for some time favoured his sentiments. There was something imposing in his manner, by which a young and inexperienced reader is apt to be carried away; my pastor had also been one of his admirers. His denial of God’s having *decreed to permit sin*, and his notion of the *purposes of grace being executed upon the elect, even though sin had never intervened*, much entangled me. It seemed as if he were concerned to vindicate his Creator from being *the author of sin*; and in this view I could not but approve; but on the other hand, it appeared to me idle to speculate on what God could or would have done concerning his elect, if sin had never intervened, when all his revealed counsels went on the supposition of its existence; even the incarnation of his Son was ‘to destroy the works of the devil.’ And all the grace given us in Christ Jesus supposed the intervention of sin; his scheme, therefore, appeared to have no foundation in the Scriptures. And, respecting *the decree to permit sin*, I was one day conversing with a friend upon it, who observed, ‘It is a *fact*, is it not, that God has permitted sin? And can it be a reproach to his character that he should *have decreed* to do what he *has done*?’

“ This remark carried conviction to my mind. I saw that, if there were any thing inconsistent with the divine perfections in the affair, it must be in *permitting* evil, and not in the *decree* to permit it. If the one were right the other could not be wrong, unless it were wrong to determine to do what is right. But to say that it is wrong for God to permit evil is either to arraign the Divine conduct, or to maintain that evil exists without being permitted. I perceived, too, that Mr. Johnson availed himself of the ambiguity of the word *permit*, and because it signifies on some occasions to *give leave*, would have it thought that God could not be said to permit it. After this, I thought but little more of it, but rested in this, The Judge of the whole earth will do right.

“ In reviewing some of these questions, which occupied my attention at so early a period, I have seen reason to bless God for preserving me at a time when my judgment was so immature. When I have seen the zeal which has been expended in maintaining some such peculiarities, I have thought it a pity. Bunyan would have called them ‘nuts which spoil the children’s teeth.’ They have appeared to me as a sort of *spiritual narcotics*, which, when a man once gets a taste for them, he will prefer to the most wholesome food. It was in recollection of these things that I lately wrote, in an *Essay on Truth*, as follows,—‘A man who chews opium, or tobacco, may prefer it to the most wholesome food, and may derive from it pleasure, and even vigour for a time; but his pale countenance and debilitated constitution will soon bear witness to the folly of spending his money for that which is not bread.’

“ In the spring of 1775 I accepted the invitation of the church at Soham, and was ordained their pastor. The pastors of the other churches, who attended the ordination, took that opportunity to inquire into the controversy which had divided us from our former minister, and requested me to state the difference. Mr. Robert Hall, of Arnsby,† who was one of them, expressed his satisfaction in the state-

\* For further remarks on this subject, see Index, Art. Sonship of Christ.

† This great and excellent man was the father of the late Robert Hall, A. M., and author

ment, but recommended *Edwards on the Will* to my careful perusal, as the most able performance on the power of man to do the will of God. Not being much acquainted with books at that time, I confounded the work of Dr. John Edwards, of Cambridge, an Episcopalian Calvinist, entitled *Veritas Redux*, with that of Jonathan Edwards, of New England. I read the former, and thought it a good book; but it did not seem exactly to answer Mr. Hall's recommendation. Nor was it till the year 1777 that I discovered my mistake. Meantime, however, I was greatly exercised upon the subject, and upon the work of the Christian ministry.

“The principal writings with which I was first acquainted were those of Bunyan, Gill, and Brine. I had read pretty much of Dr. Gill's *Body of Divinity*, and from many parts of it had received considerable instruction. I perceived, however, that the system of Bunyan was not the same with his; for that, while he maintained the doctrines of election and predestination, he nevertheless held with the free offer of salvation to sinners without distinction. These were things which I then could not reconcile, and therefore supposed that Bunyan, though a great and good man, was not so *clear* in his views of the doctrines of the gospel as the writers who succeeded him. I found, indeed, the same things in all the old writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that came in my way. They all dealt, as Bunyan did, in free invitations to sinners to come to Christ and be saved; the consistency of which with personal election I could not understand. It is true, I perceived the Scriptures abounded with exhortations and invitations to sinners; but I supposed there must be two kinds of holiness, one of which was possessed by man in innocence, and was binding on all his posterity—the other derived from Christ, and binding only on his people. I had not yet learned that the same things which are required by the precepts of the law are bestowed by the grace of the gospel. Those exhortations to repentance and faith, therefore, which are addressed in the New Testament to the unconverted, I supposed to refer only to such external repentance and faith as were within their power, and might be complied with without the grace of God. The effect of these views was, that I had very little to say to the unconverted, indeed nothing in a way of exhortation to things spiritually good, or certainly connected with salvation.

“But in the autumn of 1775, being in London, I met with a pamphlet by Dr. Abraham Taylor, concerning what was called *The Modern Question*. I had never seen any thing relative to this controversy before, although the subject, as I have stated, had occupied my thoughts. I was but little impressed by his reasonings till he came to the addresses of John the Baptist, Christ, and the apostles, which he proved to be delivered to the ungodly, and to mean spiritual repentance and faith, inasmuch as they were connected with the remission of sins. This set me fast. I read and examined the Scripture passages, and the more I read and thought, the more I doubted the justice of my former views.

“About the same time I met with a sermon by Mr. John Martin,\* from Rom. x. 3, On the *Causcs and Consequences of not submitting to the Righteousness of God*. The drift of this discourse, as nearly as I can remember, was to show that sub-

of “Help to Zion's Travellers,” &c. Mr. Fuller, alluding to the commencement of his acquaintance with him, observes, “He came seventy miles to my ordination, and continued my father and friend till his death.”

\* This remarkable man, distinguished for vast conceit and pomposity, afterwards removed to London, and died pastor of the Baptist church in Keppel street. He became a hyper-Calvinist, and opposed to missions; a high tory in politics, and, singularly enough, a personal friend of George the Third.—B.

mission to the righteousness of God was the same thing for substance as believing in Christ for righteousness; and that non-submission to it was owing to wilful ignorance, pride, prejudice, and unbelief. I was equally unable to answer this reasoning as that of Dr. Taylor, and therefore began more and more to suspect that my views had been antisciptural. I was very unhappy. I read, thought, and prayed. Sometimes I conversed on these subjects with my friend Joseph Diver, and some others. He was nearly as much at a loss as myself. I made a point, however, of not introducing the question in the pulpit till my judgment was fixed.

“In 1776 I became acquainted with Mr. Sutcliff, who had lately come to Olney, and soon after with Mr. John Ryland, jun., then of Northampton. In them I found familiar and faithful brethren; and who, partly by reflection, and partly by reading the writings of Edwards, Bellamy, Brainerd, &c., had begun to doubt of the system of false Calvinism to which they had been inclined when they first entered on the ministry, or rather to be decided against it. But as I lived sixty or seventy miles from them, I seldom saw them, and did not correspond upon the subject. I therefore pursued my inquiries by myself, and wrote out the substance of what I afterwards published under the title of *The Gospel worthy of all Acceptation; or the Obligations of Men cordially to believe whatever God makes known.*

“My change of views on these subjects never abated my zeal for the doctrine of salvation by grace, but in some respects increased it. I never had any predilection for Arminianism, which appeared to me to ascribe the difference between one sinner and another, not to the grace of God, but to the good improvement made of grace given us in common with others. Yet I saw those whom I thought to be godly men, both among Arminians and high, or, as I now accounted them, hyper Calvinists. I perceived that men’s characters were not always formed by their avowed principles; that we may hold a sound faith without its having such hold of us as to form our spirit and conduct; that we may profess an erroneous creed, and yet our spirit and conduct may be formed nearly irrespective of it; in short, that there is a difference between *principles* and *opinions*; the one are the actual moving causes which lie at the root of action, the other often float in the mind without being reduced to practice.”

On the important and responsible work of the ministry Mr. Fuller entered with that humility and devotedness which it demands, and which the peculiar exigences of the people among whom he laboured called for in no ordinary degree.

Though his acceptance of the pastorate added somewhat to the pressure of those theological difficulties by which his early engagements were embarrassed, as giving to them more of a practical aspect, it had nevertheless a favourable influence on their solution, as prompting him to more vigorous efforts of thought, a more rigid examination of the word of God, and more strenuous applications at a throne of grace, and also bringing him into contact with eminent individuals who, like himself, were accustomed to pursue inquiries with a view to a practical purpose, and whose means of information had been more extensive than his own. Owing however to the distance of their residence from his, as well as to the independence of his own mind, they might be said to have done little more than give an impetus to his thoughts, of which they were afterwards happy in acknowledging the benefit.

Among the investigations which occupied his attention at this period, that on



the subject of *justification* was not the least important. The following record of the progress of his mind on this topic, written in 1796, may not be uninteresting :—

“When I first set out in the ministry, I had no other ideas of justification than those which are stated by Dr. Gill. ‘Justification,’ he says, ‘may be distinguished into *active* and *passive*. Active justification is the act of God. *It is God that justifieth*. Passive justification is the act of God terminating on the conscience of a believer, commonly called a transient act passing upon an external object. The former is an act internal and eternal, taken up in the Divine mind from eternity, and is an immanent, abiding one in it. It is, as Dr. Ames expresses it, a sentence conceived in the Divine mind by the decree of justifying.’

“In his *Bod. Div.* vol. ii. p. 797, the Doctor speaks of justification as it ‘terminates in the conscience of a believer, and which (he says) the Scriptures style justification *by faith*.’

“These, till within a few years, were my views. But, thinking over these subjects, I felt dissatisfied; I felt that my views did not quadrate with the Scriptures; I endeavoured, therefore, to examine the matter closely. It occurred to me that, whatever disputes had arisen on this subject, all parties that I had read were agreed in considering justification as *the opposite of condemnation*. I found this idea also plentifully supported by the Scriptures, Deut. xxv. 1; 1 Kings viii. 32; Rom. viii. 33, 34; I therefore set myself to examine—What is *condemnation*? Is it, said I, the decree of God finally to condemn a sinner? No; for every believer, elect or non-elect, is under condemnation, John iii. 18, 36, ‘the wrath of God abideth on him.’ Believers ‘were by nature children of wrath, even as others;’ Saul, therefore, while a persecutor, was a child of wrath, or was under condemnation; yet God ‘had not appointed him to wrath, but to obtain salvation by Jesus Christ.’

“Hence I concluded, if condemnation be not the decree of God finally to condemn, justification is not the decree of God finally to acquit. It also appeared to me inconsistent with the nature of things to conceive of justification as Dr. Ames expresses it, namely, as ‘a sentence conceived in the Divine mind;’ for, whatever purpose may be conceived in a judge’s mind in favour of a prisoner, it is not justification till it is *declared* in open court.

“Further, Does condemnation, said I, consist in any *sense* or *persuasion* which a sinner possesses that he shall be condemned? No; for many who are under condemnation according to the Scriptures have no such persuasion, but the reverse, as was the case with the Jews, who were persuaded that God was their Father, while in fact they were of their father the devil; and others, who are not under condemnation according to the Scriptures, are yet at times under the apprehension that they are so. But if condemnation, continued I, consists not in a sense or persuasion that we are or shall be condemned, justification consists not in a sense or persuasion that we are or shall be justified.

“On the whole, it seemed evident that the sentence of justification was neither a purpose in the Divine mind, nor a sense or persuasion in the human mind. The question then returned, What is it? Still keeping hold of my clue, I proceeded to inquire, Is not condemnation that *state* or *condition* of a sinner in which, according to the revealed will of God in his holy law, all the threatenings and curses stand against him? Is it not the same thing as a being *under the curse*, which all are who are *of the works of the law*, whether they be elect or non-elect? And, if so, is not justification that *state* or *condition* of a sinner be-

lieving in Jesus, in which, according to the revealed will of God in the gospel, all the promises and blessings of the new covenant belong to him? Is it not the same thing as a being *under grace*, (Rom. vi. 14,) and which is true only of believers? The *sentence* of justification is not a revelation or manifestation of something to the mind which was true before, though unknown to the party; but consists of the voice of God, *in the gospel*, declaring that whosoever believeth shall be saved. In this court believers in Jesus stand acquitted from all things from which they could not have been acquitted by the law of Moses."

The above may be regarded as an elementary sketch of the writer's sentiments on this great subject: the reader will find it amplified and exhibited in its several relations in various parts of his works, particularly in three discourses on Rom. iii. 24.

On the 23d December, 1776, Mr. Fuller married Miss Sarah Gardiner, a member of the church at Soham, and daughter of Stephen and Sarah Gardiner, of Burwell. This was esteemed one of those important events of his life on which, as he said, he never entered without a reference to the divine direction, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths;" and in the retrospect of which he could say, "My ways have I declared, and thou heardest me." An affecting narrative is given in this memoir of the last hours of this truly pious woman, whose valuable domestic qualities were augmented by a more than ordinary display of "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit."

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## SECTION II.—1777 TO 1783.

Change in his manner of preaching—Alienation of some of his hearers—Embarrassment in his temporal circumstances—Distressing agitation of mind in the prospect of leaving Soham—Extracts from his Diary—Letters to Mr. Wallis—Removal to Kettering—Mutual testimonies to and from the church at Soham—Statement at his ordination.

MR. FULLER'S strain of preaching, which at first nearly corresponded with the views which he had early imbibed, soon underwent a change of a most important and valuable character; for although, as he himself tells us in relation to a kindred subject, "he made a point of not introducing the question in the pulpit till his judgment was fixed," he was not the man to reserve a store of speculative sentiments at variance with the character of his public ministrations.

Though he was not without cheering instances of success, it was no matter of surprise that many, especially those whose lethargy was disturbed by the searching and practical character which his ministry had now begun to assume, should express their dissatisfaction in a manner that served to depress a mind naturally susceptible of the tenderest emotions, and the earliest religious sensibilities of which had grown up among them. The increased disposition among the inhabitants of the town to attend his ministry was not met by a corresponding concern on the part of the church to afford them the accommodation which their place of worship would not supply; though an increase in their rent, at that time, furnished an inducement to some effort for securing it in another direction.

To these causes of unhappiness was added the extreme depression of his temporal circumstances—his whole yearly income from the people having never exceeded thirteen pounds, and his attempts to derive support, first from a small shop, and then from a school, both proving unsuccessful; so that, notwithstanding all his exertions, he could not prevent an annual inroad upon his little property, most distressing to himself and ruinous to the future prospects of a rising family. Under such complicated trials his health suffered a shock from which he with difficulty recovered. He was, however, destined by the providence of God yet to undergo an ordeal not less trying to his physical powers than to his religious principles. With him the question of leaving a station which he thought the providence of God had assigned him, in which he had experienced tokens of divine approbation, and which was especially endeared to him by early associations, was not very easily disposed of. It has been thought, and perhaps not without reason, that he carried his conscientious scruples on this point to an unjustifiable extent. Be that as it may, this important era of his life is allowed on all hands to have elicited two features the most characteristic and the most godlike; it is difficult to say whether his integrity or his love was the more conspicuous, whether his conscience or his feelings appeared the more exquisitely tender. “Men who fear not God,” observes the late excellent Dr. Ryland, “would risk the welfare of a nation with fewer searchings of heart than it cost him to determine whether he should leave a little dissenting church, scarcely containing forty members besides himself and his wife.” That distressing and protracted hesitation, which enslaved a mind afterwards distinguished for a promptitude and decision equal to the most varied and complicated difficulties, marks an important peculiarity in the present case. Here he feared “lest haply he should be found even to fight against God:” there, satisfied that God was on his side, it was utterly beyond the compass of human power to baffle or daunt him. A selection from his diary, kept during the last two years of his residence at Soham, while it furnishes a history of the progress of events, will exhibit the exercises of his mind on this subject, as well as others relative to his experience and the discharge of his pastoral functions; and as it is not so much the object of this memoir to hasten through the narrative of events as to convey a correct portraiture of the subject of it during their progress, no apology is deemed necessary for the miscellaneous character of these extracts.

“1780, Jan. 10.—A solemn vow or renewal of covenant with God.

“O my God, (let not the Lord be angry with his servant for thus speaking,) I have, thou knowest, heretofore sought thy truth. I have earnestly entreated thee that thou wouldest lead me into it; that I might be rooted, established, and built up in it, as it is in Jesus. I have seen the truth of that saying—‘It is a good thing to have the heart established with grace;’ and now I would this day solemnly renew my prayer to thee, and also enter afresh into covenant with thee.

“O Lord God! I find myself in a world where thousands profess thy name; some are preaching, some writing, some talking about religion. All profess to be searching after truth; to have Christ and the inspired writers on their side. I am afraid lest I should be turned aside from the simplicity of the gospel. I feel my understanding full of darkness, my reason exceedingly imperfect, my will ready to start aside, and my passions strangely volatile. O illumine mine understanding, ‘teach my reason reason,’ my will rectitude, and let every faculty of which I am possessed be kept within the bounds of thy service.

“O let not the sleight of wicked men, who lie in wait to deceive, nor even the pious character of good men, (who yet may be under great mistakes,) draw me aside. Nor do thou suffer my own *fancy* to misguide me. Lord, thou hast given me a determination to take up no principle at second-hand; but to search for every thing at the pure fountain of *thy word*. Yet, Lord, I am afraid, seeing I am as liable to err as other men, lest I should be led aside from truth by mine own imagination. Hast thou not promised, ‘The meek thou wilt guide in judgment, and the meek thou wilt teach thy way?’ Lord, thou knowest, at this time, my heart is not haughty, nor are mine eyes lofty. O ‘guide me by thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory.’

“One thing in particular I would pray for; namely, that I may not only be kept from erroneous principles, but may so *love* the truth as never to keep it back. O Lord, never let me, under the specious pretence of preaching *holiness*, neglect to promulge the truths of thy word; for this day I see, and have all along found, that holy practice has a necessary dependence on sacred *principle*. O Lord, if thou wilt open mine eyes to behold the wonders of thy word, and give me to feel their transforming tendency, then shall the Lord be my God; then let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I shun to declare, to the best of my knowledge, the whole counsel of God.

“June 14.—Went out to visit some fallen brethren. Convinced that no art was necessary in religion, resolved to proceed with all plainness and openness. Did so; and hope for good effects. Left each party with weeping eyes. But oh how liable to sin myself!

“17.—I think I have seen one thing to-day—that speaking ostentatiously of any thing laudable in ourselves, is the way to mar all the peace or pleasure that we enjoy in it. I think I see that this is a sin which easily besets me, and which needs being guarded against.

“21.—What! have the powers of grace and sin concluded a truce? I feel to-day as if both lay nearly still, as if I were strangely destitute of all thought; devoid of pleasure, carnal or spiritual; of sorrow, whether godly or worldly.

“24.—I see what a strait course it is to steer between legality and libertinism. I have been for some time trying to walk more closely with God; and now I find the sparks of self-righteous pride begin to kindle—yet I think I have tasted a sweetness in that plan of redemption which stains the pride of all flesh.

“28.—Have found my heart tenderly affected several times, especially to-night, in prayer respecting my critical situation. O providence, how intricate! If rough roads are marked out for me, may my ‘shoes be iron and brass.’ I found a peculiar sympathy towards poor people under trying providences, thinking I may have to go that road.

“29.—It is good to visit the poor, that we may know their cases, exercise sympathy and charity towards them, and learn gratitude and many a lesson in the doctrine of providence. Oh what a horrid depth of pride and hypocrisy do I find in my heart! Surely I am unfit for any company. If I am with a *superior*, how will my heart court his praise, by speaking diminutively of myself, not forgetting to urge the disadvantages under which I have laboured to excuse my inferiority; and here is a large vacancy left, in hope he will fill it up with something like this: Well, you must have made good improvement of what advantages you have enjoyed! On the other hand, when in company with an *inferior*, how full of self am I? While I seem to be instructing him, by communicating my observations, how prone to lose sight of *his* edification, and every

thing but my own self-importance—aiming more to discover my own knowledge than to increase his! While I make these observations I feel the truth of them. A thought has been suggested to write them, not as having been working in my heart to-day, but only as *discovered* to-day. O horribly deceitful and desperately wicked heart! Surely I have little else in my religious exercises but these workings. I am afraid of being deceived at last. If I am saved, what must the Son of God have endured!

“30.—Much affected to-day in thinking on my situation. I prayed to the Lord earnestly, that if there were any thing in his word which might direct me, he would lead my mind to it. Here I must wait. The Lord may have designed to lead me in a way that I have not known.

“July 1.—My soul has been dejected to-day in thinking on the plague of the human heart. Had a sweet time in prayer to-night. Through the glass of my depravity I see, oh I see, the preciousness of that blood which flowed on Calvary! Oh that the ideas I have had to-night were indelibly written on my heart! But, alas! one hour of sin will, I fear, efface them all.

“2.—Surely my views of myself, of divine love, and of the blood of Christ, never were clearer, nor yielded me greater satisfaction, than last night and to-day. I retained the savour throughout this forenoon, though it seems abated this afternoon. Well, it has been a time of refreshment to my soul! But perhaps I may have somewhat at hand to balance it. Oh that I could retain the ideas I have had to-day! I thought God was such an infinitely lovely Being, that it was a great sin not to love him with our whole hearts. I thought one perpetual flame of supreme love was his natural due from every intelligent creature, and that the want of such love merits damnation.—And I am under peculiar obligations to love him.

“4.—Alas, how strange it is! Those things of which a day or two ago I could not think without a flood of tears, I now feel make little impression on my mind; which seems in a sluggish, jaded, and almost sceptical frame. Ah, how soon are those ideas effaced! When shall my love be one eternal flame? I fear some trial is at hand. Oh may the Lord keep me.

“5.—I found some pleasure to-day in preaching from Hos. xiii. 9, ‘O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself,’ &c. I love to open the purity and extent of God’s righteous law, and thereby the depravity of human nature. Here I see the greatness of grace.

“6.—Dull and unaffected. I sometimes feel a spirit of idle, sceptical despair; as if the difficulties that attend the finding out what is truth and duty were insurmountable.—O Lord, keep up in me a spirit of activity, and teach me to know and do thy will. May I know what is that good, perfect, and acceptable will of God.

“10.—I had an affecting time to-night, in going a road where, several years ago, I had many a season of sorrow and joy. Oh *here* I saw myself lost, *there* I had a sight of the Saviour; *here* I went bowed down with fear and despair, *there* I was sweetly checked with a view of the faithfulness of God; in *this* place I mourned my desolate state, in *that* the state of the church lay heavily upon me; *yonder* my hopes respecting the church were excited by thinking of Psal. cxxii. 1, 2, 8, 9. Oh what strange events since! By the help of God I have continued to this day. When my soul is cast down within me, may I remember thee, from Hermon, and Jordan, and the hill Mizar.

“12.—‘O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’ O mine iniquity! Surely I had rather die than feel again what

I have felt of the odious risings of this unholy heart. Oh the wormwood and the gall! Tremble, my soul, at the rising of that which has so often filled thy cup with bitterness; that which made thy Lord as it were shrink back from suffering. Oh may the remembrance of *this* make thee shrink back from sinning. Surely the renewal of a fresh conflict with old corruptions is not the trial I feared. Lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil, O Lord.

“15.—Alas! with what can I go forth to-morrow? My powers are all shackled, my thoughts contracted. Yesterday and this morning I seemed to feel some savour, but now all is gone; like the seed by the way-side, which the fowls of the air devoured.

“ Bless the Lord! To-night I have felt a melting sense of the heinous nature of backsliding from the Lord, while thinking on Jer. ii. 5, 31—33. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name; he maketh me to renew my strength like the eagle, dissolves my hardness, disappoints my fears, and touches my lips as with a live coal from his altar. Bless the Lord, O my soul.

“17.—O my dear brother Diver! When shall we recover our loss in losing you? What disorders have we now in the church! Our hands, heads, and hearts, how full! O my father, my father, the chariots of Israel, and the horse-men thereof!—Methinks I shall go all my days, at times, in the bitterness of my soul.—Ah! we took sweet counsel together, and walked together to the house of God—but all is over. As he said on his dying bed, ‘I have done with that life.’—Alas, he has done his all with us.

“ Ah, woe is me, I am a man of unclean lips, and dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. My heart is ready to sink beneath its load. More bad conduct among my brethren. The Lord have mercy on them and me! Surely I labour in vain, and spend my strength for nought. All my warnings, instructions, reproofs, &c., whether in or out of the pulpit, seem to have no effect.

“18.—Great part of this day sadly misspent; but have had a sweet evening, in views of the latter-day glory, from reading Isaiah xi. xii. How dark the day in which I live! Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?

“20.—O peace, thou inestimable jewel! The Lord grant I may never enter the polemical lists.

“21.—Dejected through worldly and church concerns, but had some relief to-night in casting all my care upon the Lord, hoping that he careth for me. The Lord undertake for me! O thou that managest worlds unknown, without one disappointment, take my case into thy hand, and fit me for thy pleasure. If poverty must be my portion, add thereto contentment.

“22.—Ah, how heavily do I drag on without the Lord! I can neither think nor do any thing to purpose. Lord, help me. Sin, how deceitful! While we may obtain an apparent victory over one sin, we may be insensibly enslaved to another: it may seem to flee before us, like the Benjamites before Israel, and yet retain an ambushment to fall upon our rear.

“27.—Oh what an ocean of impurity have I still in me! What vain desires lodge in my sinful heart! Rich must be the blood that can atone, infinitely efficacious the grace that can purify, and inconceivable the love that can remain without the shadow of turning amidst all this vileness. Oh, had every creature in heaven and earth joined in assuring me of God’s love to me, I could never have believed it but for the assurances grounded on his own word.

"29.—Surely I do not study the cases of the people enough in my preaching. I find by conversation to-day, with one seemingly in dying circumstances, that but little of my preaching has been suited to her case. Visiting the sick, and conversing sometimes even with the unconverted part of my hearers about their souls, and especially with the godly, would have a tendency to make my preaching more experimental.

"Am not I a fool and slow of heart to believe? Notwithstanding all the Scripture says of my impotency, all the experience I have had of it, and all my settled and avowed principles, how hard is it for me to believe that I am *nothing*! Ah! can I live near to God, set or keep the springs of godliness a-going in my soul, or investigate the things of God to any purpose? No, I cannot: 'When I am weak, then (and then only) am I strong!'

"Aug. 6, Lord's day.—Alas! how disconsolate this morning! What a fool am I to lay God under a necessity (if I may use such an expression) of leaving me to myself, to let me and others see that I am nothing!

"30.—I found my soul drawn out in love to poor souls while reading Millar's account of Elliott's labours among the North American Indians, and their effect on those poor barbarous savages. I found also a suspicion that we shackle ourselves too much in our addresses; that we have bewildered and lost ourselves by taking the decrees of God as rules of action. Surely Peter and Paul never felt such scruples in their addresses as we do. They addressed their hearers as *men*—fallen men; as we should warn and admonish persons who were blind and on the brink of some dreadful precipice. Their work seemed plain before them. Oh that mine might be so before me!

"Sept. 5.—I longed in prayer to-night to be more useful. Oh that God would do somewhat by me! Nor is this I trust from ambition, but from a pure desire of working for God, and the benefit of my fellow sinners.

"10.—Earnest in prayer with God this afternoon. Humbled for our little love; yet found such desire that, could I obtain my wish, the brightest seraph could not outvie me in love to my Lord. I saw plainly that my salvation must be from first to last of *free grace*.

"12.—Very much in doubt respecting my being in a state of grace. I cannot see that I have, or ever had, for any constancy, such an idea of myself as must be implied in true humility. The Lord have mercy upon me; for I know not how it is with me. One thing I know, that if I be a Christian at all, real Christianity in me is inexpressibly small in degree. Oh what a vast distance is there between what I ought to be and what I am! If I am a saint at all, I know I am one of the least of all saints: I mean, that the workings of real grace in my soul are so feeble, that I hardly think they can be feebler in any true Christian.

"There is not only an inexpressible distance between what I *ought* to be and what I *am*, but between what primitive believers, yea, the Scripture saints in all ages, seem to have been, and what I am. I think, of late, I cannot in prayer consider myself as a Christian, but as a sinner, casting myself at Christ's feet for mercy.

"22.—I was somewhat moved this morning, in thinking of the mercy of God, how it was a hedge about us, preserving us from the ravages of the very beasts and birds, nay, from the very stones. The whole creation groans and suffers through us, and would retaliate the injuries we have done them, were not a covenant made on our behalf with them. See Hos. ii. 18; Job v. 13."

23. After recording a season of mental darkness, he adds,—“O blessed be

God, he has appeared once again. To-night, while I prayed to him, how sweet has Col. i. 19, been to me. That which has pleased the Father pleases me. I am glad all fulness dwells in him. It is not fit it should dwell in me, nor that I should have the keeping of my own stock. Oh for some heavenly clue to guide me to the fulness of Christ!

“Oct. 24.—Observed our proneness to think of ourselves as others speak of us. For example, If I am praised at any particular place as a preacher, how prone am I at that place to keep pace with their esteem, if not to outgo it, in the estimation of myself! On the other hand, at places where I have felt myself embarrassed, how prone to despair, and to take no delight in the work! Oh how much of self have I in me! how far from that excellent character of being dead to the smiles and the frowns of men!

“27.—My heart often aches in thinking of my situation. Lord, what is duty? ‘Oh that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!’

“30.—Had some view to-night of the hardships of poverty. What mercies do I enjoy, yet how ungrateful am I! What a world of self-sufficiency is there in our hearts! Whence springs our desire of riches, dominion, &c., but from an idea of our sufficiency to manage each as we ought! at least this is implied in those desires. Were we truly emptied of self-sufficiency, we should be, like Agur, afraid of these.

“Nov. 4.—How apt are we to think ourselves rather pitiable than blamable for having such remains of corruption in us! Perhaps one cause of this may be our viewing sin in us as an *army*, or something we have to *oppose* and *press through*. These ideas are good, provided we remember that they are figurative, and that this army is nothing *external*, but *internal*; and that the opposition is not like that wherein the combatant’s inclination is all one way, but he finds himself overcome wholly against his will: were this the case, we should be wholly *pitiable*. But it is as if a debtor were going to pay his creditor; but by the way found great struggles whether he should go forward, and behave like an honest man, or whether he should turn aside, and spend his money in riot and luxury. In this case he certainly ought to have had no struggle, nor to have made a moment’s scruple. Neither ought we to make a moment’s scruple about loving the Lord with all our hearts, and refraining wholly from sinning against him. We may, indeed, be pitiable with respect to each other, but in the sight of God we are wholly blamable.

“A hard heart is a symptom of distance between God and us. As the Lord is nigh to those who are of a *broken* heart, so he is far from those who are of a *hard* heart.

“17—25.—Have been under very heavy affliction for above a week, and incapable of writing. One day I dreamed that I was dead: waking, and finding it but a dream, I trembled at the thought of what would become of such a sinful creature were this dream realized! Here I stopped—painfully stopped. At length I answered, Lord, I *have* hoped in thy salvation. Here I wept and thought I would hope still. Oh that it may not be in vain!

“28.—For some days past, have been tenderly concerned about my situation. Oh that the Lord would bestow upon me his counsels and his care! I am afraid of pride being in my motives both ways. Oh that God would hear and help me! The parable of the talents has been something to me. I am frequently told that my talents are buried here; but I do not know. Oh that I may not have to go upon *this* principle, that some plainer path might appear if I must go!

“Dec. 26—29.—Afflictions having returned, I think I might make too light



of the former; this, though lighter on the body, yet seems heavier on the mind. I am sometimes pressed with guilt for my lightness under the other: sometimes ready to sink into a kind of despondency almost like that of Jonah, 'It is better for me to die than to live.'

"1781, Jan. 1.—Alas! my affliction, instead of taking away sin, seems to be attended with new risings of evil. O wretched man that I am! Surely it does not seem consistent that a heart so full of stupidity and unholiness, and in so constant a manner too, can be the residence of the Spirit of God. Surely those great things said to be done in the hearts of the godly are not done in me! Yet I have found some outgoings of soul to God after keeping and quickening grace.

"15.—Much disheartened in seeing the coolness of some in providing for the future welfare of the church.

"26.—Much affected to-day for my dear father, who I fear will die. Oh his immortal soul! How can I bear to bury him unconverted? Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me! I have had many earnest outgoings of soul for him, and some little conversation with him. 'Have you any outgoings of soul, father, to the Lord?'—'Yes, my dear, I have.'—'Well, father, the Lord is rich in mercy to all that call upon him: this is great encouragement.'—'Yes; my child, so it is; and I know, if I be saved, it must be by him alone. I have nothing to recommend me to his favour: but my hopes are very small.'

"27.—Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me! Give me some good hopes of the welfare of his soul; then I could almost be willing to part with him. This would be letting the cup pass from me. 'But oh the soul that never dies! The woman of Caanan made her daughter's case her own, and cried, 'Lord, help me!' Surely I may do likewise by my father.'

"28. Lord's day.—Affected with nothing else to-day but thoughts of my father's death. This I know not how to bear.—Preached somehow from Job xiv. 1, and Heb. ii. 14.

"29.—O he is gone! he is gone! forever gone!

'His course is finished now, his race is o'er;  
The place that knew him knows him now no more;  
The tree is fallen, and ever there must lie,  
To endless ages of eternity.'

"Feb. 3.—I think I have never yet entered into the true idea of the work of the ministry. If I had, surely I should be like Aaron, running between the dead and the living. I think I am by the ministry, as I was by my life as a Christian before I read *Edwards on the Affections*. I had never entered into the spirit of a great many important things. Oh for some such penetrating, edifying writer on this subject! Or, rather, oh that the Holy Spirit would open my eyes, and let me into the things that I have never yet seen!

"5.—A pulpit seems an awful place!—An opportunity for addressing a company of immortals on their eternal interests—Oh how important! We preach for eternity. We in a sense are set for the rising and falling of many in Israel. And our own rise or fall is equally therein involved.

"8.—Oh would the Lord the Spirit lead me into the nature and importance of the work of the ministry! Reading a wise and spiritual author might be of use, yet could I, by Divine assistance, but penetrate the work myself, it would sink deeper and be more durable.

"13. —I think when we are in company, and address ourselves to any one in

particular, it too often happens that the applause of the company, rather than the edification of the person or ourselves, is the object. Hence witticisms, and such sayings as sting the party addressed, are introduced. Pride, how pernicious!

“March 5.—To-night it seems as if it would break my heart to remove. The seal and fruits of my ministry are dear to me, yet how it can be otherwise I cannot see.

“26.—My soul is discouraged because of the way; I am full of confusion: see thou mine affliction. Oh that I knew what was my duty! Let me not err for want of knowledge, and pierce myself through with many sorrows. I think my soul is like the body of an aged man: even a grasshopper becomes a burden. I seem unable to do any thing more. I had an affecting time in prayer on these subjects. I thought what an immense fulness of light and happiness dwelt in God! how easily could he inform my mind and comfort my heart!

“29.—What a wonder am I to myself! Compared with what I deserve to be, how *happy*! compared with what I *desire* to be, how miserable!

“April 1.—It seems as if the church and I should break each other's hearts! To-night I have been but truly charged with having ‘an irregular mind.’ How heartily could I embrace death, if it pleased God to send it! How far are peace and happiness from me!

“2.—Affected in prayer. Oh for an unerring guide! Oh that I knew the Lord's will! Verily, if I know mine own heart, I would do it. I had rather, I think, much rather walk all my days in the most miserable condition, than offend the Lord by trying to get out of it.

“10.—The thoughts of my situation now return, and overpower me! To-night I was exceedingly affected in prayer, earnestly longing that I might know the will of God. I have entered to-night into a solemn *vow*, which I desire it may please God to accept at my worthless hands. With all the powers of my soul, with the utmost effusion of feelings, I have vowed to this effect before the Lord:—‘O Lord! if thou wilt give me so much light as plainly to see in this case what is my duty, then, if I do not obey the dictates of conscience, let my tongue for ever cleave to the roof of my mouth; let my ministry be at an end; let me be made an example of thy displeasure against falsehood!’

“The case of those who asked counsel of Jeremiah (chap. xlii.) seemed to excite in me a jealousy of my own heart; but, so far as I know any thing of myself, I am resolved to stay or go as it should please God, did I but know his will.

“18.—Earnest outgoings to God in prayer. To-morrow seems a day of great importance. Then I must give my reasons to the church for what I have intimated concerning my removal. The Lord guide and bless them and me!

“19.—I went to meeting to-day with very little premeditation, thinking an upright heart would be prepared. I assigned two reasons for my removal—the complaints some have made of non-edification, and my wasting my property every year. Neither of these objections being answered, the church despairs,—all is in confusion! Ah! what can I do? what can they do? My heart would say, Stay; would freely go and gather them together, and pour oil into their wounds. My judgment only forbids me . . . . No . . . . No! Surely I cannot go! My heart is overwhelmed—lead me to the rock that is higher than I! Have been pouring out my heart to the Lord since I came from the meeting; think I could rather choose death than departure. My heart is as if it would dissolve. It is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels.

“21.— Vast are the trials tied to time,  
And all my thoughts confusion still.

My spirit is overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate. Now my mind seems to lean as if I must stay, even though it terminate in my temporal ruin. O fluctuating soul!

“May 1.—Have been praying to the Lord that I may keep to that direction which has been so much to me ten or eleven years ago. ‘In all thy ways acknowledge him, &c. This passage has been several times like a present help in time of need. Oh that it may be such now!

“4.—All my powers of body and mind absorbed in my extreme affliction. I thought towards night that, as these limbs had been ingloriously employed in the service of sin, how reasonable, though pardoning mercy be extended, that they should be blasted, confined by a series of affliction, and, at last, ingloriously reduced to dust! Can think of little else now but that I must leave Soham; yet it seems an affair of so much importance, I dread it.

“6.—Confined by bodily affliction from public worship this Lord’s day. To-night my heart melts with compassion towards the church. I think, after all, if I go from them, it is as if it must be in a coffin.

“14.—O my heart! it is as if it must break. Thought, this morning, ‘There is a way that seemeth right to a man, but the end thereof is death.’ This makes me jealous lest specious appearances should beguile me. My load seems heavier than I can bear! O Lord, for thine own sake, suffer me not to act contrary to thy will. Oh for an unerring guide!

“20.—To-night I stopped the church, and asked them if they could prove it wrong for me to leave them, and assured them if they could I would abide with them whatever was the consequence.

“22.—One thing I desire of the Lord, whatever be my portion here, if it be to wear out my years in pining sadness, let me so walk as to enjoy his approbation. Into thy hands I commit my spirit.”

So much were Mr. Fuller’s thoughts absorbed in the welfare of the church at Soham, that throughout this diary no mention appears to be made of that at Kettering, which being at this time destitute of a pastor, and acquainted with Mr. Fuller’s difficulties, had repeatedly suggested to him their wishes for his removal thither. This, it appears, was at the instance of Mr. Hall, a man whose piety and wisdom eminently qualified him to advise, in cases of difficulty, especially where opposing claims seemed to present themselves; and who also judged his young friend to be possessed of talents suited to a more enlarged sphere of labour.

In May, 1781, Mr. Fuller attended the association with which both of these churches were connected, and which this year assembled at Kettering. Here he referred his case to the opinions of the following ministers, Messrs. Booth, Evans, Gill, Guy, Hall, Hopper, Ryland senior, Ryland junior, and Sutcliffe, who unanimously advised his removal.

This was not, however, esteemed by him a sufficient indication of his duty. “O my soul,” he exclaims, “what shall I do? Oh for an unerring guide!”

“June 26.—Have been reading Mosheim, cent. xiii. and xiv., to-day. Really I am sick in reading so much about monks, mendicant friars, &c.: I could have wished the history had more answered to its title—a history of the *church*; but it seems little else than a history of locusts.

“28.—Some sacred delight in reading more of Mosheim on the coming forth of those champions of the Reformation—Luther, Melancthon, Zuinglius, Cal-

vin, &c., into the field. I think I feel their generous fervor in the cause of God and truth. How were the arms of their hands made strong by the mighty God of Jacob!

"29.—The conduct and condition of some wicked people make me bless God for conscions integrity. Christ's yoke is truly easy. Purity carries its own reward with it. Oh the guilt, the misery that results from a submission to the yoke of Satan! Well, it is by the grace of God I am what I am; nor is any sin so black or so detestable but that I am liable to fall into it. Lord, keep me!

"July 3.—I was occupied to-day with *Mosheim*, whose partial account of the English Baptists would lead me to indulge a better opinion of various sects who have been deemed heretics.

"12.—Have been trying to-day to examine my heart, by putting such questions as these to myself: Would it be most agreeable to my conscience, after all, to continue with my people? Is it likely in so doing I should please God, and contribute to the welfare of his cause on the whole? To these questions I could not see how I could in any degree answer in the affirmative. But God knows my heart. I have been trying to pray, and surely it is my sincere desire, if I am wrong, to be set right. I am now going to the church-meeting. The meeting-house has been a *Bochim* to-day, a place of weeping! I have told the church to expect my removal in a quarter of a year's time. O my soul, I seem unable to endure such attacks on my feelings.

"August 11.—Have been ravished, as it were, to-day, in reading the account of the council held by the apostles and elders, Acts xv. Oh the beauty and simplicity of primitive Christianity!

"27.—I had pleasure in conversing on Rom. viii. 33. Methought it indicated the fulness of the Redeemer's righteousness; partly from the character of the justified, and partly from that of the justifier—God, the all-scrutinizing, impartial Judge.

September 15.—What a difference between the book which I keep, and that which God keeps! Oh what an awful, black diary could he produce against me in judgment!"

An attempt being made about this time to determine the question of Mr. Fuller's removal by a reference, both on his part and that of the church, to the arbitration of three ministers, he writes thus:—

"September 21.—Earnestly affected in prayer, that, if it would be most pleasing to God for me to stay, I might do so after all. I should not be sorry if the arbitrators should judge this to be my duty. My soul trembles for the ark of God. What will betide the interest of Christ here? Unto thee I lift up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens!

"22.—O God, thou knowest that I am willing to be any thing. It is my unfeigned desire that not my will but thine be done. Let not my ease, but thine honour, be consulted. Yes; O thou searcher of hearts! I humbly, earnestly, and unfeignedly desire of thee, that, if my departure would issue in the *failure* of thine interest here, never let me depart! Let me rather go mourning all my days in the bitterness of my soul."

From this arbitration, however, nothing was elicited, and Mr. Fuller thus expresses himself:—

"October 6.—Very heavy in heart. Be not far off, O Lord, for trouble is near! Exceedingly melted in thinking on, 'O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee?'"

The following is an extract from a letter written about this time to Mr. Wallis, a deacon of the church at Kettering:—

“We then agreed that I and an officer of the church should take the letters from all parties on the subject, and lay them before Mr. Robinson of Cambridge, and that which he should judge duty in the case we would follow, unless it should appear to both parties that he was wrong. We waited on Mr. R. yesterday, and, after an investigation of the affair for three or four hours, he gave it as his opinion, ‘That Mr. Fuller ought to continue pastor of the said church for one whole year from this day, and after that time if it should appear that he can live on his income; and that the people ought to abide by their proposal to raise Mr. Fuller’s income to twenty-six pound a year, as they had proposed, clear of all deductions.’

“On the 3rd of October I received a note from Mr. Hall, who was in London, wherein he wishes me not to enter into an engagement to be governed by the arbitration; and suggests that, if my continuance at Soham should be thus determined, it would be a reflection either on the wisdom or integrity of the nine ministers whom I consulted at Kettering, or else on myself for having related a partial tale, tending to lead them into a deception. As to the former, I have only to say, however it may look, that I have certainly no inferior opinion of the wisdom or integrity of the nine ministers to that of the arbitrators. I impute it wholly to their hearing the matter but from one party; and as to the partiality of my tale, I refer you to what I said in my last to you.

“I dare not, indeed I dare not, go contrary to the above decision. I think it would be mocking God and the arbitrators to be *previously resolved* what way to take. Would it not be like Ahab’s asking counsel of Micaiah? or the Jews of Jeremiah? (chap. xlii.)—I therefore must not comply with your invitation. Mr. Robinson referred me to what it is that approves a minister of God, in 2 Cor. vi. 4—8, and such things have no small impression on my heart.

“I am at this time a compound of feelings. I feel, dear brethren, I painfully feel for you. I am distressed that a church whose troubles were many before should have them increased through me. I feel myself unhappy lest my worthy brethren and fathers in the ministry should think themselves slighted, of which there is nothing that I am less conscious; and should they on this account slight me, it will very much grieve me, but I cannot help it. I hope they will consider what must necessarily be my motives in this matter, and excuse me. I am not without feelings on my own account, but these are not so great as those for you. Blessed be God, I feel peace within, let things issue as they will. I enjoy a consciousness of having done every thing in this matter as in the sight of Christ; at least to the best of my knowledge. A passage in Mr. Hall’s letter to me of April 28, 1780, has both yesterday and to-day been sweet to me.—‘How awfully mysterious are divine providences! The Lord help us to approve and adore with cordial affections the dispensations of God. We shall one day see we *could* not have been *so* well in any other condition as in that in which the Lord has placed us, nor without the various afflictions we meet with by the way. I have lately thought that religion is not designed to *please* us now, but to *profit* us—to teach and dispose us to *please* God. And those who please him, he will please them hereafter.’

“I am not without some fears that, as the time of trial is limited to *one year*, you should some of you be hankering still in your minds after me, which if you should it will make me exceedingly unhappy. I do not mean to spend what I have, but if possible to live according to what I shall have coming in, and to bow my shoulder to the yoke with contentment. It is therefore likely I shall stay longer, perhaps all my life. I therefore humbly and most earnestly

beseech you, by all that belongs to your own welfare and my future peace, to drop all thoughts whatever of my removal, and to look up and look out for some other person to be your pastor: the great Head of the church direct your choice!

“Great happiness is what I do not look for now; but it would serve to increase the little I have remaining to receive one more letter from the church at Kettering, or, if that is too much trouble, from Mr. Wallis, by the church’s consent, expressing these two things—That you entertain no hard thoughts of me, as if I had in any respect used you ill; and that you give up all thoughts of my removal, and intend to look out elsewhere. Give my love to any of the ministers whose judgment I consulted, and tell them what I say. Accept the same to yourselves. That Jehovah-Jireh may see and provide for you is, my dear brethren, the prayer of

“Yours very affectionately

A. F.”

Thus the decision appeared to be thrown further off than before. The church at Kettering satisfied Mr. Fuller on the subject of his conduct, and endeavoured without effect to procure a suitable minister from the institution at Bristol. Their minds being still directed to him, Mr. Fuller, in July, 1782, thus replies to a letter of Mr. Wallis:—

“You ask in yours, ‘Will the Lord raise desires in his own people merely to disappoint them?’ You think not, seeing that God hath said, *The desires of the righteous shall be granted*. Certainly if God doth excite desires, and then disappoint them, it is for some higher end than *merely* their disappointment. You will not think, dear sir, that I mean to discourage you, if I should say the above explanation of the text in Proverbs is inconsistent with truth. I once heard a sermon\* from Psal. cxlv. 19. The minister proposed first to *explain* his subject, and in so doing he delivered something like this:—‘God will not grant us every desire. That is our mercy; for, (1.) Some of them are *sinful*. David desired to be revenged on Nabal and his *innocent* family. Jonah desired Nineveh’s ruin. (2.) Others would not be for our *good*. David desired the life of the child he had by Bathsheba; David also desired the life of Jonathan; neither of which would have been for his good. (3.) Nay, not every *righteous* desire. It is a righteous desire for a minister to desire the salvation of those that hear him. So Paul declared, I would to God that all that are here present were altogether such as I am, Acts xxvi. 29. So again, *I could wish myself accursed from Christ, for my brethren’s sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh*, Rom. ix. 1. David *desired* to build a house for God, and it was a righteous desire, for God took it well at his hands; yet he did not grant it. Kings and prophets desired to see the Lord Messiah, and yet did not see him. How then are we to understand it? Answer. The *sum* or substance of their desires shall be fulfilled. What is the main desire of a seaman? that he may arrive at the haven. So saints will be brought to their desired haven. What of a pilgrim!—See Heb. xi. 16. So all the desires of a Christian are summed up in this, *That he may eternally enjoy God and be like him*.—See 2 Sam. xxiii. 2.’ Doubtless there is great mystery in these things. However, I think it is certain, that when God raises a spiritual desire in a person, it is *often*, though not *always*, with an intention to bestow the object desired.”

On the 20th of August, 1782, after a visit from Mr. Wallis, he thus addresses him:—“Since I saw you, though it is but a little time, yet I have had great

\* Since ascertained to have been his own.

exercises. The day I parted with you, calling in the evening on one of my friends, my feelings were tried by what you know is the most effectual battery on my heart of any thing; I mean *bitter weeping*. The Lord's day following, the meeting-house, to say all in one word, was a *Bochim!* The most unfeigned sorrow I believe prevailed in almost every heart. For my own part, I found it exceedingly difficult to go on in preaching, and keep from weeping quite out. I hastened as soon as worship was over to get alone, and there give full vent to all my sorrow. We had a private evening meeting, which was more trying to me than the day. I saw a spirit in the church in general, which had I seen half a year ago, I could never have left them, come what would, whatever I do now! I went home to my house with a heart full of distress, and my strength nearly exhausted with the work and weeping of the day.

"The next day, August 12, I devoted to fasting and prayer: found special outgoings of heart, and encouragement to pray from many scriptures. I scarcely remember such a day for tenderness and importunity in prayer in my life. Two days after, I felt my spirits all the morning exceedingly depressed; got alone, and found a heart to pray, with, I think, greater importunity than I had done before. Oh, it seemed as if I *must* have my petitions granted, or I could not live. This last Lord's day was a tender day, but not like the Lord's day preceding.

"Truly, sir, nothing but the thoughts of an open door for greater usefulness in Christ's cause, (surely this is not an illusion!) and my having been so engaged to pray for the coming of Christ's kingdom, could have kept me from dropping all opposition, and yielding to the church's desire. All their former treatment towards me I cannot remember. I am constrained not only to forgive it, but to forget it. And as to profit or reputation, things at which I have been charged with aiming, these seemed no more to me than the mire in the streets. I cannot say what I shall do. I desire to be governed by judgment, and mean to be so; but these things influence my judgment, and that which appeared clear before has appeared doubtful since. Some of my friends also, who thought my way clear before, think it doubtful now. Oh! it pains me to the heart to put you and my dear friends to so much pain. I have often of late lamented before the Lord my unhappy situation, that it should be my lot to be reduced to the painful necessity, to say the least, of injuring, at one place or other, that cause which of all things in the world I most dearly love! My dear friend, I must beg of you not to have your expectations raised too much. Indeed, I am ashamed to mention their being raised at all by the thoughts of my coming; only I know how you are. Truly I am not without a dread of being made a curse to you if I come. I feel such barrenness and carnal-mindedness habitually prevail as often has made me think my labours would be blasted, be where I might. I know not but such is your partial opinion of me, that you will be apt to impute this to a peculiar sensibility of the plague of my own heart; but verily this is not the case. My soul is indeed, like the lands of Jericho, *barren*; and almost all my services, like its waters, *naught*; and unless something extraordinary be done to the spring-head of all, to heal the waters, like what was done by the prophet Elisha, my barrenness will be my plague and the plague of those about me.

"I must further beg of you not to move it to the church to give me any further call. If I leave Soham I shall come, not doubting their willingness to receive me; and, if not, the more there is done by the church, as a church, towards it, the greater will be their disappointment. For my own part, the lan-

guage of my heart is, 'Here am I, let him do with me as seemeth good to him.' I do not expect nor wait for extraordinary directions. All I look for is to have my way plain, my judgment clear, and my conscience satisfied. Pray to the Lord, my dear sir, earnestly, yet submissively. I thought it right to give you an honest account of things as above; and I think it but right as honestly to say, on the other hand, that, all things considered, notwithstanding the check I have lately met with, the evidence for removing rather preponderates than that for continuing. Meanwhile, till we see the issue of things, may we each become dead to all created good, any further than as it may subserve the glory of God. So desires  
 Your affectionate but distressed friend, A. F."

To a further invitation Mr. F. gave the following answer:—

TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST AT KETTERING.

"SOHAM, Sept. 22, 1782.

"DEAR BRETHREN,

"Yours I received, and quite approve of your devoting a day to fast and pray to the Lord on such a solemn occasion. I thank you for your remembrance of me, and the church of Soham, on that day, as well as for your kind and repeated invitation; to which I can only say, that, if I should leave Soham at the time you expect, I have no other thoughts than to comply. God only knows how it will be with me when the time comes. True it is, I give the church here no reason to expect any thing but my removal; but such a spirit of tenderness now takes place among them that it shakes my confidence, and threatens to destroy my happiness if I remove. It is true I do habitually think of removing, but do not you expect it too much. Hold Christ and your religion with a close hand, but me and every other creature with a loose one! God can bless you without me, and blast you with me! If I come, oh that the Spirit of God may come with me! Surely it is my habitual prayer—'If thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence.' With great respect and esteem, I remain, dear brethren,

"Yours in the gospel, A. F."

Mr. Fuller removed to Kettering in October, 1782, and in the following October was ordained pastor of the church. He was succeeded at Soham by his friend Mr. West, one of the deacons, who subsequently became pastor of a church in Dublin.

An extract from a letter written by the church at Soham to that of Kettering, respecting his dismissal, will show their estimation of him:

"DEAR BRETHREN,

"Inasmuch as you have requested that our brother and former pastor, Mr. Andrew Fuller, should be dismissed to you, we accordingly comply therewith, though it pains our hearts, and renews our former grief. On the thoughts of such a request we are ready to give ear to the voice that cried in Ezekiel's hearing, *O wheel!* His ways are in the great deep, and his footsteps past finding out.

"Oh that Peter's wish may be accomplished in us, 'That the trial of our faith, being much more precious than that of gold which perisheth, might be found to praise and glory at the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ.'

"With regard to Mr. Fuller's conduct as a Christian, while with us, we have nothing to lay to his charge. It was in many respects very amiable. Relative to his ministerial character, his faithfulness, wisdom, tenderness, and freeness with his friends, &c., were the things which captivated our hearts, and united



our affections to him, which make our parting the more trying. But we wish that our loss may be your gain. We therefore consent," &c. &c.

While the above demonstrates the feelings of the church towards their late pastor, a letter to a friend at Soham, written by him a few weeks after his ordination at Kettering, will testify the deep interest he still felt in their concerns:

“DEAR BROTHER,

“How deep are the designs of Providence! ‘Too deep to sound with mortal lines.’ Since I have been here, I have had various exercises of mind; but the state of the church at Soham has lain nearest of any thing! Such has been the union of affection between them and me, that I suppose no events in time, and I hope none in eternity, will ever dissolve it. This, I know, some would think to be scarcely reconcilable with my conduct in leaving them; but, however it may appear, so it is. I can truly say, ‘Who among them is afflicted, and I burn not?’ My earnest prayers have been in their calamity. I have not yet seen any reason to repent of what I have done. The Lord, I think, has been with me hitherto, in my work, and in my private retirements. But, alas, poor people, they are destitute! Oh! this, after all, wounds me. Oh may He, whose name is Jehovah-jireh, see and provide for them! I trust in God they will be provided for. I hear that they keep together, and are in a good spirit. The Lord, who loves his cause better than we can, will not suffer, I think, people of such a spirit to fall to the ground. I have many other things to say to you; but I trust shortly to see you. Meanwhile, farewell. The Lord be with you! A. F.”

The following summary of the preceding circumstances, addressed by Mr. Fuller to the congregation on the occasion of his ordination at Kettering, will be read with interest:—

“For me to enter minutely into this affair might, perhaps, be attended with too great a revival of feelings for me, at this time and place, to sustain; and as the affair is so well known by many here present, I must beg to be indulged in being short.

“It seems a strange thing that is come upon me! I seem still, at times, as if I could scarcely believe it to be true! I was always averse to removals, and had inured myself to look upon them with a jealous eye. I do not therefore wonder that others have done the same by mine. I suppose there was a time when, if any one had suggested the idea of my removal, it would have seemed to me a strange, unlikely thing. But, however, it was so . . . . it is come to pass!

“I imagine it will not be expected that I should enter upon a vindication of my conduct in that affair. I only say this: several things concurred to make me, first, *hesitate* whether it was my duty to abide where I was; and, afterwards, to *think* it was not. Desirous, however, of doing nothing rashly, I was determined to wait a considerable time before I did any thing. My chief desire, I think, was to preserve a conscience void of offence, towards God and towards man. I had, all along, much jealousy of my own heart, and many fears. I frequently laid my case before God in prayer, with much more importunity than I usually feel. I sometimes devoted days on purpose for fasting and prayer, on the occasion. On some of those days, partly for the church at Soham, and partly for myself, I had, I think, the most earnest outgoings of heart to the Lord that ever I felt in my life. I consulted many friends, ministers upon the spot (who knew the case) and ministers at a distance. I think to nine of them, some

of whom are here present, I told the case as impartially as I was able, and asked their advice. Still my heart felt reluctant at the thoughts of a removal. I submitted the case to three or four different persons, who heard the particulars on both sides.—The issue was, I staid another year. At that time, it was my purpose to remain for life. I told the church at Kettering, in a letter, to that effect. But I soon found that reproach—reproach unlamented, had broken my heart! The bond of my affection was dissolved. I could not feel a union of spirit; without which I could not continue. In proportion as I despaired of this, I felt my heart incline towards the church at Kettering. At length, impelled by several motives, (of some of which, especially, I think I shall not be ashamed at the day of judgment,) I removed!—a painful event to me. I have, however, one consolation remaining—that as far as I know, I acted herein to the best of my judgment and conscience. Yet, after all, I have had many relentings, and many reflections upon some parts of my conduct; as well as fears lest the Lord should blast me in the future part of my life: for though I have never, to this day, thought *the thing itself* to be wrong; yet I have, upon review, seen a great deal of vanity mixing itself in my motives, and a great deal of folly in some parts of my conduct, for all which I desire to be ashamed.

“Since my removal hither, I have found much outgoing of heart for the welfare of Christ’s kingdom, particularly in this part of Zion. When repeatedly requested to take this office upon me, I have not been without my fears; and, might I have indulged that sort of feeling, I suppose I should not have accepted their invitation for the present. But I wish to attend to the voice of *duty*. Duty seemed to call for my compliance. I therefore applied for, and received, a dismissal from the church at Soham to the church at Kettering; and have resigned myself up, to serve them in the Lord. I wish it may be for the glory of Christ and their good; though, I must own, the pleasure of this day is marred to me, because a union with the one church cannot be effected but by a disunion with the other.”

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### SECTION III.—1784 TO 1792.

Labours at Kettering—Northamptonshire Association—Union of ministers for Prayer and conference relative to the promotion of Vital Religion—Extracts from his Diary—Publication of his Treatise on the Universal Obligation of Faith—Controversies arising out of it—Diary resumed—Letters to Dr. Ryland on the illness and death of his daughter Sarah—Further extracts from his Diary—Illness and death of his wife.

Conscious of having entered on a more extended, and, consequently, a more responsible field of labour, Mr. Fuller addressed himself to his work with his constitutional ardour. The increase of occupation which he had anticipated was chiefly, if not altogether, of a local nature; but the great Disposer of events rendered his removal to Kettering subservient to engagements to which those of his pastoral office bore a small proportion, whether viewed in relation to their bearing on the interests of mankind, or on his own personal exertions.

The first two years of his residence at Kettering were, however, distinguished by no operations beyond the immediate sphere of pastoral labour, if we except those arising out of his connexion with the churches of the Northamptonshire

Association,\* a register of whose statistics and history, for a succession of years, forms the subject of a private memorandum, accompanied with remarks on their circumstances, indicative of a heart devoted to their welfare. The influence of his talents and character began early to be felt among them. His assistance was claimed in their public services, his advice sought in their difficulties; nor is it too much to say that his judgment became the standard of appeal to an extent altogether unprecedented.

The friendship which Mr. Fuller had previously commenced with those excellent men, the late Messrs. Sutcliffe, of Olney, and Ryland, of Northampton, was now cemented by frequent intercourse, by which the interests of their respective churches, as well as those of the cause of Christ at large, were materially benefited. A pamphlet, written by the celebrated President Edwards, on the importance of general union in prayer for the revival of true religion, having found its way into their hands, was printed and diligently circulated. This was followed by a small publication, entitled "Persuasives to extraordinary Union in Prayer for the Revival of Real Religion," appended by Mr. Fuller to a sermon which he published about this time "On Walking by Faith:" periodical meetings for prayer were instituted among the ministers in their immediate neighbourhoods; resolutions were also passed at a meeting of the Association, at Nottingham, and subsequently at similar meetings in other districts, recommending the setting apart of the first Monday evening in every month for prayer for the extension of the gospel. It is, perhaps, not too much to say that these gave the impetus to that missionary spirit which afterwards extended itself successively through every denomination of the Christian world, and with which the origin of the British and Foreign Bible Society is closely identified: the importance of these meetings became more and more obvious in connexion with missionary efforts, the practice being almost universally adopted by the various communions of Dissenters, and continuing in existence to the present day. A few extracts from Mr. Fuller's private memorandums, about this time, will show with what singleness of heart he entered into the spirit of the apostolic aphorism—"None of us liveth to himself."

"1784, April 11.—A tender forenoon in public prayer. My heart aches for the congregation, young and old, especially for some who seem to be under concern. Oh if Christ might but be formed in them! But I am so carnal that I fear God will never do any thing by me.

"25.—Expounded Matt. iv. this evening, on Christ's temptation; noticed its importance, time, circumstances, and issue, inferring that as Christ did not *run into* temptation, but was *led up*, so we must not; but pray, as he has directed, that we *enter not* into it.

"30.—Very little exercise to-day. What reason have I to pray for a revival in my soul! Surely I am to a sad degree sunk into a spirit of indifference: 'My soul cleaveth to the dust.'

"May 3.—Some tenderness in preaching at Stagsden: endeavoured to speak plain and home to the understandings and consciences of some poor plain people, on *Christ's being a way that men know not*.

"7.—Heard Mr. Robert Hall, jun., from, 'He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.' Felt very solemn in hearing some parts! The Lord keep that young man!

"8.—Conversation with Robert Hall on various subjects. Some tenderness

\* This Association embraced at that period the churches in several adjoining counties.

and earnestness in prayer after his departure. Oh could I but keep more near to God! How good is it to draw near to Him!

“11.—Devoted this day to fasting and prayer, in conjunction with several other ministers, who have agreed thus to spend the second Tuesday in every other month, to seek the revival of real religion, and the extension of Christ’s kingdom in the world. Feel very unhappy, to think that my heart should be no more in it. But very little of the true spirit of prayer throughout the whole day.

“16.—A good forenoon: tender in prayer for the revival of religion, and the carrying on of a good work among our young people. Very tender to-night, at Thrapston, and greatly concerned for the salvation of souls while preaching on sinners being like Moab—at ease from his youth. Here I am child enough to think—surely some good must be done!

“26.—Some sense of the importance of everlasting things, occasioned by hearing the conversation of some wicked men. Oh! if I had an abiding sense of the danger and worth of souls, surely I should feel more like Aaron, when he ran, with his censor, between the living and the dead.

“June 11.—Spoke to-night from, ‘Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.’ Indeed, I have need to learn more of this. I find applauses to be fiery trials.

“13.—At Olney. A poor cold day, except in the evening. I am weary of being out from home so much. I want to be more at home, that I may be more with God.

“21.—Much affected to-day in visiting some poor friends; especially in going to see a little boy, of seven or eight years old, in a decline, not likely to continue long. My heart felt for his everlasting state. Conversed with him a little on divine subjects.

“July 9.—Some serious tenderness of spirit and concern for the carnality of my heart, for some days past. Read to our friends, this evening, a part of Mr. Edwards’s *Attempt to promote Prayer for the Revival of Religion*, to excite them to the like practice. Felt my heart profited and much solemnized by what I read.

“11.—A good forenoon in preaching on *fellowship with Christ*. Felt some tenderness of heart several times in the day, longing for the coming of Christ’s kingdom and the salvation of my hearers.

“12.—Read part of a poem, by John Scott, Esq., on the cruelties of the English in the East Indies, causing artificial famines, &c. My heart felt most earnest desires that Christ’s kingdom might come, when all these cruelties shall cease. Oh for the time when neither the sceptre of oppression nor heathen superstition shall bear the sway over them! Lord Jesus, set up thy glorious and peaceful kingdom all over the world! Found earnest desire this morning, in prayer, that God would hear the right, as to them, and hear our prayers, in which the churches agree to unite, for the spread of Christ’s kingdom.

“13.—Spent this day in fasting and prayer, in conjunction with several of my brethren in the ministry, for the revival of our churches and the spread of the gospel. Found some tenderness and earnestness in prayer, several times in the day. Wrote a few thoughts on the desirableness of the coming of Christ’s kingdom.

“16.—Rode to Arnsby, this morning; had some profitable conversation with Mr. Hall. Returned and heard Mr. ———, of ———, with grief. Surely the

system of religion [false Calvinism] which he, with too many others, has imbibed, enervates every part of vital godliness.

“18.—A good forenoon in preaching from, ‘All my springs are in thee;’ but a better time in prayer. Found my heart go out for the children and youth of the congregation; owing, perhaps, to my having spoken last night at the grave of the little boy mentioned June 21. Poor child! he seemed to like that I should talk with him before he died.

“19.—Chiefly employed in writing and visiting poor friends. Think I get good, and hope I do some good, by the latter.

“27.—Dull and unaffected. Nothing seems to lay hold of me. Some fear to-night in prayer. An accident that has befallen my youngest child now lays sufficient hold of me; I fear lest he should be taken from me. Very much moved in prayer for him. O Lord, I must have something trying to move me. How I shall endure this I know not. O prepare him, and prepare me! Feel my heart tender to-day, and some thankfulness of heart for hope afforded of the child. Ah, how easy to speak of resigning our whole selves, and all that pertains to us, to the Lord; but how difficult to do so when it comes to the trial!”

A more extended sphere of labour began now to open itself, and more varied and painful exercises of mind awaited Mr. Fuller, than those indicated in the preceding extracts; it was not for him to enjoy that freedom from polemical engagements for which he had so ardently longed and prayed. The change of sentiments which took place during his residence at Soham had not been lightly effected, and a manuscript on this subject, which had lain by him from that time, though written at so early a period of his life, bears evident marks of an acuteness of perception, and a patience and candour of investigation, rarely combined in the productions of those of riper years. The preface to this essay is characterized by beautiful simplicity of statement, and anticipates the distinguishing feature of the work, which, though not less remarkable than his other productions for logical acumen, assumes less of a polemical aspect, and more of the attitude of honest inquiry. The difference between them, however, originated only in the circumstances under which they were respectively produced; the one being written expressly for private use, the others as a defence of truth.

The value of the sentiments contained in this manuscript, and the methodical and masterly manner in which the subject was argued, were too obvious any longer to admit of its suppression; and the persuasion of friends, aided by the sincere desire of doing good, at length prevailed over the native modesty of the author.

The leading sentiment advocated is *the universal obligation of the hearers of the gospel to its cordial and entire reception.*

This was argued on the general principle that man is bound to approve and receive *whatever* God presents to his attention, a principle supported not less by the sanctions of Scripture than the dictates of reason—on the testimony borne to the claims of the gospel in particular by the *commands, exhortations, and invitations*, abounding both in the Old and New Testaments—on the *obedience* required to the gospel necessarily involving *previous obligation*—on *unbelief* being represented as a *heinous sin*, subjecting to the *most awful punishments*—and, finally, on *other spiritual exercises*, inseparably connected with faith, being represented as *universal duties*.

The leading objections to these views are fully considered: these chiefly relate to the *decrees* of God—to the *particularity of redemption*—the *inability of*

the carnal mind to receive spiritual things, and the consequent necessity of *Divine influence*. These doctrines were not only believed by Mr. Fuller, but invested with great importance in his esteem. The conclusion drawn from them against the universal obligation of faith is, however, shown to be fallacious. That from the first position would equally exculpate men from any moral delinquency, and also render means for the attainment of temporal subsistence vain and inconsistent. The inference from the second is shown to arise from an overstrained comparison of the atonement of Christ to the discharge of a debt, the extreme of which view is shown to be at variance with the doctrine of *free forgiveness*, and with the application of sinners as *suppliants* rather than as *claimants*. In correcting this notion, Mr. Fuller insists that the atonement proceeds not on the principle of *commercial*, but of *moral* justice, and that the reasoning thereon must correspond with this view. The objection founded on the inability of man, Mr. F. meets, by showing that this inability is no where represented in Scripture as of a *proper* or *physical*, but of a *figurative* or *moral* kind,\* an *unwillingness* so inveterate as to require a Divine influence to overcome it, which, so far from excusing an inattention to the claims of the gospel, is in itself a gross aggravation of the evil—that the arguments used to justify it on the ground of alleged incapacity annul a distinction founded not less in reason than in Scripture, and would equally justify any grade of moral delinquency and a total disregard of the law of God, and at once exculpate men from the imputation of sin. The subtle distinction of duties into *moral* and *spiritual*, by which the force of this reasoning is evaded, is proved to have no existence in Scripture—and it is shown that, in fact, there can be no true morality which is not spiritual, nor can God require an insincere or defective obedience.

Powerful as were the arguments advanced by Mr. Fuller in this treatise, it was not to be expected that a view of religion so practically identified with the whole system of theology which had prevailed nearly half a century, and had been partially embraced and defended by men of acknowledged talent and piety, would readily surrender its claims on the public regard. Some excellent men of the same connexion as Mr. F. were grieved that the doctrines of free grace should, as they considered, sustain an injury from one who professed an adherence to them. One of these addressed himself respectfully in reply; while others, less mindful of the interests of truth than of their own personal importance, poured forth torrents of illiterate abuse, unaccompanied with the shadow of an argument.

A neighbouring minister, whom we must, in the judgment of charity, hope to have been in some measure influenced by the former of these feelings, but who cannot claim an exemption from a portion of the latter imputation, earnestly importuned a sight of the MS. With this request Mr. Fuller complied, at the same time observing that any animadversions he might make should receive a serious and candid attention, provided they were accompanied by

\* Mr. F., in reply to an opponent, thus explains his views of this subject:—"All such terms as *necessary*, *cannot*, *impossible*, &c., when applied to these subjects, are used improperly: they always denote, in strict propriety of speech, an obstruction arising from something distinct from the state of the will." This view "represents man as not only possessing great advantages, but as *able to comply with every thing that God requires at his hand*; and that all his misery arises from his *voluntary* abuse of mercy, and his *wilful* rebellion against God. It is not a want of *ability*, but of *inclination*, that proves his ruin." In a note, he adds, "I maintain that men have the same *power*, strictly speaking, before they are wrought upon by the Holy Spirit, as after, and before conversion as after; that the work of the Spirit endows us with no new rational powers, nor any powers that are necessary to moral agency."

evidence. The manuscript was soon returned, accompanied with a letter replete with illiterate abuse, while all argument was declined, on the pretext that "enough had been said already." He charges Mr. F. with having "gathered those scriptures used by Arminians," to the neglect of those parts which "speak distinctly and clearly the Jews' language, and not the language of Ashdod." He further charges him with disrespect to Drs. Gill, Owen, Ridgely, &c.; and concludes by expressing his conviction that "time was when no such calf would ever have been suffered to be born or nourished at the little meeting at Kettering."

The respect Mr. Fuller bore to the private character of this individual induced him to reply. "If," he writes, "a friend of mine had called on me purely in a way of respect; if he had written any thing that I did not approve; if I had requested and even importuned a sight of it upon the footing of friendship; if he had desired me with all the frankness of a Christian to point out any of his mistakes, promising to rectify or suppress any thing that should be found amiss, adding, however, this caution, that I should not barely *call* them mistakes, but *prove* them so; if, on perusing his papers, I had, instead of making any candid remarks tending to conviction, written a letter fraught with reproachful sneers and low invective, unaccompanied by any kind of evidence; I should have thought, had I thought right, that I had acted beneath the minister, the Christian, or the man.

"Texts of Scripture are none the worse for having been quoted by Arminians. You wonder that any who call themselves Calvinists should talk thus; and I wonder any should call themselves Calvinists who talk otherwise. It is very singular to charge me with disrespect to Drs. Gill and Owen, when there is not a single animadversion on their writings in the whole MS. As to the former, I have not taken a single quotation from his writings, nor spoken a syllable about his sentiments, but barely *written his name on a blank page* for the purpose of transcribing something from him tending to *confirm* what I have written, when I should copy it again. As to the latter, I never met with any thing of importance in his writings on which I saw any reason to animadvert; so far from it, that I know of no writer for whom I have so great an esteem; it would be a faint expression for me to say I *approve* his principles—I *admire* them. I suppose you saw the names of these worthies, and observed that I said or intended to say something about them, and you concluded it must be *against* them. This reminds me of an old woman who, hearing her clergyman frequently preach against popery, exclaimed, 'Our parson is certainly a *papish*; for he talks so much about the pope.' Alas! into what misconstructions and misrepresentations will not a partial spirit insensibly betray us! I believe, if Drs. G. and O. were living, they would defend their principles against some things which certain writers since their death have attempted to father upon them: the same may be said of Dr. Ridgely; I never saw more than one passage in his writings unfavourable to my views, and could produce twenty for them.

"But I have 'treated the sacred Scriptures with *partiality*, by collecting those parts which suit my turn, and omitting others that clearly speak the Jews' and not my Ashdod language.' Truly, sir, I never thought it necessary to collect scriptures irrelevant to the purpose for which I was writing. I suppose you would have had me occupy half the work in proving the doctrine of election, as Mr. Wayman did—a doctrine believed by his antagonist as much as himself. I assure you, sir, I never observed a *studied* silence of any one argument or scripture that might be thought to make against me. It seems, according to

your account, that *one part only* of the Scripture speaks clearly and distinctly what you call the *Jews' language*. I used to think, sir, the Scriptures were all of a piece, but I understand you—that part which does not agree with *your creed* does not speak *Jews' language*. This comes, too, from the pen of the man who, in the same letter, and even the same sentence, was charging his friend with treating the sacred Scriptures with partiality!

“You must go on, sir, if you choose, calling me Arminian, Baxterian, or any thing else it may please you best. These are things which I hope will not move me. I only say that though I verily believe it is every man's *duty* to be of a *right spirit*—such a spirit as *cordially to embrace whatever God makes known*, yet such is my opinion of human nature, that I have not the most distant idea of either the probable or possible salvation of any one but those who ‘according to God's purpose’ are ‘made *willing* in the day of his power,’ and this you must have fully known, had you with any candour attended to what I have written.

“I desire to seek both ‘*truth and peace*,’ and so far as I can enjoy the latter without sacrificing the former, I hope it will be one chief object of my pursuit. Should what I have written be published, and should any number of persons, instead of seriously attending to evidence, take fire, call names, and set their churches in a flame—and should they after this upbraid me with having ‘stirred up divisions in the churches,’ for all or any of this I hope I shall never be thought accountable.”

This reply called forth a second and a third letter equally abusive; but as for evidences, the demand for them is a mere “come off.” “Are there not,” he asks, “reasons enough, evidences in plenty, already extant?”

Mr. Fuller's polemical propensities were hardly strong enough to be attracted, by this sagacious reference to “evidences already extant,” to the continuance of a correspondence in which he could gain nothing but scurrility; he therefore respectfully declined it.

This correspondence would not have been thought deserving of notice, but that it fairly represents the temper, talents, and information of a large portion of the opposition it was Mr. Fuller's fate to encounter in private intercourse; while no small degree of it actually struggled into print in the shape of various pamphlets, some of which are fraught with doggerel of the very lowest grade.

It was refreshing amidst all this to find a few opponents capable of observing the rules of civilized intercourse, and of addressing themselves for the most part to the consideration of the points in dispute; such were the Rev. Messrs. Button, A. Booth, A. Maclean, and, on the Arminian side, Dan Taylor.\* It

\* Perhaps justice demands that the statement be here made, that though Mr. Taylor ostensibly appeared as the antagonist of Mr. Fuller, yet that the principal man in the production of his books was the late Rev. George Birley, of St. Ives, in Huntingdonshire, the intimate friend of Robert Robinson, the latter having delivered his ingenious sermon on the pastoral office founded on friendship at Mr. B.'s ordination. Mr. Fuller always suspected this to be the fact, and Mr. B. distinctly told me after his death that he suggested to Mr. Taylor his principal line of arguments, and some of his illustrations. I know not that this fact in itself would be worth recording, if it did not allow me an opportunity of warning my younger ministerial brethren against the temper and spirit of Mr. Birley, which destroyed his usefulness, and his reputation. He was a man of unquestionably acute mind, was inordinately fond of criticism, and never seemed so happy as when heaping on an opponent a load of questions which no man could answer. He resided at St. Ives nearly fifty years, and was for some time very popular; having, however, inoculated his people with his own spirit, which extended into other congregations in the town, religion long seemed to be lost in speculation. For many years before his death he had but the skeleton of a congregation, and even these dispersed soon after he died. Nothing but a very sound, judicious, and perseveringly energetic ministry could have repaired the mischiefs of his conduct in the neighbouring churches.—B.



was a matter, however, of grave complaint, that much misconception and consequent misrepresentation of his views was to be found in each of their publications, a considerable portion of which was devoted to the elaborate proving of doctrines cordially received by their opponent; nor was there any thing in the course of his polemical career which furnished Mr. Fuller with so much cause of grief as the reiterated disingenuousness of conduct manifested towards him by a man so deservedly esteemed for learning, integrity, and holiness of character, as Mr. Booth, between whom and himself there was moreover but a slight difference of opinion. The circulation of certain incorrect and injurious representations of Mr. Fuller's sentiments, the subsequent publication of the same *after* a distinct avowal of their incorrectness, and their republication *after* a serious and respectful letter of remonstrance, of which Mr. B. takes no notice, furnish evidence of the power of prejudice over even an upright mind. Impartiality requires the admission that Mr. Fuller was, in more than one instance, chargeable with misrepresentation, the discovery of which was, however, followed by the most prompt and unqualified acknowledgment.

The reply to Mr. Button was accompanied by an answer to "Observations, &c., by Philanthropos," a work in which the Rev. D. Taylor attacks with considerable spirit and ingenuity the *Calvinistic* positions of "The Gospel worthy," &c. "It may appear somewhat extraordinary," says Mr. Fuller, in his reply, "that the same sentiment should be liable to opposition from gentlemen of such contrary principles as Mr. BUTTON and PHILANTHROPOS. It may be less surprising, however, when it is considered that there are certain points in which the most opposite extremes are known to meet. An attentive reader will perceive a great affinity in the tendency of their reasonings on various subjects. If I am not greatly mistaken, they both particularly agree in denying faith in Christ to be a duty required by the *moral law*; and in excusing the sinner, unless *grace* is bestowed upon him, in his non-compliance with every thing spiritually good."

The exceptions taken by Mr. Maclean were of a complexion different from either of those before stated, and were grounded on certain views of the nature of faith, and its priority to regeneration and repentance, peculiar to the bulk of the Baptist churches in Scotland and parts of Ireland. Mr. M. argued that Mr. Fuller's position of a holy change of heart being requisite in order to true faith in Christ, was "subversive of the great doctrine of justification by grace alone without the works of the law," and maintained that faith was a mere intellectual exercise, ascribing to it, nevertheless, all the fruits of a holy principle.

To this view of things Mr. Fuller first replied in an appendix to the second edition of his work, which, giving rise to further observations on the part of his opponent, resulted in the production of "Strictures on Sandemanianism, in Twelve Letters to a Friend," a work worthy alike of the talents of its author and of the powerful antagonist against whose writings it was directed.

The controversy on faith, which in all its branches extended, with some intervals, to a period of more than twenty years, was by far the most considerable in which Mr. Fuller was engaged; and it being that which was the most identified with his name, and which gave rise to the grossest misrepresentations of his character and views, especially in his own denomination, no apology will be offered for the peculiar prominence given to it in this memoir.

A continuation of the diary from which extracts have already been made, while it exhibits the feelings under which Mr. Fuller commenced and continued

these engagements, will serve to fill up the portraiture of his character at this period of his life.

“Aug. 10, 1784.—Occupied in writing for the press some persuasives to united prayer for the revival of real religion.

“20.—Many misgivings of heart, about engaging in defence of what I esteem truth, lest the cause of Christ should be injured through me. Surely, if I did not believe *that* in defence of which I write to be *important* truth, I would hide my head in obscurity all my days.

“21.—Much pain at heart to-day, while reading in Dr. Owen. Feel almost a sacred reverence for his character. Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man! Oh that I might be led into Divine truth! ‘Christ and his cross be all my theme.’ I love his name, and wish to make it the centre in which all the lines of my ministry should meet! The Lord direct my way in respect of publishing. Assuredly he knows my end is to vindicate the excellence of his character, and his worthiness of being loved and credited.

“23.—The weight of publishing still lies upon me. I expect a great share of unhappiness through it. I had certainly much rather go through the world in peace, did I not consider this step as my duty. I feel a jealousy of myself, lest I should not be endued with meekness and patience sufficient for controversy. The Lord keep me! I wish to suspect my own spirit, and go forth leaning on him for strength. I heard yesterday that Mr. William Clarke is likely to come to Carlton; the Lord grant he may! Oh that I were of such a meek and lowly spirit as that good man!

“24.—Some tenderness in prayer of late, yet fear lest I should be blasted in my ministry on account of my barrenness. Conversation with Mr. Toller\* on various subjects affecting to me. The Lord keep me and lead me into all truth.

“25.—Enjoyed delight for some days in reading over the Acts of the Apostles before family prayer. Sweet times in that duty.

“26.—I felt some tenderness to-day at the church-meeting; but much depression of spirit generally now attends me. I feel a solid satisfaction that the cause in which I am about to engage is the cause of truth and righteousness; but I am afraid lest it should suffer through me.

“29.—A very tender and affectionate time in prayer for the congregation, especially the young people.—Finished expounding Christ’s sermon on the mount. Some cautions I had given me to-night I wish I may attend to. The Lord lead me into the spirit of the gospel, and keep me from extremes.

“Sept. 3.—Very earnest and fervent this evening, preaching on love to Christ’s salvation. Oh if God would but make use of it!

“6.—Feel myself vile before God. My vileness is as if it were restless, and could never be still night nor day.

“19.—A letter from Soham much depresses me to hear of their jarrings. Know not how to preach.

“21.—Occupied all day in writing letters into Cambridgeshire. Oh may God bless them to their good! Very tender in writing them.

“22.—Chiefly employed in preparing a MS. for the press on the obligations of men in respect to the gospel of Christ. Felt some pleasure in the sentiments I have written.

\* The excellent congregational minister at Kettering, an extract from whose funeral sermon for Mr. Fuller, and also his own character as delineated by Mr. Hall, appear in the latter portion of this Memoir.—B.

“26.—Deeply affected this morning in thinking and preaching on the poor and needy seeking water and finding none, &c. Some tenderness too in the afternoon : this thought was moving, that our *hardness of heart broke* Christ’s heart, and our *stupidity* made his soul exceedingly *sorrowful*, even unto death.

“Oct. 4.—To-morrow, ministers’ meeting; the Lord meet with us. The ministers met to-night, it being the monthly exercise of prayer for the revival of religion.

“7.—Spent the day chiefly in the company of some of the ministers. Much depressed in spirit, and grieved at seeing such levity and wanton folly in a certain person. My heart is sick of all knowledge and accomplishments unless made to subserve the cause of the blessed Redeemer. How empty and frothy, unless sanctified by the grace of God ! Felt my heart go out in prayer for that person.

“18.—Much depressed in spirit on account of my want of spirituality; prayed with tenderness of heart. Sensibly felt my entire dependence on the Spirit of God for the continuance of the work of grace as well as for the beginning of it.

“21.—Feel some pain in the thought of being about to publish *On the Obligations of Men to Believe in Christ*, as supposing I shall thereby expose myself to much abuse, which is disagreeable to the flesh. Had I not a satisfaction that it is *the cause of God and truth*, I would drop all thoughts of printing. The Lord keep me meek and lowly in heart.

“22.—[In allusion to the termination of a domestic trial] This day the Lord has been merciful. A saying of Mr. Hall, which I heard him use in prayer, has been much to me of late. ‘Lord, we are bound this night to love thee more than ever we did before.’

“24.—I have many fears concerning certain flesh-pleasing doctrines lately agitated, particularly that of *the final salvation of all, men and devils*. I have no doubt that this notion will have a great spread in twenty years’ time, however contrary to the word of God, seeing it is just what suits the flesh.

“31.—Preached this afternoon on the *dimensions* of the love of Christ. Great delight at the Lord’s supper. Oh to know more of and live upon Christ ! he must be our daily bread. Sweet pleasure to-night. Can hardly forbear singing as I go about,

‘ Oh for this love let rocks and hills  
Their lasting silence break,’ &c.

“Nov. 12.—Feel my mind earnestly engaged in longing for the salvation of souls; earnest in prayer for this. Oh what an awful thing it seems to me for sinners under a fatal disease not to *desire* a remedy !

“22.—Walked to Northampton. Some prayer that God would bless that about which I am going, namely, the printing of a manuscript on faith in Christ being the duty of unregenerate sinners.

“Dec. 18.—Feel myself to-day a poor carnal wretch ! Casting my eye on ‘Woe to the idol shepherd,’ &c., thought that was my character. Reading in James, ‘with meekness receive the *ingrafted word*,’ methought there was something in that which I could not reach. Felt my heart go up to God that I might understand it.

“22.—Some tender feelings under my frequent indisposition of body. Thought how I should bear it, if God should lay me by from the work of the ministry.

“31.—Deeply affected on Wednesday night, in singing with little R. in my arms :—

‘O mayst thou live to reach the place,’ &c.

If I should die before him, let him remember this, and S. the verses in the diary, &c.

“1785, Jan. 2, Lord’s day.—Preached this afternoon a new-year’s sermon to young people, from ‘Come, ye children,’ &c. Some sweet and solemn feelings, as I sat in the vestry, while a hymn for the new year was sung: felt my heart very tender, and a longing desire for the welfare of the young people: preached to them with some earnestness. Felt much also this day in reading *Bunyan’s Holy War*, particularly that part where the four captains agree to petition the King for more force: felt a great satisfaction in my principles concerning preaching to sinners, and a desire to pray, like them, for help from on high, to render the word effectual.

“8.—Much affected to-day in hearing my little girl say, ‘How soon sabbath day comes again!’ Felt grieved to see the native aversion of the carnal heart to God so early discovering itself. Was led to importune God at a throne of grace on her behalf.

“9.—This evening expounded Acts vi. One verse in particular carries in it conviction to me: That we may *give ourselves wholly* to prayer and the ministry of the word.

“11.—Some outgoings of heart in prayer to-day for the revival of real religion, first in my own soul, and then in the churches in general. My own mental departures from God have been long and great! Went several times to the Lord, with some satisfaction, but found not such nearness of access as I could wish.

“14.—Spoke to-night with some freedom on Psal. cxvi. 9, ‘I will walk before the Lord,’ &c. Explained it as consisting in viewing ourselves always as in *God’s sight*, and not merely in the sight of creatures, whether godly or ungodly; in striving to *please God*; and in attending in a constant way to the most *spiritual duties*. Observed the *goodness of the resolution*; because this course was *safe, honourable, and happy*.

“Feb. 8.—Visited Mr. Toller to-day, who has been very ill: some serious conversation with him on the importance of real religion in a dying hour.

“11.—Read part of the life of J. Janeway to-day, with much conviction and tenderness. O my life, how low to his!

“13.—Some earnestness to-day in preaching on *pressing forward*, and on the *desire accomplished being sweet to the soul*; but little spirituality. Very earnest to-night in preaching from ‘What will ye do in the end thereof?’

“16.—In the company of Christian friends. Some good conversation, but no free tender talk on things spiritual and experimental. I find Mr. —— and the people at —— carry their resentments very high, on account of what they reckon my erroneous principles. I need grace not so much at present to keep me from resenting again as to keep me from rejoicing in their iniquity. Undoubtedly they could not take measures that would more conduce to the reputation of what I have written and of what I preach, as well as to their own detriment.

“19.—Feel an earnest desire that my mind might be well furnished with gospel sentiments. Found encouragement in observing several in the congregation who are likely soon to join the church.

“22.—Tenderness in private prayer, attended with shame. An agreeable visit with Mr. B. W. at Mr. T.’s. Conversation very serious and profitable, chiefly on closet prayer and experimental subjects.

“March 11.—Feel a general lowness of spirits; partly occasioned by the

bitter spirit of some neighbouring ministers, respecting my late publication and my preaching; and partly by sympathy with some of my friends under trials.

“16.—Visited Mr. Toller to-day, and had some good conversation.

“21.—Have been somewhat stirred beyond due bounds to-day, in talking with a member of the church who has sinned. It would have been better for me to have thought more of *myself*, and to have spoken to him with more humility.

“25.—Returning from Woodford, (where I preached last night, with earnestness and solemnity of spirit, on the ways of sin being *movable*, like those of the adulteress,) I was led into a profitable strain of meditation, on our good Shepherd’s care of his flock, occasioned by seeing some lambs exposed to the cold, and a poor sheep perishing for want of care.

“28.—Some heaviness of heart, because some of my friends do not take that freedom with me which I wish they did; at least it seems so to me.

“April 19.—Preached at Wellingborough, with some freedom, on Christ’s commanding us to watch. Some conviction by conversing with Mr. Carver, whose carefulness not to circulate an evil report I admire.

“28.—I find it is often observed that persons in my condition, without greater advantages as to learning, are generally apt to be more censorious than others whose learning is far greater. I wish I may be always on the watch here.

“29.—Somewhat unhappy to see the disrelish, as I think, of one of my friends to the doctrines of sovereign grace. Oh that I may not only believe the truth, but *love* it!

“30.—Thought to-day I could wish to die if I had but done my generation work. Last Monday I heard a young man at N. speak of the advantage of mixing prayer with reading the word. This morning I have been trying to read in that way. Read the second chapter of Hosea thus; longing to use that sweet and holy freedom which the Lord designs to encourage, when he directs the church to call him not Baali, but Ishi. Oh that I could dwell nearer to God! I fear some trials in the church; but were I kept near to him, I should be able to bear any thing.

“May 1.—Found earnestness in preaching on *the words of God doing good to the upright*, and on *Christ’s being the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*. Felt my heart drawn out in prayer this morning that God would make some use of me for good. Praying that I might not labour in vain and spend my strength for nought, I felt a check of this kind—What then is *my* labour, and of what account is *my* strength? On this I found much outgoing of heart, in pleading Christ’s merits as the *ground*, and the welfare of souls as the *end*.

“2.—Returning from Brigstock, where I preached last night, some conversation with Mr. Porter, of Thrapston,\* makes me reflect on myself for imprudence. I feel how far off from a right spirit I often am. This evening I felt

\* This excellent man, a deacon of the Baptist church at Thrapston from its commencement, died at an advanced age, in 1816. I may be permitted, in this connection, to relate an anecdote, told me by the late excellent Joseph J. Stevenson, for many a years a colleague of Mr. P. in the diaconate. Mr. S., in the early period of his bearing office, did not feel quite comfortable, and was strongly disposed to resign his station. He was, however, prevailed on first to consult Mr. Fuller on the subject; and as his residence was but nine miles from Kettering, he went there for that purpose. Mr. F. listened with great patience to the whole details, the substance of which was, that he did not think he was treated by the church with the respect which his office demanded. Mr. Fuller looked at him with his solemn earnestness, and emphatically said, “A man, my brother, who wishes to be loved, must show himself lovely.” “This was quite enough for me,” said Mr. S. when he told me the facts, “I returned home, and never since have had to complain of any lack of respect on the part of the church.”—B.

tender all the time of the prayer-meeting for the revival of religion; but, in hearing Mr. Beeby Wallis pray for me, I was overcome: his having a better opinion of me than I deserve cuts me to the heart! Went to prayer myself, and found my mind engaged more than ordinarily in praying for the revival of religion. I had felt many sceptical thoughts; as though there were room to ask, What profit shall I have if I pray to God? for which I was much grieved. Find a great satisfaction in these monthly meetings: even supposing our requests should not be granted, yet prayer to God is its own reward. Felt many bitter reflections for my stupid carnal way of living.

“8.—Impressed this morning in thinking of the wants of the people, how they would probably be coming from many places round, in quest of spiritual food, while I was barren, and scarcely knew what to say to them. Affected in thinking of Micah vii., ‘Feed thy people with thy rod,’ &c.”

After alluding to a journey to Soham, and giving the details of a week’s exercise in preaching and conversation in that neighbourhood, he adds—

“June 2.—To-day I go for home, laden with the burdens of others as well as some of my own.

“4.—An uncommon load lies all day on my spirits. I am incapable of all profitable meditation: feel pained for the people to-morrow. Some few exercises on *subjection to the Father of spirits*; but very heavy in heart.

“5.—Feel myself quite ill with sorrow of heart: had a very tender forenoon on the subject mentioned above; but a poor wretched afternoon: very much depressed all day.

“6.—But little exercise till towards night, when the sorrows of yesterday returned, and for two hours preyed upon my heart stronger than ever, so as to make me very ill. Darkness and confusion of mind overwhelm me.

“7.—Engaged in writing out the circular letter on *Declensions in Religion* for the press: found some very tender feelings towards the latter part of it; and enjoyed a good deal of pleasure on the whole in writing it.

“14.—Taken up with the company of Mr. Robert Hall, jun.: feel much pain for him. The Lord, in mercy to him and his churches in this country, keep him in the path of truth and righteousness.

“25.—Some pain of mind through a letter from Mr. —, of London, expressing his fears lest my publication should occasion some uncomfortable disputes. Some outgoings of heart to God that this might not be.

“But a poor day yesterday in meditation; yet this day has been, I think, one of the best I have experienced for years. Most tenderly and earnestly affected, both in prayer and in preaching. In the morning I could scarcely go on for weeping, while preaching from Acts iv. 33, ‘Great grace was upon them all!’ Not quite so well in the afternoon, though I was upon the *excellency of the knowledge of Christ*. Yet I felt a sweet serenity at the Lord’s supper, and spoke of it under the idea of a feast.

“29.—Pleasant conversation with some persons newly awakened. Heard Dr. Addington to-night, on our *light afflictions*, with pleasure and profit; but walked alone in the fields exceedingly disconsolate.

“July 3.—Another exceedingly melting sabbath: very tender and earnest in prayer, and in preaching on *casting our care* on the Lord; and, in the afternoon, on the caution given to glory, not in *wisdom, strength, or riches*, but in the *knowledge* of God. Preached in the evening from ‘Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity;’ occasioned by my own past exercises, and applied to the warning of people against the vanities of the world, particularly against improper

behaviour at their *feast*, which is to-morrow; found great tenderness, particularly in warning the youth from the example of the young woman who last week came to such an awful end.

"5.—Rode to Walgrave; somewhat discouraged to see disunion; attempted a reconciliation, which I hope may be effected; felt tender and much concerned.

"6.—This morning a reconciliation was brought about, and Mr. Payne\* was ordained their pastor: Mr. Ryland, jun., delivered the charge, and I had much profit in hearing him.

"16.—Some pleasure in thinking on God's power to do abundantly more than we can ask or think. Surely he had need have more power in giving than I have in asking.

"25.—I was much impressed this morning in reading *Mason's Remains*. Felt much affected and very solemn in prayer and conversing with a poor woman at Barton, who seems not likely to be here long, and is much in the dark as to her state.

"Aug. 1.—Some affectionate emotions of heart in prayer to-night at the monthly prayer-meeting. Surely unbelief damps our near addresses to God, and something of that ungrateful suspicion which asks, 'What profit shall we have if we pray unto him?' lies at the bottom of our indifference in this duty.

"3.—Chiefly employed to-day in visiting poor friends. I have been too deficient in this practice.

"4.—Visited several more poor friends; some conversation profitable; but I mix all with sin.

"6.—Some tenderness in thinking on Jonah iii. 4, 'I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet will I look again,' &c. We have had some awful providences of late. Mr. —, a clergyman of C—, has hanged himself, and a poor woman of B. seems in the very jaws of desperation. These things have led me to think on something that may be an antidote to despair.

"8.—Some exercises of mind this week through an advertisement of Dr. Withers, wherein I think he in a very vain manner threatens to *reduce to dust* my late publication. I wish I may be kept in a right spirit. I find myself, on seeing what I have hitherto seen, much subject to a spirit of contempt; but I wish not to indulge too much of that temper. Doubtless, I am wrong in some things. I wish I may be all along open to conviction; found some desires go up to heaven for such a spirit as this.

"26.—A letter from Mr. Thomas, † of Leominster, on the piece I lately published, has some effect upon my heart in a way of tender grief and fear.

"Sept. 30.—We had a ministers' meeting at Northampton. I preached, and brother Sutcliff, and brother Skinner. But the best part of the day was, I think, in conversation. A question was discussed, to the following purport:—*To what causes in ministers may much of their want of success be imputed?* The answer turned chiefly upon the want of personal religion; particularly the neglect of close dealing with God in *closet prayer*. Jer. x. 21, was here referred to, 'Their pastors are become *brutish*, and have not *sought* the Lord; therefore they shall not prosper, and their flocks shall be scattered.' Another reason assigned was the want of reading and studying the Scriptures more *as Christians*, for the edification of our own souls. We are too apt to study them merely to find out something *to say to others*, without living upon the truth ourselves.

\* This very amiable servant of Jesus Christ faithfully laboured in this church for about forty years. He was the father of the Rev. Dr. Payne, president of the Congregational College at Exeter.—B.

† It appears that this venerable minister afterwards fully embraced Mr. Fuller's views.

If we eat not the book, before we deliver its contents to others, we may expect the Holy Spirit will not much accompany us. If we study the Scriptures as *Christians*, the more familiar we are with them, the more we shall feel their importance; but, if otherwise, our familiarity with the word will be like that of soldiers and doctors with death—it will wear away all sense of its importance from our minds. To enforce this sentiment, Prov. xxii. 17, 18, was referred to—‘Apply thine *heart* to knowledge—the words of the wise will be pleasant if thou keep them within thee; they shall withal be fitted in thy lips.’ To this might be added Psal. i. 2, 3. Another reason was, Our want of being emptied of *self-sufficiency*. In proportion as we lean upon our own gifts, or parts, or preparations, we slight the Holy Spirit; and no wonder that, being grieved, he should leave us to do our work alone. Besides, when this is the case, it is, humanly speaking, *unsafe* for God to prosper us, especially those ministers who possess considerable abilities. Reference was also had to an ordination sermon lately preached by Mr. Booth of London, to Mr. Hopkins, Dr. Gifford’s successor, from ‘Take heed to thyself.’\* Oh that I may remember these hints for my good!

“Oct. 3.—Preached at Corby with much tenderness; felt some encouragement on hearing of one person to whose conversion it is hoped my ministry has been made instrumental.

“7.—Some tremor of mind in hearing that Dr. W.’s book is in the press. What I fear is lest his manner of writing should be provoking, and lest I should fall into an unchristian spirit.

“9.—A miserable afternoon. After service I was told of a young man, to whom I had been made useful about two years ago, having a desire to join the church. I have for some time felt a kind of despair in preaching to sinners; thinking that, on account of my being so carnally-minded, God would never bless any thing I said. This instance, and that of last Wednesday, seem to afford some encouragement, and to make me think that it is possible, however, for God to work even by *me!* and that when I think nothing can be done, then it is possible for God to work. I have long sown in tears: oh that I might, in some degree at least, reap in joy! Preached at night with an unusual affection of heart, and sense of everlasting things, from Job xvi. 22, ‘When a few years are come,’ &c.

“30.—After baptizing several persons, preached on the fellowship of Christians affording joy to ministers, from Phil. i. 3—5.

“Nov. 21.—For above a fortnight past have been chiefly out on journeys. At Bedford, saw Mr. —, of —; glad to see his spirit softened, and his prejudices, I hope, giving way. Much grieved to find the spirits of people about the neighbourhood of G— hurt by controversy. I find there are several whose conversation almost entirely, and on all occasions, turns on these subjects. It seems to be one of Satan’s devices, in order to destroy the good tendency of any truth, to get its advocates to hackney it out of its senses, dwelling upon it in every sermon or conversation, to the exclusion of other things. Thus the glorious doctrines of free and great grace have been served in the last age, and so have fallen sadly into disrepute. If we employ all our time in *talking* about what men ought to be and to do, it is likely we shall forget to put it into practice, and then all is over with us.

\* Afterwards published and very extensively circulated, under the title of “Pastoral Cautions.” No sermon was ever more adapted to promote the welfare of young ministers.—B.



“Dec. 7.—This week received a treatise written by Mr. Button in answer to mine. There seems to be an abundance of things in it very foreign from the point, and very little evidence.

“16.—Set off for home with my little girl, who has been ill at Northampton. My heart greatly misgives me. If God should take either of my children from me, I seem as if I could scarcely sustain it. On this account I have many fears. Oh, I could give up their bodies, but I want to see piety reigning in their *souls*, before they go hence and are no more seen. I tried, as I rode home, to converse with my child, and to instil religious principles into her mind. Oh that God would bless my endeavours to that end!

“18.—To-day I had a very tender forenoon, in preaching from Jer. l. 4, 5. Oh how my heart went forth in desire after the salvation of souls, for some of the greatest of sinners; particularly for a poor wretched young woman, the daughter of one of our members. She had been, through her own wicked conduct, kept away from public worship for a year past. I lately heard that she was in a state of despair, and had resolved never to come to meeting again. But this morning she appeared in the meeting. The sight of her much affected me, and was the means of a very tender forenoon. In the afternoon, I preached on the great things of God's law being counted as *strange* things; but, alas, my heart seems as strange and as alien from the spirit of true religion as any thing I can talk about! Oh what a poor mutable creature am I! Somewhat revived to-night in hearing more about a Mrs. D. I hope she is a godly woman. I find she had a daughter who died about twelve months ago, and who gave strong evidence of her piety while her father and mother were in ignorance. The mother now says that she believes the means of her daughter's conversion was her attending on a child's burial, with some other children, and hearing me speak to the young people present on that occasion. It seems a strange thing that God should do any thing by me!

“1786, Jan. 1.—Some painful reflections in thinking on my vast deficiencies. Another year is gone, and what have I done for God? Oh that my life were more devoted to God! I feel as if I could wish to set out afresh for heaven, but, alas! my desires seem but too much like those of the sluggard.

“8.—Very earnest this morning in public prayer. Oh that God may work on the minds of our youth and children! I hope there is somewhat of a work of God going on amongst us. I have been visited by a young man who gives very promising evidence of being a subject of true religion, so far as can be judged by a conversation. Also a young woman has been with me who appears to be very tender-hearted, meek, and lowly in mind. Exceedingly distressed on Wednesday night. I fear God will take away my child. I have reason to fear some awful chastisement is at hand, either *spiritual* or *temporal*. Methought I was like the Israelites, who had little or no heart to call upon God except in times of trouble. I tried, however, to pray to him now. I think I could willingly submit to God in all things, and bear whatever he should lay upon me, though it were the loss of one of the dear parts of myself, provided I could but see Christ formed in her. I know also that I have no demand on the Lord for this; but surely I ought to bless his name that he does not require me to be willing to be lost myself, or that this should be the end of any whom he has put under my care. The chief exercise of my mind this week has been respecting my poor child. Methought I felt some resignation to Divine Providence. ‘The Lord liveth, and blessed be my rock.’

“19.—I hear that a piece is coming out, against what I have written, on the

Arminian side. I have no fears as to the cause itself, but many as to my capacity to defend it.

"20.—Had some very affecting conversation with Miss M. W. I feel reluctant in being obliged to attend to controversy. My heart seems to delight in my work, and I hope the Lord, in some measure, is owning it.

"This week I received Dr. Withers's treatise against what I have written. What horrid sentiments does he advance!

"Feb. 5.—Our dear little girl has this week much alarmed our fears. On Thursday morning the measles came out: we hope the illness may be carried off hereby. As I sat by her that morning alone, she requested me to pray with her, saying, though she was greatly afflicted with pain, yet she would try to lie still. I did so, and found some tenderness of heart on her behalf. My mind is generally much engaged now in perusing the treatises which are published against what I have written. This morning I received another, written by Mr. Dan Taylor.

"6. Monday.—I read the above piece. The author discovers an amiable spirit, and there is a good deal of plausibility in some things that he advances. My mind has been much employed all the week on this piece. The more I examine it, the more I perceive that it is open to a solid and effective reply.

"10.—Some edifying conversation this morning with Mr. Jones, a clergyman lately come to Creaton.\*

"12.—Great are the mercies of the Lord towards us, who has now given me another daughter. Mercy and judgment both visit us. Now my fears chiefly turn on the child that is afflicted.

"19.—My sabbaths, I fear, are spent to little purpose, I have so little love to God and the souls of men; but I felt much impressed to-night in catechising the children. I thought and spoke to them about my own dear little girl.

"26.—Except Thursday, all this week has been miserably spent! I sin against God repeatedly, and yet remain wretchedly insensible. I tremble at myself, and have reason to do so much more.

"April 16.—For this month past I have had great exercise of heart, on account of my poor little daughter. Sometimes pleading hard with God on her account; at other times ready to despair, fearing God would never hear me.

"Lord's day, March 19, was a distressing day to me. My concern for the loss of her body is but trifling, compared with that of her soul. I preached and prayed much, from Matt. xv. 25, 'Lord, help me!' on Monday I carried her towards Northampton; was exceedingly distressed that night; went to prayer with a heart almost broken. Some encouragement from conversation with dear brother Ryland. I observed that 'God had not bound himself to hear the prayers of any one for the salvation of the soul of another.' He replied, 'But if he has not, yet he frequently *does* so; and hence, perhaps, though grace does not run in the *blood*, yet we frequently see it runs in the *line*. Many more of the children of God's children are gracious than of others.' I know neither I nor mine have any claim upon the Almighty for mercy; but as long as there is life, it shall be my business to implore his mercy towards her.

"Methought I saw, on Tuesday, (21,) the vanity of all created good. I saw,

\* This eminently excellent Episcopal clergyman remained for nearly fifty years to labour in this interesting village. As might have been expected, however, very many who were brought to the knowledge of the truth by his ministry became Dissenters, and not a few of them Baptists. Several congregations in that neighbourhood were thus founded by him, so that he had used pleasantly to say that he had successive swarms and casts among his bees, who seemed to acquire the habit of carrying their honey to other hives.—B.

if God were to cut off my poor child, and not to afford me some extraordinary support under the stroke, that I should be next to dead to the whole creation, and all creation dead to me! Oh that I were but thus dead, as Paul was, *by the cross of Christ*.

“On the 27th, riding towards Northampton, I think I felt greater earnestness and freedom with God than I ever had before in this matter. I seemed likewise more willing to leave her in the hands of God. Some tender opportunities in prayer with her and for her. I now feel more of an habitual resignation to God. If I could take the reins into my own hand, I would not. I feel a satisfaction that my times, and the times of all that pertain to me, are in the Lord’s hands. This also I have felt all along, never to desire the life of the child, unless it be for her present and eternal good. Unless she should live to the Lord, I had rather, if it please God, she might not live at all.

“To-day I felt some encouragement in my work from hearing of a young man hopefully converted in hearing me preach.

“My time and attention are now much taken up with my poor little girl, particularly on the 28th. Exceedingly affected and importunate with God in prayer for her. I felt, indeed, the force of those words, ‘To whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.’ Oh, of what worth to an immortal creature, subject to eternal death! My heart seemed to be dissolved in earnest cries for mercy.

“May 7.—I was tolerably supported under the approaching death of my poor child, which I saw drawing on apace. I saw I must shortly let her fall. With floods of tears, with all the bitterness of an afflicted father mourning for his first-born, I committed her to God, to his everlasting arms, when she should fall from mine.

“21.—Death! Death is all around me! My friends die. Three I have buried within a fortnight, and another I shall have to bury soon! Death and judgment are all I can think about! At times I feel reconciled to whatever may befall me. I am not without good hopes of the child’s piety, and as to her life, desirable as it is, the will of the Lord be done.

“30.—But at other times I am distressed beyond due bounds. On the 25th, in particular, my distress seemed beyond all measure. I lay before the Lord, weeping like David, and refusing to be comforted. This brought on, I have reason to think, a bilious cholice; a painful affliction it was, and the more so as it prevented my ever seeing my child alive again! Yes, she is gone! On Tuesday morning, May 30, as I lay ill in bed in another room, I heard a whispering. I inquired, and all were silent . . . . . all were silent! . . . . . but all is well. I feel reconciled to God! I called my family round my bed. I sat up, and prayed as well as I could; I bowed my head and worshipped, and blessed a taking as well as a giving God.

“June 1.—I just made a shift to get up to-day, and attend the funeral of my poor child. My dear brother Ryland preached on the occasion, from 2 Kings iv. 26,—‘It is well.’ I feel, in general now, a degree of calm resignation. I think there is solid reason to hope that she has not lived in vain; and if she is but reared for God, it matters not when she died. I feel a solid pleasure in reflecting on our own conduct in her education; we endeavoured to bring her up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and I trust our endeavours were not in vain. Her visit to Northampton, too, was blessed for her good; she has certainly discovered ever since great tenderness of conscience, and much of the fear of God; great regard for the worship of God, especially for the Lord’s day;

and great delight in reading, especially accounts of the conversion of some little children. But all is over now, and I am in a good degree satisfied.

“3.—To-day I felt a sort of triumph over death. I went and stood on her grave with a great deal of composure! Returned, and wrote some verses to her memory.

“4.—Had a good day in preaching on *these light afflictions*. My mind seems very calm and serene, in respect of the child; but, alas! I feel the insufficiency of trouble, however heavy, to destroy or mortify sin. I have had sad experience of my own depravity, even while under the very rod of God.\*

“6.—Rode to Northampton, to our annual association. I am glad to find the state of the churches upon the whole encouraging. The next day I and Mr. Hopper and Mr. Sutcliff preached; but I wanted more spirituality.

“8.—We had a very affecting time in communicating experiences. For my part, I fear something more awful than the death of the child awaits me. Though I have been in the fire, yet my dross is not removed; nay, it seems to be increased. My family is afflicted nearly throughout! ‘For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.’

\* A narrative of this interesting child was written by her father, but as it contains little more than a detail of the events which are recorded in a more impressive form in the above diary, it will only be necessary to give the following extract: “At the time of her birth I committed her to God, as I trust I have done many times since. Once in particular viewing her as she lay smiling in the cradle, at the age of eight months, my heart was much affected; I took her up in my arms, retired, and in that position wrestled hard with God for a blessing; at the same time offering her up as it were and solemnly presenting her to the Lord for acceptance. In this exercise I was greatly encouraged by the conduct of Christ towards those who brought little children in their arms to him for his blessing.” Speaking of her residence a short time at Northampton, he adds,—“During this fortnight I went two or three times to see her; and one evening, being with her alone, she asked me to pray for her. ‘What do you wish me to pray for, my dear?’ said I. She answered, ‘That God would bless me, and keep me, and save my soul.’ ‘Do you think, then, that you are a sinner?’ ‘Yes, father.’ Fearing lest she did not understand what she said, I asked her, ‘What is sin, my dear?’ She answered, ‘Telling a story.’ I comprehended this, and it went to my heart. ‘What, then,’ I said, ‘you remember, do you, my having corrected you once for telling a story?’ ‘Yes, father.’ ‘And are you grieved for having so offended God?’ ‘Yes, father.’ I asked her if she did not try to pray herself. She answered, ‘I sometimes try, but I do not know how to pray; I wish you would pray for me, till I can pray for myself.’ As I continued to sit by her, she appeared much dejected. I asked her the reason. She said, ‘I am afraid I should go to hell.’ ‘My dear,’ said I, ‘who told you so?’ ‘Nobody,’ said she, ‘but I know if I do not pray to the Lord, I must go to hell.’ I then went to prayer with her, with many tears.

“She was accustomed to pray over the hymn which Mr. Ryland composed for her.† I used to carry her in my arms into the fields, and there talk with her upon the desirableness of dying and being with Christ, and with holy men and women, and with those holy children who cried, Hosanna to the Son of David. Thus I tried to reconcile her, and myself with her, to death, without directly telling her she would soon die. One day, as she lay in bed, I read to her the last eight verses of Rev. vii., ‘They shall hunger no more, nor thirst,’ &c. I said nothing upon it, but wished to observe what effect the passage might have upon her; I should not have wondered if she had been a little cheered by it. She said nothing, however, but looked very dejected. I said, ‘My dear, you are unhappy.’ She was silent. I urged her to tell me what was the matter. Still she was silent. I then asked her whether she was afraid she should not go to that blessed world of which I had been reading? She answered, ‘Yes.’—‘But what makes you afraid, my dear?’—‘Because (said she, with a tone of grief that pierced me to the heart) I have sinned against the Lord.’—‘True, my dear, (said I,) you have sinned against the Lord; but the Lord is more ready to forgive you, if you are grieved for offending him, than I can be to forgive you when you are grieved for offending me; and you know how ready I am to do that.’ I then told her of the great grace of God, and the love of Christ to sinners. I told her of his mercy in forgiving a poor wicked thief, who, when he was dying, prayed to him to save his soul. At this she seemed cheered, but said nothing.

“A few weeks before she died, she asked her aunt to read to her. ‘What shall I read, my dear?’ said her aunt. ‘Read (said she) some book about Christ.’ Her aunt read part of the twenty-first chapter of Matthew, concerning the children who shouted Hosanna to the Son of David.” She died May 30, 1786, aged six years and a half.

† The well-known hymn—“Lord, teach a little child to pray,” &c.

"11.—Lord's day.—Had a good day, on the Lord's giving us peace by *all means*. I know not how I go on. On the Lord's days I am tender-hearted, and seem disposed to lie low before God, and to be more watchful and spiritual; but, alas, how soon do I forget God! I have a fountain of poison in my very nature. Surely I am as a beast before thee! I have been preaching at Moulton and Hardingstone this week, and seemed to feel at both places; and yet I am far from a spiritual frame of mind. Had a pretty good day, in preaching from Jer. xxxi. 2,—'The people that were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness.' I heard last week that Mr. Hall, of Arnsby, had been preaching from Prov. xxx. 2,—'Surely I am more brutish than any man,' &c. I am sure that passage is more applicable to me than it can be to him; I therefore preached from it to-day. At night I preached a very searching discourse, from Lam. iii. 40, chiefly for the purpose of self-conviction."

Several leaves are here wanting, which have been destroyed; nor is any further entry made for upwards of three years.\*

\* The following letter, belonging to this chasm in Mr. Fuller's diary, will both show the state of his mind, and present a pleasing specimen of his correspondence with his brethren in the ministry.—B.

KETTERING, July 13, 1788.

DEAR SIR,—When I was at your house you kindly requested a letter on my return. Excuse my not attending to your request before. I am slow at writing, not knowing how in general to write any thing to purpose. I shall always remember my visit to Horsley with pleasure. I wish, in some future time, not far hence, you might be able to say the same of Kettering.

Since I saw you we have had two public meetings; one of which is our annual association. I think our churches have never been in so thriving a state, upon the whole, for several years. I have just received one of your Circular Letters; am glad to see things go on so well with you. Blessed be God for any appearances of Christ's kingdom being enlarged. My dear brother Ryland, jun., preached us a sermon at our association, from John iii. 30, "He must increase." The very mention of the words did my heart good. I hope I could rejoice if I were to sink into obscurity, like the Baptist, if by that means Christ's cause might but be enlarged. When I think what vast numbers are hastening the downward road; how few walk the narrow way; and, comparatively speaking, what little success attends our preaching, and what little ground Christ gets in the world, my heart fails and is discouraged. But it did my heart good last night to read Isaiah xlii. 4, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged till he have set judgment in the earth!" I could not but reflect that Christ had infinitely more to discourage him than I can have to discourage me; and yet he persevered! But, methought, judgment is not yet set in the earth, except in a small degree. And what then? May I not take courage for that the promise has not yet spent its force? Christ has much more yet to do in the world; and, numerous as his enemies yet are, and few his friends, his heart does not fail him; nor shall it, till he has spread salvation throughout the earth, and leavened the whole lump!

Oh that my own soul was more leavened! My greatest difficulties arise from within. I am not what a servant of Christ should be. I want an unction from the Holy One. I have lately preached an ordination sermon or two, (that at Thorn, which is printed, for one,) in which I have endeavoured to come as home to the heart and conscience of my brethren as I knew how. But, oh, what shame covers my face when I turn my attention inward! I am the man who am too, too guilty of many of those things which I have cautioned them to avoid. I remember, in August last, when I came out of the pulpit at Carlton, in Bedfordshire, after preaching an ordination sermon to my brother West, from Ezra vii. 10, Mr. Pilley of Luton, a dear and faithful servant of Christ, in a tone of familiarity, thus accosted me:—"Are not you ashamed of yourself? I am;" said he. "Yes," said I; "and so am I." I find a perpetual proneness to read and study rather as a minister than as a *Christian*; more to find out something to say to the people than to edify my own soul.

How great a matter is Christian perseverance, to hold out to the end, *and be saved!* I have sometimes wondered at the grace in that astonishing gradation, Jude 24. What "*Him*?" must that be that is able to keep *me* from falling—and to present *me*—to present *me faultless*—faultless before *the presence of his glory*—and that *with joy*—yea, with *exceeding joy!* Excuse thus much about myself. Have you read my reply to Button and Taylor? If you have, let me have your free thoughts upon it. It is a matter beyond all doubt with me that Button's scheme is very antisciptural; and I am more and more convinced that Taylor's is the same. When I think of the tendency of his principles, and those of his

† Rev. Dan Taylor, of London.—B.

The following short extracts from letters written to Dr. Ryland, during the illness of the child, will be read with interest :—

“ I have, for a day or two past, been greatly afraid of her recovering just so much as to raise my expectations, so that I should have all the work to do over again. But perhaps that is best. If there is a *need be* for trials, then there is a need for such circumstances to attend the events which befall us as shall make them *trials*. And one of David’s trials was, ‘Thou hast lifted me up and cast me down.’ I feel, however, how much I am indebted to mercy for many things which attend this affliction. I sometimes think how if my two other children should be left, and grow up wicked, and then be cut off like Eli’s sons! Ah, in many of my prayers *I know not what I ask*. May God in mercy do that for me and those that pertain to me which is best! I feel a sweet satisfaction in the reins being in his hand, the government upon his shoulders. I have just now been preaching from Matt. xx. 20—24. I fear I am not yet able to drink the cup, and if not to drink the cup, perhaps I am less able to bear a deliverance from it.

“ Yesterday my wife had pretty much talk with her, and seemed much satisfied of her piety, and resigned to her death. For my part, I feel very different at different times. But generally speaking, except when my feelings are attacked by the child’s heavy afflictions, or any fresh symptom of death, I find a far greater degree of composure and resignation to God than ever I could have expected. I can easily see it may be best for us to part. I have been long praying, in I know not what manner, that I might be brought *nearer to God*; find some particular *evils* in my heart subdued; have my mind enlarged in *experimental* knowledge, and my heart more *wearied* from things below, and *set on things above*. Perhaps by ‘terrible things in righteousness’ God may answer these petitions. Oh that it may be so, indeed! I feel, however, that it must be something more than affliction to effect that! I have long found, to my shame, that though drawing and living near to God are the happiest things in the world, yet such is the carnality of my heart, that I have long been in a habit of despairing of ever attaining them. I have often, of late, said of holiness what Solomon said of wisdom—‘I thought to be holy, but it was far from me.’

“ Some time ago I spoke at a child’s grave, and addressed the children. It appears that a little girl was wrought upon, who is since dead. At that time her father and mother were very ignorant. She talked much to them before her death. I hope the Lord has lately wrought upon her mother. She seems very tender-hearted, and in real earnest after the salvation of her soul. Her husband has opposed her coming to meeting, but in vain. He beat her, but to no purparty, I can scarcely forbear exclaiming, “Oh, my soul! come thou not into their secret!” They go from one thing to another, like a rolling stone upon a house roof. Whither is poor T——\* of Birmingham going? At first he seemed as if he would be contented with Baxterianism, owning an election to everlasting life; and when I asked him, “Brother T——, how came *you* to be a believer?” he answered, seemingly without reserve, “I am sure if I am saved it must be by invincible grace” But now I find by his own hand-writing he believes in no election, unless it be a conditional one. And so it seems, it is we ourselves, after all, that turn the scale in matters of salvation! I have not yet seen your Socinian champion. My kind and Christian love to Mrs. Francis. It is with pleasure I recollect her free and Christian behaviour. My kind love also to any of your friends who may remember me. Accept the same to yourself. I hope this will find you better of your complaints. If you see the gentleman with whom we dined at Yewlee, I think, (I forget his name,) make my respects to him.

I am, dear Sir, your affectionate brother,

A. FULLER.

B.

\* The reference here is to Mr. Taylor, the predecessor of the Rev. Samuel Pearce, of Cannon-street, Birmingham. He was originally a minister of the Wesleyan Methodist Body, and became a Calvinist and Baptist, and laboured for some years at Birmingham with success. He ultimately returned to the Methodists, among whom he died.—B.

pose. He then despaired, and began to think her right and himself wrong. 'If it had not been of God,' said he, 'I had overcome it before now.' The man invited me to visit his wife. I went, expecting him to dispute with me, as he had threatened to stop me in the street for that purpose: accordingly I gave him an opportunity; but, says the poor man, 'I have done with that now, my chief concern is, What must I do to be saved?' I cannot tell how it may issue as to him; he comes sometimes to meeting, and sometimes goes to hear Mr. Lydiat, at Warkton. Last Tuesday I was visited by a lad, who has lately been observed to weep very much under the word. He appears to have every mark of true and deep contrition, and says a sermon I preached, two or three months ago, on sinners being under the curse of the Almighty, was first of use to him. The Lord carry on his work!

"Last night I preached a funeral sermon for one person, and buried two others within nine days. Can I be supposed to be otherwise than dejected? We attend all we can to our own health, but is it to be wondered at that we should be sensibly affected and very ill? To nurse a child with her afflictions is great work for the hands; but to nurse altogether without hope is far greater work for the heart. 'But the hope of a better world.'—True—and I never felt the worth of that consideration so much as now. Ten thousand worlds seem nothing in consideration of the hope of the gospel. Surely I know something more than I did of the meaning of 'Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!' and, 'Underneath are the everlasting arms!' with many other passages. And yet, after all, oh what shall I say? I am not without hope—hope, as I said, with which I would not part for ten thousand worlds; but I have as well painful fears. My dear brother, the matter is of too great importance to be thought of lightly. However, the nearer I am to God, the better it is with me. I thought last night it was some relief that God had enjoined us to train up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Methought there was never a command but what had a promise connected with it; for God does not say to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain. I also felt some satisfaction in reflecting on my conduct towards the child, and thought of the Psalmist's words—'Lord, I have hoped in thy salvation, and have done thy commandments.'

"I enjoy great satisfaction and pleasure whenever I think of her being at Northampton. If there is any change in her, I think your conversation, or the instructions she received at Northampton, were the means. Those few verses you wrote for her she will still repeat, though obliged to rest, for want of breath, between almost every word. She says, 'Mr. Ryland told me, when I had got them, he would make me some more,' and requested I would write to you for them."

Mr. Fuller thus resumes his diary:—

"October 3, 1789.—For above a year and a half I have written nothing. It has seemed to me that my life was not worth writing. Two or three years ago my heart began wretchedly to degenerate from God. Soon after my child Sally died, I sunk into a sad state of lukewarmness; and have felt the effects of it ever since. I feel at times a longing after the lost joys of God's salvation; but cannot recover them. I have backslidden from God; and yet I may rather be said to be habitually dejected on account of it than earnestly to repent of it. I find much hardness of heart, and a spirit of inactivity has laid hold of me. I feel that to be carnally minded is death. My spiritual enemies have been too much for me. Some time ago I set apart a day for fasting and prayer, and

seemed to get some strength in pleading with God. The very next day, as I remember, I found my heart so wandering from God, and such a load of guilt contracted, that I was affrighted at my own prayer the preceding day, lest it should have provoked the Lord to punish me, by leaving me so suddenly; and I have not set apart a day to fast and pray since. But surely this was one of Satan's devices, by which I have been imposed upon. Perhaps, also, I trusted too much to my fasting and praying, and did not, on that account, follow it with sufficient watchfulness.

"In the month of May I preached with some feeling from Job xxix. 2, 'Oh that it were with me as in months past,' &c. During this summer, I have sometimes thought what joy Christians might possess in this world, were they but to improve their opportunities and advantages. What grounds of joy does the gospel afford! What joy was possessed by the primitive Christians! I have preached two or three times upon these subjects. Once from John xv. 11,—'These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full!' Another time from Neh. viii. 10,—'The joy of the Lord is your strength.' And again, from Mark xi. 24,—'Whatsoever things ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye shall receive them, and ye shall receive them:' in which the chief sentiment on which I insisted was, that *confidence in God's goodness was necessary to our success in prayer*. Another time I preached from 'Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.'

"These subjects have tended sometimes to make me long after that joy and peace in believing which I have heretofore found. But joy of heart is a feeling I cannot yet recover."

"Jan. 20, 1790.—During the last quarter of a year I seem to have gained some ground in spiritual things. I have read some of Jonathan Edwards's sermons, which have left a deep impression on my heart. I have attended more constantly than heretofore to private prayer, and feel a little renewed strength. Sometimes also I have been much affected in public prayer, particularly on Monday, January the 4th, at the monthly prayer-meeting. I felt much afraid lest some uncomfortable debates which we have had in the church, though now finished, should have grieved the Holy Spirit, and quenched our affection for each other, and so lest our spiritual welfare as a church should be essentially injured.

"Sometimes I have been discouraged, and afraid that God would never bless me again. In my preaching, though I am at times affected with what I say, yet, as to doing good to others, I go on as if I had no hope of it. Repeated disappointments, and long want of success, make me feel as if I were not to expect success.

"Last Friday evening I was affected with the subject of *Divine withdrawal*, and especially with the thought of being *contented* in such a state. If we lose our daily bread we cannot live; if we lose our health we are miserable; if we lose a dear friend we are the same: and can we lose the bread of life, the health of our souls, and the best friend of all, and be unconcerned? Last Lord's day I preached upon the *desirableness of nearness to God*, from Psal. xxvii. 9—'Hide not thy face from me; put not thy servant away in anger; thou *hast* been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.'

"Feb. 16.—For these last three weeks I have too much again relapsed into a kind of thoughtlessness. I have felt a little in preaching, but not much. One day I was looking over Dr. Owen on the Mortification of Sin. Speaking of the evil of sin in the soul unmortified, he says,—'It will take away a man's usefulness in his generation. His works, his endeavours, his labours, seldom



receive a blessing from God. If he be a preacher, God commonly blows upon his ministry, so that he shall labour in the fire, and not be honoured with success.' This, in a great degree, is realized in me.

"March 27.—Some weeks ago I thought I felt myself to gain ground by closet prayer; but I have lately relapsed again too much into indifference. Yesterday I read *Jonathan Edwards's* two Sermons *On the Importance of a Thorough Knowledge of Divine Truth*, from Heb. v. 12. I felt this effect,—a desire to rise earlier, to read more, and to make the discovery of truth more a business. This morning I have read another of his sermons, on *God the Christian's Portion*, from Psal. lxxiii. 25. The latter part comes very close, and I feel myself at a loss what to judge as to God's being my chief good. He asks, whether we had rather live in this world rich, and without God, or poor and with him? Perhaps I should not be so much at a loss to decide this question as another; namely, had I rather be rich in this world, and enjoy but *little* of God; or poor, and enjoy *much* of God? I am confident the practice of great numbers of professing Christians declares that they prefer the former; and in some instances I feel guilty of the same thing.

"In the course of this summer (1790) I have sometimes enjoyed a tenderness of heart in preaching. On June 27th, at the Lord's supper, I was affected with this subject, 'Do this in remembrance of me.' I was also greatly affected on Sept. 5, in preaching from Gal. vi. 7, 'Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.' But yet in general I have but little of the joys of salvation. I do not feel tempted to evil as heretofore, but yet all is not right. 'Oh for a closer walk with God!'

"At the close of this year the review of my life afforded me neither pleasure nor what may be called pain; but rather a kind of discouragement too common of late with me.

"From last April I have been expounding the book of Psalms, and sometimes have enjoyed pleasure therein."

"1791.—In the spring of this year there appeared a religious concern among some of our young people. I proposed to meet them once a week at the vestry, to talk and pray with them. I hope this has been of use both to me and them. I find there are some hopeful appearances at Northampton. The Lord revive his own work.

"I feel some return of peace, but am not as I would be. Reading Owen on Spiritual-mindedness, I feel afraid lest all should not be right with me at last. What I have of spirituality, as I account it, seems rather occasional than habitual.

"Towards the latter end of this summer, I heard of some revival of religion about Walgrave and Guilsborough; and that the means of it were their setting apart days for fasting and prayer. Hence I thought we had been long praying for the revival of God's cause, and the spread of the gospel among the heathen, &c., and perhaps God would begin with us at home first. I was particularly affected with this thought, by finding it in the 67th Psalm, which I was expounding about the same time: Oh that God's being merciful to *us*, and blessing us, might be the means of his way being made known upon earth, and his saving health among all nations; at least among a part of them.

"Oh to be spiritually alive among ourselves! One Monday evening, I think in October, I told our friends of some such things, and prayed with them with more than usual affection. I was particularly encouraged by the promise of giving the Holy Spirit to them that ask. Surely if ever I wrestled with God

in my life I did so then, for *more grace*, for *forgiveness*, for the restoration of the joys of salvation; and that not only for myself, but for the generality of Christians among us, whom I plainly perceived to be in a poor lukewarm state, when compared with the primitive Christians. I have lately been reading several Socinian writers; viz. *Lindsey*, *Priestley*, *Belsham*, &c., and have employed myself in penning down thoughts on the moral tendency of their system. I felt an increasing aversion to their views of things, and feel the ground on which my hopes are built more solid than heretofore.

“The 27th of December I set apart for fasting and prayer. I felt tender in the course of the day. Thought with some encouragement of Psal. cxix. 176, —‘I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant, for I do not forget thy commandments.’ I employed a considerable part of the day in reading over Owen on the Mortification of Sin. A review of the past year, and of several past years, tended to humble me.

“I felt tender on Friday evening, Dec. 30, in addressing my friends from Psal. xc. 14, on the mercy of God as the origin of all solid joy.”

“1792.—This year was begun, or nearly so, with a day of solemn fasting and prayer, kept by us as a church. It was a most affecting time with me and many more. Surely we never had such a spirit of prayer amongst us!

“On the 2d of April we lost our dear and worthy deacon, Mr. Beeby Wallis.\* The next church meeting was kept as a day of solemn fasting and prayer, and a very tender occasion it was. During this and the last year we have had a good deal of religious concern among the young people of the congregation. I set up a private meeting in which I might read, and pray, and converse with them, and have found it good both to them and me. This spring several of them joined the church.

“June 1.—I seem to have trials before me in the afflictions of my family. It has of late been a thought which has much affected me, that our conduct in this world under the various afflictions and temptations of life is the *seed* of eternity! Have dwelt upon these thoughts in preaching from Matt. vi. 19, 20.

“It was a thought, likewise, which lately struck me, that *we have no more religion than what we have in times of trial*. On this subject I preached from Exod. xvi. 4. It seems as if these things were preparative to a time of trial to me.

“July 10.—My family afflictions have almost overwhelmed me, and what is yet before me I know not! For about a month past the affliction of my dear companion has been extremely heavy. On reading the fourth chapter of Job this morning, the 3d, 4th, and 5th verses affected me.—‘My words have upholden many. O that now I am touched I may not faint!’

\* Some interesting particulars of this excellent man will be found in a funeral sermon, entitled “The Blessedness of the Dead, who die in the Lord;” in this volume, Sermon IV.

The following inscription, by Mr. Fuller, was placed on his tomb, which stands under a sycamore, planted by his own hand:—

Kind sycamore, preserve beneath thy shade  
The precious dust of him who cherished thee;  
Nor thee alone; a plant to him more dear  
He cherished, and with fostering hand upreared.  
Active and generous in virtue’s cause,  
With solid wisdom, strict integrity,  
And unaffected piety, he lived  
Beloved amongst us, and beloved he died.  
Beneath an Allon-bachuth Jacob wept;  
Beneath thy shade we mourn a heavier loss.

It ought to be recorded, that in the parlour of this gentleman’s house, exactly six months after his death, was formed the Baptist Missionary Society, to which his excellent widow was a warm friend to the day of her death.—B.

"25.—O my God, my soul is cast down within me! The afflictions in my family seem too heavy for me. O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me! My thoughts are broken off, and all my prospects seem to be perished! I feel, however, some support from such scriptures as these: 'All things work together for good,' &c.—'God, even our own God, shall bless us.'—'It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed.' One of my friends observed, yesterday, that it was difficult in many cases to know wherefore God contended with us. But I thought that there was no difficulty of this kind with me. I have sinned against the Lord; and it is not a little affliction that will lay hold of me. Those words have impressed me of late: 'It was in my heart to chastise them.'

A record of the death of his amiable and pious wife forms the last entry in the diary for nearly two years. The following affecting letter to her father, Mr. Gardiner, furnishes the melancholy details of the concluding scene:—

"DEAR AND HONOURED FATHER,—

"Aug. 25, 1792.

"You have heard, I suppose, before now, that my dear companion is no more! For about three months back our afflictions have been extremely heavy. About the beginning of June she was seized with hysterical affections, which, for a time, deprived her of her senses. In about a week, however, she recovered them, and seemed better; but soon relapsed again; and during the months of July and August, a very few intervals excepted, her mind has been constantly deranged. In this unhappy state, her attention has generally been turned upon some one object of distress; sometimes that she had lost her children; sometimes that she should lose me. For one whole day she hung about my neck, weeping; for that I was going to die, and leave her! The next morning she still retained the same persuasion; but, instead of weeping for it, she rejoiced with exceeding joy. 'My husband,' said she, 'is going to heaven . . . . and all is well!—I shall be provided for,' &c. Sometimes we were her worst enemies, and must not come near her; at other times she would speak to me in the most endearing terms. Till very lately, she has been so desirous of my company, that it has been with much difficulty that I have stolen away from her about two hours in the twenty-four, that I might ride out in the air, my health having been considerably impaired. But lately her mind took another turn, which to me was very afflictive. It is true she never ceased to love her husband. 'I have had,' she would say, 'as tender a husband as ever woman had; but you are not my husband!' She seemed for the last month really to have considered me as an impostor, who had entered the house, and taken possession of the keys of every place, and of all that belonged to her and her husband. Poor soul! for the last month, as I said, this and other notions of the kind have rendered her more miserable than I am able to describe! She has been fully persuaded that she was *not at home*, but had wandered some where from it; had lost herself, and fallen among strangers. She constantly wanted to make her escape, on which account we were obliged to keep the doors locked, and to take away the keys. 'No,' she would say to me, with a countenance full of inexpressible anguish, 'this is not my home . . . you are not my husband . . . these are not my children. Once I had a good home . . . and a husband who loved me . . . and dear children . . . and kind friends . . . but where am I now? I am lost! I am ruined! What have I done? Oh! what have I done? Lord, have mercy upon me!' In this strain she would be frequently walking up and down, from room to room, bemoaning herself, without a tear to relieve her, wringing her hands, first looking upwards, then downwards, in all

the attitudes of wild despair! You may form some conception what must have been my feelings, to have been a spectator of all this anguish, and at the same time incapable of affording her the smallest relief.

“Though she seemed not to know the children about her, yet she had a keen and lively remembrance of those that were taken away. One day, when I was gone out for the air, she went out of the house. The servant missing her, immediately followed, and found her in the grave-yard, looking at the graves of her children. She said nothing; but, with a bitterness of soul, pointed the servant’s eyes to the wall, where the name of one of them, who was buried in 1783, was cut in the stone. Then turning to the graves of the other children, in an agony, she with her foot struck off the long grass, which had grown over the flat stones, and read the inscriptions with silent anguish, alternately looking at the servant and at the stones.

“About a fortnight before her death, she had one of the happiest intervals of any during the affliction. She had been lamenting on account of this *impostor* that was come into her house, and would not give her the keys. She tried for two hours to obtain them by force, in which time she exhausted all her own strength, and almost mine. Not being able to obtain her point, as I was necessarily obliged to resist her in this matter, she sat down and wept—threatening me that God would surely judge me for treating a poor helpless creature in such a manner! I also was overcome with grief: I wept with her. The sight of my tears seemed to awaken her recollection. With her eyes fixed upon me, she said . . . ‘Why, are you *indeed* my husband?’—‘Indeed, my dear, I am!’—‘O! if I thought you were, I could give you a thousand kisses!’ ‘*Indeed*, my dear, I am your own dear husband!’ She then seated herself upon my knee, and kissed me several times. My heart dissolved with a mixture of grief and joy. Her senses were restored, and she talked as rationally as ever. I then persuaded her to go to rest, and she slept well.

“About two in the morning she awoke, and conversed with me as rationally as ever she did in her life: said her poor head had been disordered; that she had given me a great deal of trouble, and feared she had injured my health; begged I would excuse all her hard thoughts and speeches; and urged this as a consideration—‘Though I was set against you, yet I was not set against you as my *husband*.’ She desired I would ride out every day for the air; gave directions to the servant about her family; told her where this and that article were to be found, which she wanted; inquired after various family concerns, and how they had been conducted since she had been ill: and thus we continued talking together till morning.

“She continued much the same all the forenoon; was delighted with the conversation of Robert, whose heart also was delighted, as he said, to see his mother so well. ‘Robert,’ said she, ‘we shall not live together much longer.’ ‘Yes, mother,’ replied the child, ‘I hope we shall live together forever!’ Joy sparkled in her eyes at this answer: she stroked his head, and exclaimed, ‘O bless you, my dear! how came such a thought into your mind?’

“Towards noon she said to me, ‘We will dine together to-day, my dear, up stairs.’ We did so. But while we were at dinner, in a few minutes her senses were gone; nor did she ever recover them again. From this happy interval, however, I entertained hopes that her senses would return when she was delivered, and came to recover her strength.

“On Thursday, the 23d instant, she was delivered of a daughter; but was all the day very restless, full of pain and misery, no return of reason, except

that from an aversion to me, which she had so long entertained, she called me 'my dear,' and twice kissed me; said she 'must die,' and 'let me die, my dear,' said she, 'let me die!' Between nine and ten o'clock, as there seemed no immediate sign of a change, and being very weary, I went to rest; but about eleven was called up again, just time enough to witness the convulsive pangs of death, which in about ten minutes carried her off.

"Poor soul! What she often said is now true. She was not at *home* . . . . I am not her husband . . . . these are not her children . . . . but she has found her home . . . . a home, a husband, and a family better than these! It is the cup which my Father hath given me to drink, and shall I not drink it? Amidst all my afflictions I have much to be thankful for. I have reason to be thankful, that though her intellects were so deranged, yet she never uttered any ill language, nor was ever disposed to do mischief to herself or others; and when she was at the worst, if I fell on my knees to prayer she would instantly be still and attentive. I have also to be thankful, that though she has been generally afraid of *death* all her lifetime, yet that fear has been remarkably removed for the last half year. While she retained her reason, she would sometimes express a willingness to live or to die, as it might please God; and about five or six weeks ago would now and then possess a short interval in which she would converse freely. One of our friends, who staid at home with her on Lord's days, says that her conversation at those times would often turn on the poor and imperfect manner in which she had served the Lord, her desires to serve him better, her grief to think she had so much and so often sinned against him. On one of these occasions, she was wonderfully filled with joy on overhearing the congregation while they were singing over the chorus, 'Glory, honour, praise, and power,' &c. She seemed to catch the sacred spirit of the song.

"I mean to erect a stone to her memory, on which will probably be engraved the following lines:—

The tender parent wails no more her loss,  
Nor labours more beneath life's heavy load;  
The anxious soul, released from fears and woes,  
Has found her home, her children, and her God.

"To all this I may add, that, perhaps, I have reason to be thankful for her removal: however the dissolution of such a union may affect my present feelings, it may be one of the greatest mercies both to her and me. Had she continued, and continued in the same state of mind, which was not at all improbable, this, to all appearance would have been a thousand times worse than *death*.

"The poor little infant is yet alive, and we call her name *Bathoni*: the same name, except the difference of sex, which Rachel gave to her last-born child.\* Mr. West preached a funeral sermon last night, at the interment, from 2 Cor. v. 1."

Several months afterwards, Mr. Fuller composed the following plaintive lines, during a solitary ride through Corby woods:—

"I, who erewhile was blessed with social joys,  
With joys that sweetened all the ills of life,  
And shed a cheerful light on all things round,  
Now mourn my days in pensive solitude.  
There once did live a heart that cared for me;

\* Gen. xxxv. 16—18.

I loved, and was again beloved in turn ;  
 Her tender soul would soothe my rising griefs,  
 And wipe my tears, and mix them with her own :  
 But she is not ; and I forlorn am left,  
 To weep unheeded, and to serve alone.

“ I roam amidst the dreary woods.—Here once  
 I walked with her who walks no more with me.  
 The fragrant forest then with pleasure smiled,  
 Why wears it now a melancholy hue ?  
 Ah me ! nor woods, nor fields, nor aught besides,  
 Can grateful prove where grief corrodes the heart !

“ God of my life, and guide of all my years,  
 May I again to thee my soul commend,  
 And in thee find a Friend to share my griefs,  
 And give me counsel in each doubtful path,  
 And lead me on through every maze of life,  
 Till I arrive where sighs no more are heard !”

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#### SECTION IV.—1793 TO 1814.

Formation of Baptist mission—Departure of missionaries—Letters on Socinianism—Second marriage—Preaching in Braybrook church—Journey to Scotland—Trouble relative to his eldest son—Publications on Deism, Universal Salvation, Backsliding, Spiritual Pride—Second journey to Scotland—Journey to Ireland—Correspondence with America—Diplomas—Third journey to Scotland—Correspondence—Publication of Dialogues, &c.—Attack on the Mission—Fourth journey to Scotland—Charge of Persecution—Joseph Fuller—Journey to Wales—Fire at Serampore—East India charter—Death of Mr. Sutcliff, &c.

THE employments of life have been ranked among its greatest blessings ; and never does their value appear more striking than when they are directed to the relief of a mind overwhelmed with distress. In conjunction with a few individuals, who had united with him in strenuous efforts to induce compassion on behalf of the heathen world, Mr. Fuller was, in the midst of his afflictions, occupied in maturing plans which issued in the formation of the “ Particular Baptist Society for propagating the gospel among the heathen.” A meeting was convened for that purpose, at Kettering, on the 2d of October, 1792, on which occasion the contributions amounted to 13*l.* 2*s.* 6*d.*, which then constituted the whole of its pecuniary resources.

The meetings for prayer and conference, established in 1784, contained the germ of this institution ; but the specific design of a missionary undertaking originated with the venerable Dr. Carey, at that time pastor of the church at Leicester. This distinguished individual, though of obscure origin, displayed at an early period an astonishing facility in the acquirement of languages,\* which, united with eminent piety and enthusiastic ardour in the most sacred of causes, and aided by the association and counsels of such men as *Ryland, Sut-*

\* Evidence of this is afforded in his early appointment to the professorship of Sanscrit in the college of Fort William.

*cliff*, *Pearce*, and the subject of these memoirs, led to results truly astonishing. The Baptist mission has extended its operations over a large portion of the continent of India, having circulated in that vast tract of country copies of the New Testament in nineteen different languages,\* and of the whole Bible in six, established schools for the instruction of the heathen youth, and already resulted in the hopeful conversion of several hundreds of Hindoos and Mussulmans, besides upwards of 20,000 of the negro population of the West Indies. In this mighty enterprise, the commencement of which was distinguished by extraordinary modesty of pretension and silence of operation, Mr. Fuller found ample scope for the exercise of those powers of mind with which he was endowed; and to this, beyond a doubt, he sacrificed his life.

The characteristic qualities severally displayed by Mr. F.'s associates in this work illustrate an interesting peculiarity in the Divine procedure. In the accomplishment of any great design, men of various and even opposite temperament are selected, (as was strikingly exemplified in the Reformation,) to operate as a mutual check upon that tendency to extremes which too often neutralizes individual efforts. Thus the singular wisdom of *Sutcliff*, and the scrupulous integrity of *Ryland*, served not only to strengthen and develope those qualities already so conspicuous in Mr. Fuller, but happily to temper that constitutional ardour which might otherwise have betrayed him into indiscretions. That Providence which had for so many years guided the workings of these elements, and at length brought them into such happy contact, now marked out the scene of operations, and opened a way for the departure of *Carey*, who, from the first, appears secretly to have resolved on a consecration of himself to this work. Mr. *John Thomas*, a gentleman recently returned from Bengal, was introduced to the Society by the venerable *Abraham Booth*; and it was ultimately agreed that he and Mr. *Carey* should proceed forthwith to India.

In a letter to Dr. *Ryland*, Mr. Fuller says, "You see things of great consequence are in train. My heart fears while it is enlarged. I have this day been to *Olney* to converse with brother *Sutcliff*, and to request him to go with me to *Leicester* this day se'nnight to conciliate the church there, and to sound Mrs. *Carey's* mind, whether she will go and take the family.† . . . I am much concerned with the weight that lies upon us; it is a great undertaking, yet surely it is right. We have all felt much in prayer. We must have one solemn day of fasting and prayer on parting with our *Paul* and *Barnabas*."

This meeting took place at *Leicester*, and was truly affecting. In concluding his charge to the missionaries, Mr. Fuller thus addressed them: "Go, then, my dear brethren, stimulated by these prospects. We shall meet again. Crowns of glory await you and us. Each, I trust, will be addressed in the last day, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, enter ye into the joy of your Lord.'"

A difficulty now arose as to the propriety of making formal application for a passage in one of the Company's ships; but as this might be followed with a refusal, compelling them to go in a less direct form, it was judged most advisable to wave it, and to proceed unobserved. Matters being adjusted, the missionaries embarked amid the prayers and tears of their friends.

\* Now (1844), they have translated the holy Scriptures, in whole or in part, into forty-four languages, and have distributed more than half a million of copies.—B.

† Mrs. *Carey*, in the first instance, was decidedly opposed to the undertaking. Her husband set out leaving her behind, and it was not till he had returned, through the opposition of the East India Company, from the *Isle of Wight*, that she consented to accompany him. The whole narrative of the affair presents a very striking interposition of the providence of God.—B.

They had waited three weeks at the Isle of Wight for a convoy, when the secretary received a letter from Mr. Carey, dated Ryde, May 21, 1793, in which he says, "I have just time to inform you that all our plans are entirely frustrated for the present. On account of the irregular manner of our going out, an information is laid against the captain, for taking a *person* on board without an order from the Company: the person not being specified, Mr. T. and myself and another passenger are ordered to quit the ship. I leave the island to-day or to-morrow, and on Thursday the ship sails without us."

Though Mr. Fuller had rather yielded to this method of going out than approved it, yet the disappointment deeply affected him. He lost no time in forwarding the above epistle to Dr. Ryland, accompanied with the following:—

"Perhaps Carey has written to you. We are all undone! I am grieved; yet, perhaps, 'tis best. I am afraid leave will never be obtained now for Carey or any other, and the adventure seems to be lost. He says nothing of the 250*l.* for voyage—'tis well if that be not lost."

The delay thus occasioned was not however without its advantages, as will be seen by Dr. Ryland's description of an interview with Messrs. Thomas and Carey. "At seeing them I said, 'Well, I know not whether to say I am glad or sorry to see you!' They replied, 'If you are sorry, your sorrow may be turned into joy; for it is all for the best. We have been at Hackleton, and have seen Mrs. Carey; she is well recovered from her confinement, and is now able to accompany her husband, and is willing to go.' I think they said that she had at first refused: they left the house, and had walked half a mile, when Mr. Thomas proposed to go back again, an additional argument having struck his mind to use with her. They went back: she said she would go if her sister would go with her. They then pleaded with the sister that it depended on her whether the family should be separated or not. Since Mrs. Short's return from India, she has told me that she hastened up stairs to pray, and, when she came down, told them she was willing to go. Having related the above, they told me they had heard of a Danish ship which would be in the Downs in four days, and had room for them all."

Having taken a second and final leave of the missionaries, Mr. Fuller addressed himself with redoubled ardour to the promotion of the domestic interests of the mission. His intense application to these important objects occasioned a paralytic affection most alarming to his friends, during which his indefatigable pen was engaged in the defence of evangelical religion at home. In the course of this year he produced his "Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Compared," a work justly entitled to a principal place among his polemical writings. The ground taken was new, and was suggested by the tedious iteration of the stale charge of licentiousness made by the "Unitarians" against the doctrines of Calvinism.

The sentiments of the late Rev. R. Hall relative to this treatise are thus expressed in a letter to the author:—"You will please to accept my hearty thanks for your book; which, without flattery, appears to me by far the most decisive confutation of the Socinian system that ever appeared. There are some particulars in which I differ from you; but, in general, I admire the spirit no less than the reasoning: it will be read not merely as a pamphlet of the day, but for years to come."

Notwithstanding the acknowledgment of several leading persons among the Socinians, that these letters were "well worthy of their attention," it was not till after the lapse of three years that an answer appeared, in the publications of



Dr. Toulmin and Mr. Kentish. The former of those gentlemen undertook to prove 'The Practical Efficacy of the Unitarian Doctrine,' from the successes of the apostles and primitive Christians! Mr. Fuller replied to both. Some passages in his diary, written in 1794, exhibiting the influence of these labours on his character and happiness, and furnishing a pious record of an important domestic occurrence, may here be transcribed.

"July 18.—Within the last year or two we have formed a Missionary Society, and have been enabled to send out two of our brethren to the East Indies. My heart has been greatly interested in this work. Surely I never felt more genuine love to God and to his cause in my life. I bless God that this work has been a means of reviving my soul. If nothing else comes of it, I and many more have obtained a spiritual advantage. My labours, however, in this harvest, I have reason to think, brought on a paralytic stroke, by which, in January, 1793, for a week or two, I lost the use of one side of my face. That was recovered in a little time; but it left behind it a headache, which I have reason to think will never fully leave me. I have ever since been incapable of reading or writing with intense application. At this time I am much better than I was last year, but, even now, reading or writing for a few hours will bring on the headache. Upon the whole, however, I feel satisfied. It was in the service of God. If a man lose his limbs or his health by intemperance, it is to his dishonour; but not so if he lose them in serving his country. Paul was desirous of *dying to the Lord*; so let me!"

"The reflection I made on June 1, 1792,—that we have *no more religion than we have in times of trial*, has again occurred. God has tried me, within the last two or three years, by heavy and sore afflictions in my family, and by threatening complaints in my body. But, of late, trials have been of another kind: having printed "*Letters on Socinianism*," they have procured an unusual tide of respect and applause. Some years ago I endured a portion of reproach on account of what I had written against *false Calvinism*; now I am likely to be tried with the contrary: and, perhaps, *good report*, though more agreeable, may prove not less *trying* than *evil report*. I am apprehensive that God sees my heart to be too much elated already, and therefore withholds his blessing from my ordinary ministrations. I conceive things to be very low in the congregation. It has been a thought which has affected me of late—The church at *Leicester* have lost their pastor, as have also the church at *Northampton*; but neither of them have lost their God: whereas, at *Kettering*, the man and the means are continued; we have the mantle, but 'where is the Lord God of Elijah?' God has, as it were, caused it to rain upon those places, but not upon us. Though without pastors, yet they have had great increase; whereas we have had none of late, and many disorders among us. I am afraid I am defective as to knowing the state of my own church, and looking well to their spiritual concerns.

"Within the last two years, I have experienced, perhaps, as much peace and calmness of mind as at any former period. I have been enabled to walk somewhat nearer to God than heretofore; and I find that there is nothing which affords such a preservative against sin. 'If we walk in the Spirit, we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.' This passage has been of great use to me ever since I preached from it, which was on June 3, 1792. The idea on which I then principally insisted was, *that sin is to be overcome, not so much by a direct or mere resistance of it, as by opposing other principles and considerations to it*. This sentiment has been abundantly verified in my experience: so far as I have walked in the Spirit, so far has my life been holy and happy; and I have experienced a

good degree of these blessings compared with former times, though but a very small degree compared with what I ought to aspire after. I have lately spoken some strong language against the sin of *covetousness*. Oh that I may never be left to that spirit myself! I have been concerned this morning lest I should. We know but little of what we are, till we are tried. I dreamed last night that a person of a religious and generous character was making his observations upon Dissenters—that there were but few eminently holy and benevolent characters among them. On waking, my thoughts ran upon this subject. I felt that there was too much truth in it (though, perhaps, no truth, if they were viewed in comparison with other denominations); and possessed an ardent desire that, let others do what they would, I and mine might live, not to ourselves, but to Him who died for us! It seemed a lovely thing which is said of Christ—‘He went about doing good!’ Oh that whatever I may at any time possess of this world’s good, it might be consecrated to God! The Lord ever preserve me from the mean vice of *covetousness*!

“Of late my thoughts have turned upon another marriage—that passage which has been with me in all my principal concerns through life—‘In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths’—has recurred again. I have found much of the hand of God in this concern.

“Oct. 27.—Of late I have been greatly employed in journeying and preaching, and endeavouring to collect for the East India Mission. I find a frequent removal from place to place, though good for my health, not good for my soul. I feel weary of journeys on account of their interfering so much with my work at home. I long to visit my congregation, that I may know more of their spiritual concerns, and be able to preach to their cases.

“I devote this day to fasting and prayer on account of my expected marriage, to entreat the blessing of God upon me and upon her that may be connected with me, and upon all that pertains to us.”

On the 30th Dec. 1791, Mr. Fuller married Ann, only daughter of the late Rev. W. Coles, pastor of the Baptist church at Maulden, near Amptill, on which occasion he thus writes:—

“This day I was married; and this day will probably stamp my future life with either increasing happiness or misery. My hopes rise high of the former; but my times and those of my dear companion are in the Lord’s hand. I feel a satisfaction that in her I have a godly character as well as a wife. . . . I bless God for the prospect I have of an increase of happiness. It is no small satisfaction that every one of our relations was agreeable; that there are no prejudices to afford ground for future jealousies. Two days after our marriage we invited about a dozen of our serious friends to drink tea and spend the evening in prayer.”

About this period an incident occurred which introduced Mr. Fuller into one of the pulpits of the Establishment, and which he thus describes in a letter to Dr. Ryland:—

“Oct. 26, 1796.

“The report of my *preaching in Braybrook church* is true; but that of the clergyman, or myself, having suffered any inconvenience, is not so; nor have I any apprehensions on that score. The fact was thus: Mr. Broughton, of Braybrook Lodge, had a son, about twenty years of age, who died. The young man’s desire was that I should preach a funeral sermon at his interment, from Jer. xxxi. 18—20. Mr. Ayre, the Baptist minister, came to me the day before his burial, to inform me. I said to him, ‘And where are we to be? the meeting-

house will not hold half the people.' He said, he did not know. 'I do not know,' said I, 'where we can be, unless they would lend us the church.' This I said merely in pleasantry, and without the most distant idea of asking for it. Mr. A., however, went home, and told the young man's father what I had said. 'I will go,' said he, 'and ask the clergyman.' He went. 'I have no objection,' said the old man, (who is a good-tempered man, but lies under no suspicion of either evangelical sentiments or of being righteous over-much,) 'if it could be done with safety; but I reckon it would be unsafe.' Mr. B. took this for an answer in the negative. But, the same day, the old clergyman rode over to Harborough, and inquired, I suppose, of some attorney. He was told no ill consequences would follow towards him: if any, they would fall upon *me*. He then came back, and, just before the funeral, told Mr. B. what he had learned, adding, 'I do not wish Mr. F. to injure himself; but, if he choose to run the hazard, he is welcome to the church.' Mr. B. told me this. We then carried the corpse up to the church, and the old man went through the service out of doors. It was nearly dark, very cold and damp; and about five hundred or six hundred were gathered together. The meeting-house would not hold above one hundred, and I should have taken a great cold to have been abroad. I did not believe the attorney's opinion, that they could hurt me, unless it were through the clergyman. I, therefore, went up to him, thanked him for his offer, and accepted it. He staid to hear me; and I can truly say, I aimed and longed for his salvation. After sermon he shook hands with me before all the people; saying, 'Thank you, sir, for your serious pathetic discourse: I hope no ill consequences will befall either thee or me.' Next day I rode with him some miles on my way home. 'I like charity,' said he; 'Christians should be charitable to one another.' I have heard nothing since, and expect to hear no more about it."\*

Without any disparagement of the labours of his coadjutors in the mission, it may with truth be affirmed, that the increasing weight of the Society's concerns mainly devolved on Mr. Fuller, whose gratuitous services, on its behalf, engrossed the greater part of his time for about twenty years. Much of this was spent in journeys to Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and various parts of England, where he used, as he says, to "tell the mission tale," and leave the results. These, in most cases, far exceeded his anticipations; which, though never sanguine, were equally removed from despondency. "Only let us have faith," said he, "and we shall not want money." In addressing a congregation he has sometimes expressed himself to this effect:—"If I only wished for your money, I might say, 'Give, whatever be your motive!' No; I am not so concerned for the salvation of the heathen as to be regardless of that of my own countrymen! I ask not a penny from such a motive; and, moreover, I solemnly warn you, that if you give all your substance in this way, it will avail you nothing."† He was not, however, always successful; and some of the less

\* The venerable clergyman was however summoned before his superior, and interrogated, "Did he pray for the king?"—"Yes, very fervently."—"And what did he preach about?"—"The common salvation." Here the matter ended, with an admonition not to repeat the offence.

† The following anecdote I copy from the "Almanac and Baptist Register," for the forthcoming year; I know not the authority on which it rests:—On a certain occasion he called on a pious and benevolent nobleman, who, though a churchman, was friendly to Dissenters, and was generous in his charitable contributions. Having laid before him the operations of the mission, his lordship handed him a guinea. Mr. Fuller, observing that it was given with an air of indifference, asked,—"My lord, does this come from the heart?" "What matter is that?" inquired the nobleman; "suppose it does not come from the heart, it may answer your purpose as well. If you get the money, why should you care

frequented streets of the metropolis afforded him a temporary asylum, in which his tears bore witness to the lamentable coldness of religious professors.

There was at that time little or no precedent for the management of the affairs of such institutions, nor had Mr. Fuller any predilection for that business-like apparatus which the more extended concerns of the Society at length imperatively demanded, and for the want of which they suffered during the latter part of his life. Besides his utter repugnance to that parade which has in too many instances been made an appendage to the business of religious institutions, he entertained serious objections of another kind. "Friends," said he, "talk to me about coadjutors and assistants, but, I know not how it is, I find a difficulty. Our undertaking to India really appeared to me, on its commencement, to be somewhat like a few men, who were deliberating about the importance of penetrating into a deep mine, which had never before been explored. We had no one to guide us; and, while we were thus deliberating, Carey, as it were, said, 'Well, I will go down if *you* will hold the rope.' But, before he went down, he, as it seemed to me, took an oath from each of us at the mouth of the pit to this effect, that while *we* lived we should *never* let go the rope. You understand me. There was great responsibility attached to us who began the business."

In addition to the numerous collections made in various parts of the empire and the management of the accounts, the correspondence of the Society increased rapidly on his hands. To him was chiefly committed the drawing up of official letters to the missionaries, all of whom received additional tokens of his affection in private communications. The interests of the institution demanded a still more extensive correspondence at home: its cause required a frequent advocacy with cabinet ministers, members of parliament, and East India directors; not for the purpose of procuring exclusive privileges, but for securing a legal passage for the missionaries, and the protection justly due to every peaceable subject of the colonial governments. Nor were there wanting bitter and subtle enemies both at home and abroad, who left no means untried to accomplish the ruin of the mission, and whose machinations were successively exposed and defeated by the unwearied pen of the secretary.

The labours connected with the immediate object of his journeys were probably exceeded by those to which they incidentally gave rise. This was especially the case in Scotland and Ireland, where, not to mention the frequent appeals to his judgment in cases of ecclesiastical discipline by those of his own connexion, he was led into tedious controversies, chiefly originating in certain views of faith at variance with the sentiments maintained in his first polemical treatise, and to which their advocates attached an importance that led to constant discussion in the parlour, in the pulpit, and from the press.

The first of these journeys into the north was undertaken in 1799, at the pressing solicitation of some highly respectable individuals in Edinburgh and Glasgow, who had taken a deep interest in the proceedings of the mission, and by whom Mr. Fuller was much esteemed on account of his publications, particularly that on Socinianism. In anticipation of this visit is the following entry in his diary:—

whether it comes from the heart or not?" "Take it back," said the man of God, "I cannot take it. My Lord and Master requires the heart." "Well, give it me back," said the nobleman, "it did not come from the heart." He took the guinea, and stepping to his desk, drew a check on his banker for twenty pounds (nearly 100 dollars), and handing it to Mr. Fuller, said, "This comes from the heart. I know the principles by which you are governed. I love the Lord Jesus Christ and his cause, and know that no offering is acceptable to him unless it comes from the heart."—B.

“Oct. 2, 1799. I am going out for a month altogether among faces which I have never seen. My spirit revolts at the idea, but duty calls. I go to make collections for the translation of the Scriptures into Bengalee.

“I am subject to many faults in company, and often incur guilt. The Lord keep me in the way I go, and enable me to keep my heart with all diligence. Oh that I may be spiritual, humble, and watchful in all companies! May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ prosper my way. May the God of Israel preserve my family, friends, and connexions, during my absence.”

His reception was truly generous and gratifying, and conveyed to his mind a high idea of the intelligence and principle of his northern friends. He particularly mentions in his journal interviews with Dr. Stuart, Mr. M'Lean, Dr. Erskine, Messrs. Haldane, Innes, Ewing, and the venerable David Dale.

It was at Glasgow that he received the mournful tidings of the death of his “beloved Pearce.” “O Jonathan,” he exclaims, “very pleasant hast thou been to me. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan! O Jonathan, thou wast slain upon thy high places!”

He describes the congregations at Edinburgh and Glasgow as exceedingly large. “My heart was dismayed at the sight, especially on a Lord's day evening. Nearly 5000 people attended, and some thousands went away unable to get in.” He returned after collecting upwards of 900*l.*, and preaching nearly every evening during his journey.

To Mr. Fuller was assigned the melancholy task of furnishing the public with memoirs of the excellent Pearce, of which invaluable piece of biography it was remarked by the late Sir. H. Blossett, chief justice of Bengal, that he scarcely knew which most to admire—the lovely character of Mr. Pearce, or the happy talent displayed by Mr. Fuller in sketching it. The overwhelming pressure of this and numerous other avocations is thus described in his reply to the solicitations of the editor of a periodical work:—“My labours will increase without any consent on my part. As to magazines, there are several to which I contribute, for the sake of the mission and other public interests, and, through such a number of objects as press upon me daily, my own vineyard, my own soul, my family, and congregation, are neglected. Every journey I take only makes way for two or three more; and every book I write only occasions me to write others to explain or defend it. ‘All is vanity and vexation of spirit!’ ‘I gave my heart to know wisdom; I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.’ Some are pressing me to write more largely on the mediation of Christ, and others to review the second edition of Mr. Booth's *Glad Tidings*. Controversies perplex me; and I am already engaged with a gross and subtle sophist.\* My northern correspondents are ever raising objections against my views of faith, &c.; all of which I could answer, but cannot get time. I have sent your remarks to my friend at Edinburgh; they will serve as a tub for the whale to play with, and perhaps for a time he will let me alone.

“Pearce's memoirs are now loudly called for.—I sit down almost in despair and say, ‘That which is crooked cannot be made straight, and that which is lacking cannot be numbered.’ My wife looks at me, with a tear ready to drop, and says, ‘My dear, you have hardly time to speak to me.’ My friends at home are kind, but they also say, ‘You have no time to see or know us, and you will soon be worn out.’ Amidst all this, there is ‘Come again to Scotland—come to Portsmouth—come to Plymouth—come to Bristol.’

\* Mr. Fuller was at that time engaged in the universalist, as well as other controversies.

“Excuse this effusion of melancholy. My heart is willing to do every thing you desire that I can do, but my hands fail me. Dear brother Ryland complains of old age coming upon him, and I expect old age will come upon me before I am really old. Under this complicated load my heart has often of late groaned for rest, longing to finish my days in comparative retirement.”

It has not unfrequently been the lot of men the most eminently pious to be tried with misconduct in their families. In this respect the case of Mr. Fuller, though in some of its details much more afflictive than that of his excellent friend Legh Richmond, in others strongly resembled it. Each lamented over the supposed loss of his first-born under most distressing circumstances, yet to both of them God was gracious, enabling them to say, “This my son was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found,” and giving them cheering hope in the end.

On no point has the writer of these memoirs felt such painful hesitation as in determining relative to the presentation of the following records. Desirous on the one hand of avoiding any exposure of the faults of so near a relative, and, on the other, of exhibiting every circumstance strikingly eliciting the virtues of his revered parent, he would have suffered the former feeling to predominate, had not the details of the unhappy event already been given to the public. It is due, however, to the character of the departed youth, to remove an impression, too generally conceived, that he possessed an inveterate propensity to vicious and abandoned courses. This was not the case; his disposition was in many respects amiable, and amid all his wanderings, which arose from a restless instability of character, it does not appear that he abandoned himself to any of those grosser vices incident to a naval and military life.

In May, 1796, a respectable situation was procured for him in London, which circumstance, with its result, is thus noticed in Mr. Fuller’s diary:—

“May 12. This day, my eldest son is gone to London, upon trial at a warehouse belonging to Mr. B. My heart has been much exercised about him. The child is sober and tender in his spirit; I find, too, he prays in private; but whether he be really godly I know not. Sometimes he has expressed a desire after the ministry, but I always considered that as arising from the want of knowing himself. About a year and a half ago, I felt a very affecting time in pleading with God on his behalf. Nothing appeared to me so desirable for him as that he might be a servant of God. I felt my heart much drawn out to devote him to the Lord, in whatever way he might employ him. Since that time, as he became of age for business, my thoughts have been much engaged on his behalf. As to giving him any idea of his ever being engaged in the ministry, it is what I carefully shun; and whether he ever will be is altogether uncertain; I know not whether he be a real Christian as yet, or, if he be, whether he will possess those qualifications which are requisite for that work; but this I have done, I have mentioned the exercises of my mind to Mr. B., who is a godly man, and if at any future time within the next five or six years he should appear a proper object of encouragement for that work, he will readily give him up.

“I felt very tenderly last night and this morning in prayer. I cannot say, ‘God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk;’ but I can say, ‘God who hath fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lad.’

“July. I perceive I have great unhappiness before me in my son, whose instability is continually appearing; he must leave London, and what to do with him I know not. I was lately earnestly engaged in prayer for him that he might be

renewed in his spirit, and be the Lord's; and these words occurred to my mind—'Hear my prayer, O Lord, that goeth not forth out of feigned lips;' and I prayed them over many times."

Other situations were successively procured, but in none of them could he feel satisfied to remain. In a letter to a friend about this time, his father thus expresses himself:—

"My heart is almost broken. Let nothing that I said grieve you; but make allowance for your afflicted and distressed friend. When I lie down, a load almost insupportable depresses me. Mine eyes are kept waking, or if I get a little sleep it is disturbed; and as soon as I awake my load returns upon me. O Lord, I know not what to do; but mine eyes are up unto thee. Keep me, O my God, from sinful despondency. Thou hast promised that all things shall work together for good to them that love thee; fulfil thy promise, on which thou hast caused thy servant to hope. O my God, this child which thou hast given me in charge is wicked before thee, and is disobedient to me, and is plunging himself into ruin. Have mercy upon him, O Lord, and preserve him from evil. Bring him home to me, and not to me only, but also to thyself.

"If I see the children of other people it aggravates my sorrow. Those who have had no instruction, no pious example, no warnings or counsels, are often seen to be steady and trusty; but my child, who has had all these advantages, is worthy of no trust to be placed in him. I am afraid he will go into the army, that sink of immorality; or, if not, that being reduced to extremity he will be tempted to steal. And oh, if he should get such a habit, what may not these weeping eyes witness, or this broken heart be called to endure! O my God, whither will my fears lead me? Have mercy upon me, a poor unhappy parent: have mercy upon him, a poor ungodly child."

The former of these fears was realized; in 1798 he entered into the army, on which occasion his father thus writes to Dr. Ryland:—

"I have indeed had a sore trial in the affair you mention; but I do not recollect any trial of my life in which I had more of a spirit of prayer, and confidence in God. Many parts of Scripture were precious, particularly the following:—'O Lord, I know not what to do; but mine eyes are up unto thee.—O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me.—Commit thy way unto the Lord, and he shall bring it to pass.—Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he shall sustain thee.—All things work together for good,' &c. Even while I knew not where he was, I felt stayed on the Lord, and some degree of cheerful satisfaction that things would end well. I know not what is before me; but hitherto the Lord hath helped me; and still I feel resolved to hope in his mercy."

His discharge from the army was obtained on the ground of his being an apprentice, but he subsequently enlisted in the marines, soon after which he appeared sensible of his folly. The influence of early religious education was felt. Shocked at the heathenism of his present situation, and calling to remembrance the peaceful sabbaths and pious instructions of home, he addressed his father, earnestly entreating him to use efforts for his liberation. This appeal to the piety and affection of a Christian parent was promptly responded to. His father's heart went forth to meet him, and he was once more restored to the bosom of his family.

Notwithstanding the influence of his mother-in-law, to whom as well as to every other branch of the family he was fondly attached, a dislike to business, increased by habits recently contracted, once more induced his departure.

"The sorrows of my heart," says his father, "have been increased, at dif-

ferent times, to a degree almost insupportable; yet I have hoped in God, and do still hope that I shall see mercy for him in the end. The Lord knows that I have not sought *great things* for him, and that I have been more concerned for the *wicked* course he was following than on account of the *meanness* of his taste. Oh may the Lord bring me out of this horrible pit, and put a new song in my mouth!

“My heart is oppressed; but yet I am supported. Yesterday I fasted and prayed the day through. Many scriptures were sweet to me; particularly Matt. xv. 25—‘Lord, help me!’—a petition in which a parent was heard for a child, after repeated repulses. And Psal. xxxiii. 22. I believe I shall live to see good, in some way, come out of it. My soul is at rest in God.”

Finding that he was bent on a seafaring life, his father procured him a comfortable situation on board a merchant ship, apparently much to his satisfaction. The hopes which this new arrangement raised in the minds of his friends were, however, suddenly destroyed, before he could join his ship, by the operation of the savage laws of impressment. Thus, against his inclination, he found himself once more on board a man-of-war, in the capacity of a common sailor.

In a few months an account was received by his friends of his having been tried for desertion, and sentenced to a most severe punishment, after the infliction of which he immediately expired!

“Oh!” says his agonized parent, “this is *heart-trouble!* In former cases, my sorrows found vent in tears; but now I can seldom weep. A kind of morbid heart-sickness preys upon me from day to day. Every object around me reminds me of him! Ah! . . . he was wicked; and mine eye was not over him to prevent it . . . he was detected, and tried, and condemned; and I knew it not . . . he cried under his agonies; but I heard him not . . . he expired, without an eye to pity or a hand to help him! . . . O Absalom! my son! my son! would God I had died for thee, my son!”

“Yet, O my soul! let me rather think of Aaron than of David. He ‘held his peace’ in a more trying case than mine. His sons were *both* slain, and slain *by the wrath of Heaven*; were *probably intoxicated* at the time: and all this *suddenly*, without any thing to prepare the mind for such a trial! Well did he say, ‘Such things have befallen me.’”

A few days brought the joyful intelligence that the report was an entire fabrication. “Blessed be God,” says his father, “I find the above report is unfounded! I have received a letter from my poor boy. Well, he is yet alive, and within the reach of mercy.”

Other and painful vicissitudes befell this unhappy young man, whose last station was among the marines, with whom he went on a voyage to Brazil. On his return, he addressed his father in the most pathetic terms, entreating one more written testimony of his forgiveness, urging that he was on the point of sailing for Lisbon, “whence,” says he, “I may never return.”

This was answered by an affecting epistle, of which the following extracts are all that can be found:—

“MY DEAR ROBERT,

“I received with pleasure your dutiful letter, and would fain consider it as a symptom of a returning mind. I cannot but consider you as having been long under a sort of mental derangement, piercing yourself through, as well as me, with many sorrows. My prayer for you continually is, that the God of all grace and mercy may have mercy upon you. You may be assured that I cherish no animosity against you. On the contrary, I do, from my heart, freely forgive you.



But that which I long to see in you is repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, without which there is no forgiveness from above.

“My dear son! you had advantages in early life; but, being continually in profligate company, you must be debased in mind, and, in a manner, reduced to a state of heathenism. In some of your letters, I have observed your dashing, as it were, against the rocks of fatalism; suggesting as if you thought you were appointed to such a course of life. In others I find you flattering yourself that you are a penitent; when, perhaps, all the penitence you ever felt has been the occasional melancholy of remorse and fear.

“My dear son! I am now nearly fifty-five years old, and may soon expect to go the way of all the earth! But, before I die, let me teach you the good and the right way. ‘Hear the instructions of a father.’ You have had a large portion of God’s preserving goodness, or you had, ere now, perished in your sins. Think of this, and give thanks to the Father of mercies, who has hitherto preserved you. Think, too, how you have requited him, and be ashamed for all that you have done. Nevertheless, do not despair! Far as you have gone, and low as you are sunk in sin, yet if hence you return to God, by Jesus Christ, you will find mercy. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the chief of sinners. If you had been ever so sober and steady in your behaviour towards men, yet, without repentance towards God and faith in Christ, you could not have been saved; and if you return to God by him, though your sins be great and aggravated, yet will you find mercy . . . . .”

This affecting narrative cannot be better concluded than in the words of the late Dr. Ryland:—“As this poor young man foreboded, this *was* his last voyage. He died off Lisbon, in March, 1809, after a lingering illness, in which he had every attention paid him of which his situation would admit.

“From the testimony of his captain, and one of his messmates, we learn that his conduct was good, and such as to procure him much respect; and, from letters addressed to his father and his sister, a short time before his death, we *hope* still *better* things; we hope he was led to see the error of his way, and to make the Lord his refuge from the tempest and the storm.

“His death, under such circumstances, was less painful to his friends than it would otherwise have been; and, in a sermon preached the Lord’s day after the intelligence was received, in allusion to this event, from Rom. x. 8, 9, his father seemed to take comfort from three ideas; that, ‘1. The doctrine of free justification by the death of Christ is suited to *sinners of all degrees*. It asks not how long, nor how often, nor how greatly we have sinned; if we confess our sins, *he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins*. 2. It is suited to the *helpless condition* of sinners. We have only to look and live. 3. It is suited to sinners *in the last extremity*. It answers to the promised mercy in Deut. iv. 29—*IF FROM THENCE thou seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him*. Some are far from home, and have no friend, in their dying moments, to speak a word of comfort . . . but this is near! When Jonah was compassed about by the floods, when the billows and waves passed over him, he prayed to the Lord, and the Lord heard him.’ . . .

“Here he was obliged to pause, and give vent to his feelings by weeping; and many of the congregation, who knew the cause, wept with him! His heart was full, and it was with difficulty he could conclude, with solemnly charging the sinner to apply for mercy ere it was too late; for if it were rejected, its having been so near, and so easy of access, would be a swift witness against him.”

But to return. It was in the midst of these afflictions and overwhelming engagements that Mr. Fuller, in the year 1800, produced his celebrated treatise in defence of the Christian religion, under the title of "The Gospel its own Witness, or the Holy nature and divine Harmony of the Christian Religion, contrasted with the Immorality and Absurdity of Deism."

He was at the same time engaged in writing a succession of letters on the subject of universal salvation, the first of which consisted of a private remonstrance, written in 1793, to an individual, once resident in his own family, who had embraced the views above mentioned. After a lapse of four years, some reply to this letter was made in a periodical work, of which the person to whom it was addressed was the editor, the letter having been in the mean time inserted in the Evangelical Magazine, under a private signature. The series of letters which followed were published in 1802.

In 1801 Mr. Fuller published his small but valuable work entitled "The Backslider," which was soon followed by another on "Spiritual Pride." In reference to these, he thus writes to Dr. Ryland:—"A respected friend has repeatedly pressed me to write a treatise on 'Spiritual Pride,' on the same plan as 'The Backslider.' I have thought somewhat on the subject, and begun writing. This would tend to detect that subtle spirit which is, I am persuaded, fostered by Sandemanianism—'Stand by thyself, for I am holier than thou.' But I feel myself much more capable of depicting Antinomian pride than the other. For this purpose I have procured Huntington's works. But in reading them I am stopped for a time. I have eight or nine volumes! I never read any thing more void of true religion. I do not intend to name him or his works, or those of any other person, but merely to draw pictures, and let the reader judge who they are like."

His allusion to Sandemanianism is thus illustrated in another letter to the Doctor:—

"Sept. 9, 1801.

"I had a letter about a week ago from one of the Scotch Baptists about *order, discipline, &c.* Ill as I was, I scratched out the following *parable*. Dr. Stuart\* saw it, and he was so much amused with it that he must needs copy it. 'In one of the new Italian republics, two independent companies are formed for the defence of the country. Call the one *A.* and the other *B.* In forming themselves, and learning their exercise, they each profess to follow the mode of discipline used by the ancient Romans. Their officers, uniforms, and evolutions, however, are, after all, somewhat different from each other. Hence disputes arise, and *B.* refuses to march against the enemy with *A.* as being disorderly. *A.* gives his reasons why he thinks himself orderly; but they are far from satisfying *B.*, who not only treats him as deviating from rule, but as almost knowing himself to do so, and wilfully persisting in it. *A.*, tired of jarring, marches against the enemy by himself. *B.* sits at home deeply engaged in studying order and discipline. 'If your form and rules,' says *A.*, 'are so preferable to ours, why do you not make use of them? Discipline is a means, not an end. Be not always boasting of your order, and reproaching others for the want of it; let us see the use of it. It is true, like the Quakers in 1745, you have bought waistcoats for our soldiers, and we thank you for them; but we had rather you would fight yourselves.'"

Notwithstanding the difference of views between Mr. Fuller and some of his

\* This gentleman, a physician of considerable practice in Edinburgh, was induced by his friendship for Mr. Fuller to visit him during his affliction.

northern friends, who were tinctured with some of Mr. Sandeman's peculiarities, he accepted a pressing invitation to revisit Scotland in 1802.

A journal of this excursion is preserved in letters to Mrs. Fuller, from which the following are extracts:—

“BARTON ON THE HUMBER, Aug. 25.

“At ten we arrived here. My sleep having been regular, I was not weary, and am now very well. With tenderness and earnest solicitude, I have importuned preserving mercy for my dear family, and that I may visit it in due time, and not sin.

“I begin to feel awkward, having reduced my four guineas to four shillings; I am afraid I should be in the situation of a number of small ships hereabouts, at low tide—run aground! I am thinking whether I must not take a walk before dinner, instead of having one! If I could but get over the water, I should do.

“26.—I was detained last night till half-past six, and so strong a westerly wind blew that it was thought the hoy or daily passage-boat could not have come out, in which case I must have staid longer still. It did come, however, but a number of the passengers were sick through our being tossed about. There were nearly sixty of us on board, and we arrived safely at Hull about half-past seven. It was a fine sight to see the waves, each as large as the roof of a small house, continually beating against our vessel, while she rode triumphantly above them all. I felt no sickness, but stood above deck, having hold of a rope with my hand, and gazed all the time with a kind of sublime pleasure at the majestic scene. I had eleven-pence in my pocket when I came to the house last night. I am to spend my sabbath in the two Baptist churches. I have hitherto been mercifully preserved in all respects. My mind is peaceful and happy; and my approaches to a throne of grace, at which I do not forget you all, have been free and tender.”

“YORK, Aug. 31.

“Arrived here last night at nine o'clock. Determined to stop a day here and try what I could do among the serious Church people. Dissenters there are none, except a few Socinian Baptists. Went immediately to the house of Hepworth and Crosby, who have for some time been subscribers to our mission. Met with a kind reception. Supped there with Mr. Overton, the author of ‘The True Churchman,’ who is a clergyman of this city. Much mutual pleasure. I am here well known by the evangelical clergy, of whom there are three, if not more: Richardson, Graham, and Overton. Among other things in our conversation, were the following: *O.* ‘In the course of my work I have said some things which some Dissenters have thought severe.’—*F.* ‘I suppose you mean in calling them schismatics.’—*O.* ‘Yes, in part.’—*F.* ‘I never felt it; for it did not appear to be aimed to hurt us, but merely to screen yourselves in the view of your bishops from the suspicion of favouring us.’ He admitted this a fair construction. I added, ‘It did not hurt me, because I perceived no justice in it. The term schism is *relative*, and has reference to the society from which separation is made. Before you can fix the guilt of schism upon us, you must prove—1. That the Church of England is a true church. Yea, more. 2. That it is *the only* true church in this kingdom.’ He did not go about it, and we were very sociable till eleven o'clock, when I went to bed at Mr. Hepworth's.

“This morning, when I have breakfasted, I shall call on old Mr. Richardson, who is here a man of weight and renown. Mr. Overton asked me if I had seen

the account of the York Baptists.—*F.* ‘Yes; I have it.’—*O.* ‘And Mr. Graham’s answer?’—*F.* ‘I have read that also.’—*O.* ‘What do you think of it?’—*F.* ‘I think he has answered them in some things, but not in all.’ I had once written a private letter to Mr. G., pointing out some things wherein I conceived he was wrong; but I destroyed it, lest it should involve me in more work and more correspondence than I knew how to discharge. I presently found that those things in which I had thought G. in the wrong were so considered by O.

“At Hull I visited two evangelical clergymen, who very readily contributed to our case, and several of their people followed their example. I had one if not both of them for hearers on Friday evening. Their names are Dykes and Scott: the latter is the son of Mr. Scott of the Lock.

“I cannot help mentioning the singular kindness I received from a Mr. Kidd, an Independent minister of Cottingham, four or five miles from Hull. He not only walked over on Friday to see and hear me, and stopped all night for an evening’s conversation, but came again with some of his friends on the Lord’s day evening, and, unsolicited, brought with him 4*l.* 15*s.* He is a modest, intelligent man.

“Tuesday night. I have collected about 12*l.* 12*s.* in York. Have had a great deal of Mr. Overton’s company; also of Mr. Richardson’s and Mr. Graham’s; and, what is surprising, was informed by Mr. Overton in the afternoon that a little Baptist church had lately been formed here. He told me this, as supposing I should like to call upon some of them. I thanked him, and soon after went in search of them. I found the principal persons, and they would have been very glad of a sermon this evening if they had known in time. I gave them all the good counsel I could, prayed with them, and then returned to the company of Messrs. Overton, Graham, &c., with whom I have enjoyed much free and friendly conversation. They cheerfully went round with me to their friends for a few guineas, and also subscribed themselves.”

In a subsequent letter, Mr. Fuller details a conversation at the dinner table with the three clergymen above mentioned.

“Mr. Richardson, after saying many friendly and respectful things, added, in a tone of familiarity, ‘I had almost thrown your *Gospel its own Witness* aside, owing to what you said against establishments in the Preface.’—*F.* ‘Why, sir, could you not have construed it as the *British Critic* has?’—*R.* ‘How is that?’—*F.* ‘I think they say to this effect: The author protests against establishments of Christianity for *political purposes*; but as ours assuredly is not for such ends, he cannot mean that; and, therefore, we recommend it to our readers.’—*Both* replied, ‘We apprehend they construed you more favourably than you deserved.’—*F.* ‘Well; it seems then I should have put it at the end instead of the beginning of the book.’—*R.* ‘I see you do not approve of establishments?’—*F.* ‘I do not, sir.’—*R.* ‘Well; I am persuaded we are greatly indebted to ours.’—*F.* ‘The friends of Christ would be such without it.’—*R.* ‘True; but the enemies would not be kept in such decency.’—*F.* ‘I was riding last night from Hull to York, with a drunken sea-officer; passing through Beverly, he pointed to the cathedral and said, ‘That is our *religion* . . . we are all for *religion*!’—*O.* ‘Ah! that was honey to you.’—*F.* ‘I felt for the poor man.’—*O.* ‘You think hard of Bishop Horsley?’—*F.* ‘I do.’—*O.* ‘I think his remarks about Sunday schools have been made too much of; he does not condemn the institution, but the abuse of it.’—*F.* ‘He represents village preaching as a political measure, and, as pursued, under the newly assumed garb of

zeal and spirituality, by the *same men* as formerly cried up rationality; which is absolutely false.'—*R.* 'He had heard some things of Dissenters.'—*F.* 'Yes; and I have heard some things of Yorkshiremen.'—*O.* 'What, that they are *bites*?'—*F.* 'Well; you would not be willing I should condemn you all on hearsay?'—*R.* 'He is a man of a bad temper.'—*F.* 'I have heard that he is, after all, an infidel: I do not know how true that may be; but he is a violent man, and full of misrepresentation.'—*R.* 'What he has said of the body of the Dissenters being turned from Calvinism is true of the old Dissenters: those that you now call the body of your people have come from the Church.'—*F.* 'That may be true, in part, especially respecting the Presbyterians, but not of the Independents or Baptists; and we can account for the decline of Presbyterianism in England, on the ground of their Pædobaptism.'—[All laughed, as though they should say, 'Bravo! How is that?'] *F.* 'The old orthodox English Presbyterians made so much of their *seed*, and the dedication of them to God, as they called it, by baptism, that, *presuming* on their conversion, they sent them to seminaries of learning, to be ministers, before they were Christians; and as they grew up, being destitute of any principle of religion, they turned aside to any thing rather than the gospel. The effect of this was, some of the people, especially the young and graceless, followed them; the rest have become Independents or Baptists.'—*R.* 'All your old places that were opened at the Revolution are now Socinianized.'—*F.* 'The Presbyterian places are mostly so; but we do not mind the places being Socinian, so long as the *people* have left them. As to the body of our people coming from the Church, it is little more than fifty years since the Church was almost destitute of serious ministers and people; yet there were, at that time, perhaps, nearly as many serious Dissenters as now.'

“ CONVERSATION ON DOCTRINE.

“*R.* 'There are different shades of Calvinism, I suppose, amongst you?'—*F.* 'Yes; there are three by which we commonly describe; namely, the *high*, the *moderate*, and the *strict* Calvinists. The first are, if I may so speak, more Calvinistic than Calvin himself; in other words, bordering on Antinomianism.'—*R.* 'Have you many of these?'—*F.* 'Too many.'—*O.* 'Do they not reckon you a legal preacher?'—*F.* 'Yes; at this very time I am represented, throughout the religious circles of London, as an Arminian.'—*R.* 'On what ground?'—*F.* 'What I have written in a note in the *Gospel its own Witness*.'—*R.* 'I remember that note. We all approve of it, and think it agrees with the doctrine held by our Church. But what do you call a *moderate* Calvinist?'—*F.* 'One that is a half Arminian, or, as they are called with us, Baxterians.'—*R.* 'And what a *strict* Calvinist?'—*F.* 'One that really holds the system of Calvin. I do not believe every thing that Calvin taught, nor any thing because he taught it; but I reckon strict Calvinism to be my own system.'”

“ GLASGOW, Sept. 19.

“The pastor of a church which professes to be in fellowship with the English Baptists brought a message from them, that they would be glad to hear my faith, and, if it accorded with theirs, to have me preach, and join them at the Lord's supper. I told him, he had sent their faith to me, and I approved of it: but I should make no other confession of faith than that; that I did not come to Glasgow as a candidate for their pulpit, and it was indifferent to me whether I occupied it. I said, I had no objection to answer him any question he thought proper to ask me as a Christian; but I had no notion of being interrogated as

a condition of preaching, &c. At nearly eleven, a deacon came with their decision, that, if I would not make a confession, they could not admit me. 'Very well, then I shall go to the Tabernacle, and consider your conduct as a renunciation of connexion with us, as English churches; for it implies you have no confidence in us.' He said, it was all owing to two or three, and that the church in general wished it to be otherwise. I heard at Tabernacle, in the morning, notice was given that I should preach in the afternoon and evening. The Baptists repented; but it was too late. I preached in the afternoon to 4000 people; in the evening to nearly 5000. Collected 200*l*."

"LIVERPOOL, Sept. 25.

"I have just arrived here, and found yours, after a long and tedious journey of 225 miles; in which I put off my clothes only for two hours since Thursday morning.

"On Monday, Sept. 20, I was seized at Glasgow with violent sickness and vomiting of bile, and kept my bed till three in the afternoon. While in bed, I was visited by Mr. L. and the deacons of the Baptist church. I learnt that the refusal of their pulpit was against the will of the church, except two members; that the church at P., with which they are in connexion, had sent deputies to oppose my being admitted to preach and commune with them; and these, with the two members, carried their point: but, on Lord's day noon, the church were so hurt at my being refused, that they resolved to invite me. The two deacons were deputed to request that I would look over the affair of Lord's day, and consider them as one with us. Accordingly I preached there in the evening, and collected 45*l*., after about 200*l*. had been collected, on Lord's day, at the Tabernacle. Tuesday morning set off in a chaise for Greenock; preached, and collected 33*l*. Wednesday returned, and preached at Paisley; have not yet received their collection, but suppose it may be about 40*l*. I found myself getting better daily, though travelling and preaching.

"On Thursday morning, I met with all the members of the Baptist church, who appear to be a simple-hearted people, and regret my not preaching and communing with them. They wished for a connexion with the English churches. I told them that the distance was such that our connexion could answer but few ends. We might, once in a while, hear from each other, might pray for one another, and, if the minister or members of either came to the other, they might be admitted to communion; but that was all. They assented to this. I then told them that I had heard of the Baptists in Scotland being negligent of free preaching to the unconverted, and of family religion. Whether this charge was true, or not, I could not tell; but I earnestly exhorted them to make it evidently appear that they were far more anxious that those around them should become Christians than that they should embrace our opinion as to baptism: if sinners were converted to God among them, and made Christians, they would probably be Baptists also, of their own accord; but I reminded them that, if family religion was neglected, Pædobaptists would be furnished with the most weighty objection against our sentiments as Baptists. They seemed to receive what I said in love, and to approve of it. I prayed with them, and so we parted.

"Thursday noon, Sept. 23.—Being disappointed of a place in the mail, I ordered a post-chaise, and advertised for a partner to Liverpool. A *Jew* wanted to go thither, and we took a post-chaise together. He proved an intelligent, but rather profane man. We had much talk on Christianity, and sometimes I thought him somewhat impressed. We had scarcely got out of Glasgow

before he observed something of the dissatisfaction we found in all our enjoyments. I acquiesced, and suggested that there must be some defect in the object, and thence inferred a future state. He did not seem free to pursue the subject; but said, 'I am a Jew, and I consider you as a Christian divine; I wish to do every thing to accommodate you during the journey.' I thanked him, and said I wished to do the same towards him in return. I presently found, however, that he was a Sadducee, holding with only the Five Books of Moses, and those very loosely; suggesting of Moses, that though he was a great and good man in his day, yet, it was his opinion, there had been much more learned men since. He also began 'accommodating' me with curses and oaths on the most trifling occasions. Finding I had a compound of infidelity and profligacy to contend with, and about a fifty-hours' journey before me, in which I should be cooped up with him night and day, I did not oppose him much at first; but let him go on, waiting for fit occasions. I asked for a proof of Moses's ignorance.—*Jew.* 'He spoke of the earth as stationary, and the sun as rising and setting.'—*Fuller.* 'And do not those that you call learned men speak the same in their ordinary conversation?'—*J.* 'To be sure they do.'—*F.* 'They could not be understood, nor understand themselves, could they, if they were to speak of the earth's rising and setting?'—*J.* 'True.' After a while, he praised the ten commandments. I acquiesced, and added, 'I have been not a little hurt, sir, in observing, since we have been together, how lightly you treat one of them, *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain!*'—*J.* 'I must own this is a bad habit: I have been told of it before.' We had no more swearing.

'He talked, after this, of the *merit* of good works, and told me, at my request, much about their worship and ceremonies; particularly their *great day of atonement*, which, he said, was very impressive.—*F.* 'Do you offer sacrifices?'—*J.* 'No; not since the destruction of the temple; except it be a fowl or so, just as a representation of what has been.'—*F.* 'And do you really think that the blood of any animal, or any of those ceremonies, can take away sin?'—*J.* 'If you deny that, you deny the laws of Moses.'—*F.* 'No; the sacrifices of Moses were not designed to take away sin, but to prefigure a greater sacrifice.' He paused . . . . I added, 'Sir, you are a sinner, and I am a sinner; we must both shortly appear before God. I know not upon what you rest your hopes. You have talked of human merit. I have nothing of the kind on which to place my trust. I believe we have all merited the displeasure of our Creator, and, if dealt with according to our deserts, must perish for ever. Sir, if our sins be not atoned for by a greater sacrifice than any that were offered under the law of Moses, we are undone.' He seemed impressed by this, and owned that according to their law, and confessions on the day of atonement, they were all sinners, and that their good works could not save them. I then endeavoured to point him to Christ, as the only hope; but he began to make objections to his conception by the power of the Holy Spirit.—*F.* 'That was no more impossible than God's making the first man and woman.'—*J.* 'True; but God having made these, the rest are born by ordinary generation.'—*F.* 'You might as well say that God having given the sea its laws, it moves in future according to them, and therefore the Red Sea could not have been divided. Your argument goes to deny all miracles.'—*J.* 'We think charitably of you, but you do not of us.'—*F.* 'How can you think well of us, when you consider us as deluded by an impostor?'—*J.* 'We think well of all that do good.'—*F.* 'So do we. But what a singular impostor must Jesus have been, if he was one! Did you ever know or read of such a one, either as to doctrine or man-

ners?—*J.* ‘Who wrote the life of Jesus?’—*F.* ‘Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.’—*J.* ‘Very well: were not they his disciples, and therefore partial to him?’—*F.* ‘You might as well object to all the books of the Old Testament; they were not written by adversaries.’—*J.* ‘Ah, he should have come down from the cross, and then all would have believed on him!’—*F.* ‘If evidence had been the thing that was wanted, why did not the resurrection of Lazarus satisfy them?’—*J.* ‘That was a doubtful matter. I reckon Jesus was a learned man; Lazarus might not be dead, but only apparently so; and he might make an experiment upon him; as many have done since, and restored suspended animation.’—*F.* ‘Did you ever read the New Testament?’—*J.* ‘Yes, I read it when a boy of eight years old.’—*F.* ‘And not since?’—*J.* ‘No.’—*F.* ‘What then can you know about it? You only take up the objections of your rabbis, (whom he had a little before acknowledged to be, many of them, no better than learned kuaves); if you had read and considered the history of the resurrection of Lazarus, you could not object as you do.’

“After this, I asked him what he thought of *prophecy*? ‘Prophecy!’ said he, ‘I have often, when a boy, looked at the clouds, and seen in them horses and chariots, and I know not what!’—*F.* ‘I understand you; but it is strange that imagination should find, in the prophecies, the substance of all succeeding history. Were not all the great empires that have been in the world, from the times of Daniel to this day, namely, the Babylonian, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman, with their various subdivisions, clearly foretold by him?’ He would make no answer to this, but treated it all as fable. ‘They talk,’ said he, ‘of our being restored to the Promised Land. I will tell you the whole mystery of it. Those of us who have plenty wish for no other promised land; but those that are poor would be glad enough to better their condition!’

“He complained of the *persecutions* that the Jews had undergone from Christians. I disavowed all such treatment, as the conduct of wicked men. ‘But,’ said he, ‘you have been, even in this war, *fighting for your religion.*’ I answered, ‘Those who profess to fight for religion, fight for the want of it; and Christianity employs none but spiritual weapons.’ I also assured him that real Christians felt a tender regard towards them, and loved them for their fathers’ sake. ‘Yes,’ said he, sneeringly, ‘the good people at Glasgow pray, every Sunday, for our conversion!’ I answered, ‘Very likely; it is what I have often done myself.’

“When we got to Liverpool, he requested that, when I came to London, I would call and see him. I told him I would, on one condition, which was that he would permit me to present him with a New Testament, and promise to read it carefully. He consented; but, that he might put far from him the evil day, proposed that if, when I called to see him, I would bring one with me, he would read it. I saw no more of him; but meeting with a ‘Gospel its own Witness,’ in Liverpool, in which is an ‘Address to the Jews,’ I wrapt it up in paper, and sent it to him at his inn, having written withinside as follows: ‘A small token of respect from the author, to Mr. D. L. A., for his friendly attentions to him on a journey from Glasgow to Liverpool, Sept. 23, 24, 25, 1802.’

“After all, in reflecting upon it, I felt guilty in having said so little to purpose; and was persuaded that, if I had been more spiritually-minded, I should have recommended my Lord and Saviour better than I did.”

On returning home, Mr. Fuller made the following memorandum:—

“In riding from Manchester to Harborough, in the mail, I found myself in very profane company. I therefore, for the greater part of the journey, composed myself, as if asleep. Near Loughborough, two gentlemen followed us in



a post-chaise, one of them wishing to take my place when we got to Harborough. We dined at Leicester, and, the gentleman being in the inn-yard, I went to him, and offered him my place from Leicester, proposing to ride on the outside as far as Harborough. He thanked me, but declined it. He added, 'I think I have seen you, sir, before.' He dined with us; and, while at dinner, seeing my portmanteau marked A. F. K., he asked me, before our company, if my name was not Fuller. I told him it was. He then thanked me, not only for my kind offer of my place, but for a late publication, which he had read with unusual satisfaction. I made but little answer; only inquiring his name, which I found to be Lee, of the Old Jewry, a hearer of Mr. Newton. As soon as we got into the coach, (Mr. Lee was not with us, but followed in a post-chaise,) my former swearing companions were all mute, and continued so for the greater part of the journey. One of them, however, who had been more civil and sober than the rest, addressed himself to me: 'I perceive, sir,' said he, 'by what was said at dinner, that you are an author. Will you excuse me if I ask what it is that you have published?' I told him I was a Christian minister, and had published a piece in defence of Christianity. He expressed a wish to see it. He then talked to me, as one would talk to a literary man, on the English language, composition, &c. I asked him if he was an Englishman? He answered, 'No; I am a Prussian.' He inquired if I had read Junius's Letters. I told him I had heard pretty much of them, but had not read them, as they were not particularly in my way. 'Oh,' said he, 'you must read them, by all means; I will send you a copy of them.' I thanked him, and, as he had expressed a wish to see what I had written, we would, if agreeable to him, make an exchange. To this he agreed, and we exchanged addresses. His was Count D., at the Prussian ambassador's, London. Finding him to be one of the Prussian ambassador's suite, I asked him many questions about the civil and ecclesiastical affairs of Prussia. Respecting the former, he said, what advantages we had by the law, *they* had, in a good measure, by custom; that, though the king's will was law, yet custom so swayed it as to make it very little oppressive. He mentioned the king's having a desire for a poor man's field that lay near his; that the owner was unwilling, and the matter was referred to the College of Justice, who advised the king not to insist upon it; and he did not. He spoke of religious matters as attended with toleration. The Mennonites, who I suppose are Antipædobaptists, he described as enthusiasts, much like the Quakers, who have no regular clergymen, but any of them get up and speak, as they feel themselves inspired. How far his account is to be depended upon I cannot tell. On parting with my company, I came home, and found all well. Thanks, as dear brother Pearce said after his journey to Ireland, thanks to the Preserver of men!"

Though the journeys thus undertaken on behalf of the mission introduced Mr. Fuller to scenes of controversy, their advantages soon became sufficiently apparent, irrespective of the promotion of the missionary cause; for, besides the tendency of free discussion to elicit and establish truth, the intercourse maintained exercised a favourable influence on the minds of many who had suffered themselves to be carried away by partial representations of his sentiments. Not only was this the case in Scotland and the north of England, but a visit to the southern coast, in the beginning of 1804, also furnished a remarkable example of it.

Mr. Fuller mentions a person at Portsea, where he met with much unexpected kindness, as thus accosting him: "Sir, I was greatly disappointed in you.—

‘Yes, and I in you.’—‘I mean in hearing you last Lord’s-day morning; I did not expect to hear such a sermon from you.’—‘Perhaps so; and I did not expect such treatment from you. I had heard things of the Portsea people which gave me but a mean opinion of them; but I have hitherto no cause to complain; so that we are both agreeably disappointed.’—‘Well, but I do not like your book.’—‘You do not understand it.’—‘Oh, I cannot believe faith to be a *duty*: we *cannot* believe.’—‘You seem to think we ought to do nothing but what we *can* do.’—‘True.’—‘And we can do nothing.’—‘True.’—‘Then we ought to do nothing . . . and if so we have no sin, and need no Saviour.’—‘Oh no, no, no! I want to talk more with you.’—‘Yes, but the mischief is, you cannot count five.’—‘What do you mean?’—‘First, you say, we ought to do nothing but what we *can* do. Secondly, we *can do nothing*. Then I say, thirdly, we *ought* to do nothing. Fourthly, we have no sin. Fifthly, we need no Saviour.’ After all, this person, and all of that stamp, were greatly interested in the preaching, and pressed me to go to their houses; would have it that I was of their principles, &c., and were much concerned when I went away. I told them I thought very differently from them in various respects; but they took all well: and I prayed with them before we parted.”\*

His attention was this year drawn to one of those intolerant enactments for which the Jamaica legislature has so pre-eminently distinguished itself. He immediately drew up a memorial on the subject, which being presented to the privy council was favourably received.

It was in June, 1804, that Mr. Fuller visited Ireland, hoping not only to receive pecuniary aid for the mission from the wealthy professors of religion in Dublin, but to confirm the important services rendered to the churches of that city and neighbourhood by the lamented Pearce, and establish a connexion which, while it tended to remove from those churches the frigid influence of Sandemanianism, might prove mutually beneficial to the spiritual interests of both countries.

Writing, soon after his arrival, to his friend Dr. Ryland, he says,—“My heart is dismayed to see the state of things here. The great body of the people are papists. Even the servants, in almost every family, are papists. The congregations are only a few genteel people scattered about the place. They appeared to me like the heads at Temple Bar, without bodies. A middle class of people is wanting; and the poor are kept distinct by what appears as strong as the caste in India. I preached at the Baptist meeting, in Swift’s Alley, morning and evening, and for Dr. M’Dowal, at the Presbyterian chapel: I might preach, perhaps, to fifty in the morning; to two hundred in the afternoon, in a place that would hold a thousand; and to fifty more in the evening.

\* It was sometimes exceedingly amusing to observe how many persons opposed Mr. Fuller who altogether misunderstood him. Being very anxious at one time to obtain an introduction into some of the pulpits in the eastern part of England, he wrote to a friend, requesting him to introduce him to the brethren assembled at an association. The plan was so arranged that both of them should arrive after the commencement of the morning service, when no questions could be asked, and that Mr. F. should take the place of his friend, who had been selected as the preacher. After the service, when they met round the dinner table, every one was inquiring, but alas, without success, who the stranger could be. After a while their attention was turned to the sermon itself, which all admired, and which all wished Mr. Fuller had heard, as it contained, they said, the most complete refutation of his whole system. At length the late excellent but eccentric Mark Wilks, of Norwich, rose, and very gravely moved, that the thanks of the association be given to the Rev. Andrew Fuller, of Kettering, for his excellent sermon, and that he be requested to print it. Perhaps my reader can conceive of the excitement, for I cannot describe it. They could not explain, but he did. Several of them were convinced of the truth of the system he advocated; and all opened their pulpits, that he might plead the cause of the mission.—B.

“I have been much engaged in company, yesterday and Monday. I was visited yesterday by Mr. Walker, a Sandemanian clergyman, who has considerable influence in this city, and who pronounces of one of the dissenting ministers here that he preaches the gospel (because he seems likely to embrace Sandemanianism); but the Baptist and the Moravian ministers do not! I found him, like most of the sect, calm, acute, versed in the Scripture, but void of feeling. He reminded me of Dr. Byron’s lines:—

‘ ’Tis Athens’ owl, and not Mount Zion’s dove,  
The bird of learning, not the bird of love.’

“I am told one of this stamp lately prayed in public, ‘Lord, give me head knowledge; the rest I leave to thee.’ The clergyman said to me, ‘There are many who call themselves Calvinists who are as far from the truth as Arminians.’ I asked what Calvinists he referred to, and what sentiments. He said, ‘Those who hold with *qualifications* as necessary to warrant a sinner’s believing.’ I answered, I did not know who they were that believed so. Mr. Stennett,\* who sat by, said, ‘Some of the high Calvinists might.’ I assented to this, but said I utterly disapproved of it; though I could not, as Mr. W. seemed to do, condemn all as graceless who held it. He seemed surprised, and expressed his pleasure that I disapproved of the principle; plainly proving that he, with other Sandemanians, confounds our pleading for a holy disposition as necessary to believing (or necessary to incline us to believe) with pleading for it as giving us a warrant to believe.”

In a letter addressed to Mr. Coles, Mrs. F.’s father, he thus alludes to this visit:—“I have enjoyed but little comfort in Ireland; yet I hope I have derived some profit. The doctrine of the cross is more dear to me than when I went. I wish I may never preach another sermon but what shall bear some relation to it. I see and feel, more and more, that except I eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man I have no life in me either as a Christian or as a minister. . . Some of the sweetest opportunities I had in my journey were in preaching Christ crucified: particularly on those passages, ‘Unto you that believe he is precious.’—‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.’—‘He that hath the Son hath life,’ &c.—‘That they all may be one,’ &c. But I feel that if I were more spiritually-minded I should preach better and bear trials better.”

It does not appear that the objects of his visit to this country were, at that time, in any considerable degree realized. He was grieved to find the principal Baptist community in Dublin under the influence of the most pernicious errors in doctrine and practice. Many of the members had imbibed principles which, to say the least, verged on Socinianism, while the amusements of the theatre and the card-table were tolerated, and even defended. Having refused, under these circumstances, to comply with their invitation to the Lord’s table, he encouraged the more godly portion of the church to form themselves into a separate community, who, on their secession, left behind them this assurance, “that if at any future time the church should restore that purity of communion which is essential to a Christian society, they should be ready to join heart and hand with them.”

Having on his return written some “Remarks on the State of the Baptist Churches in Ireland,” with especial reference to the disorders above alluded to,

\* This worthy man, who possessed considerable learning, and many Christian excellencies, was pastor successively of several small Baptist churches, and died about three years since in greatly depressed circumstances.—B.

a reply to them was made in the Irish circular letter addressed to the members of those churches respectively, and accompanied with an ambiguous declaration of the theological sentiments of the parties. This was inserted in a monthly journal, in which Mr. Fuller offered some observations in reply; particularly noticing the absence of all mention of the vicarious sacrifice and imputed righteousness of Christ—of the distinct personality of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and of any avowed intention of supplying their acknowledged deficiency in discipline. He further remarked, that if his construction of their statement, as it related to these particulars, was not founded in truth, he knew of no obstacle to the reunion of the seceding portion of the church.

Though this was not effected, considerable good was elicited by the discussion, and the subsequent operations of the "Baptist Irish Society" have been accompanied in a remarkable degree by the Divine blessing, not only in reviving the drooping interests of religion in the churches already established, but in the formation of others, chiefly by accessions from the Roman Catholic portion of the community, many of whom have been truly converted to God by the instrumentality of itinerant readers of the Scriptures.

Greatly as Mr. Fuller was esteemed in the various parts of the British empire, in no country were his talents and character more fully appreciated than in the United States, where his writings obtained an extensive circulation; while some of the divines of that country, of whose piety and talents he cherished the highest possible opinion, were in frequent habits of communication with him.

As early as 1798 the college of Princeton, New Jersey, had conferred on him the honorary degree of D. D., the use of which, however, he respectfully declined, alleging his deficiency of those literary qualifications which would justify the assumption of academic honours, as well as his conscientious disapprobation of such distinctions in connexion with religion. In May, 1805, he received a similar testimony from Yale College, accompanied by the following letter from the celebrated Dr. Dwight:

"NEW HAVEN, (Connecticut,) March 18, 1805.

"SIR,—The corporation of Yale College at the last public commencement conferred on you the degree of Doctor of Divinity. The diploma, which is the evidence of this act, you will receive with this letter. Both will be conveyed, and, if it should not be too inconvenient, handed to you by *Benjamin Silliman, Esquire*, professor of chemistry in this seminary.

"As this act is the result of the knowledge of your personal character and your published works only, and as such degrees are not inconsiderately given by this body, I flatter myself that it will be regarded by you in the light of a sincere testimony of respect to you.

"The gentleman who is the bearer of this letter is holden in high esteem here, as a man, a scholar, and a Christian. Such civilities as you may think proper to render to him will be gratefully acknowledged by me.

"Please to accept my best wishes for your personal welfare and your success in your ministerial labours, and be assured that I am, very respectfully, your affectionate friend and brother,

"TIMOTHY DWIGHT,  
"President of Yale College.

"Rev. Doctor Fuller."

To this communication Mr. Fuller returned the following answer:

“KETERING, June 1, 1805.

“DEAR SIR,—I yesterday received, enclosed in a letter from Mr. Silliman, a diploma from Yale College, with a letter from yourself. Considering it as a token of respect, and expressive of approbation of what I have published, I feel myself greatly obliged by it; and could I reconcile it to my judgment and feelings to make use of such a title of distinction from any quarter, there is none which I should prefer to that which you have done me the honour to communicate. Eight years ago I received the same expression of esteem from the college of New Jersey, and acknowledged it in much the same manner in a letter to Dr. Hopkins. With this it is possible you are not unacquainted; and, if so, I may presume you and your colleagues meant it purely as a token of respect, without supposing that, after having declined it in one instance, I could with any propriety, even were I so disposed, accept it in another. .

“The writings of your grandfather, President Edwards, and of your uncle, the late Dr. Edwards, have been food to me and many others. Our brethren Carey, Marshman, Ward, and Chamberlain, in the East Indies, all greatly approve of them. The President’s sermons on justification have afforded me more satisfaction on that important doctrine than any human performance which I have read. Some pieces which I have met with of yours have afforded me much pleasure.

“I have requested Mr. Silliman to procure of my bookseller all that he can furnish of what I have published, which I hope you will accept and furnish with a place in the college library, as a token of my grateful esteem.

“I am, dear sir, yours with respect and affection,

“ANDREW FULLER.”

In June this year, the interests of the mission again called Mr. Fuller to Scotland. His journal of this visit records the following interesting occurrences:—

“Saturday, July 12th, reached Aberdeen at about six in the evening. Paid my respects to several of the ministers, professors, &c., and adjusted the work of the sabbath. I agreed to spend the forenoon with a few Baptists, who meet in an upper room; the afternoon to preach and collect among the Independents in Mr. Haldane’s connexion; and in the evening at the Independents’ place called the Lock Chapel.

“Lord’s-day.—At the morning meeting I found eight or ten Baptists, residing in Aberdeen. They were not in a state of fellowship; and whether they were sufficiently united to be formed into a church appeared rather doubtful. At the same time three persons applied to me for baptism. The first was a young man who had been a Socinian, but professed of late to be convinced of the way of salvation through the atonement of Christ, and of all the other corresponding doctrines. The next was a simple-hearted man, with whose religious profession I was well satisfied. The third was a woman, and hers was a singular case.

“As I was going to the morning meeting, I was called aside by a respectable minister, and told to this effect—‘You will be requested to baptize a woman before you leave Aberdeen. I have no prejudice against her on account of her being a Baptist; but I think it my duty to tell you that she was a member of one of our churches in this neighbourhood, and was excluded for bad conduct.’—‘What conduct?’—‘Dishonesty towards her creditors.’—‘Very well; I thank you for the information, and will make a proper use of it.’

“ Though I was applied to at the morning meeting to baptize these persons, I did not hear their personal professions till after the evening sermon. They then came to my inn, where I conversed with each one apart. When the woman was introduced, the following is the substance of what passed between us:— ‘ Well, Margaret, you have lived in the world about forty years; how long do you think you have known Christ?’— ‘ A little more than a year.’— ‘ What, no longer?’— ‘ I think not.’— ‘ And have you never professed to know him before that time?’— ‘ Yes, and was a member of an Independent church for several years.’— ‘ A member of a church, and did not know Christ!—how was that?’— ‘ I was brought up to be religious, and deceived myself and others in professing to be so.’— ‘ And how came you to leave that church?’— ‘ I was cut off.’— ‘ What, because you were a Baptist?’— ‘ No, because of my bad conduct.’— ‘ Of what, then, had you been guilty?’— ‘ My heart was lifted up with vanity—I got in debt for clothes and other things; and then prevaricated, and did many things.’— ‘ And it was for these things they cut you off?’— ‘ Yes.’— ‘ And do you think they did right?’— ‘ Oh yes.’— ‘ And how came you to the knowledge of Christ at last?’— ‘ When I was cut off from the church, I sunk into the deepest despondency—I felt as an outcast from God and man—I wandered about, speaking, as it were, to nobody, and nobody speaking to me. My burden seemed heavier than I could bear. At that time a passage or two of Scripture came to my mind, and I was led to see that through the cross of Christ there was mercy for the chief of sinners. I wept much, and my sin was very bitter. But I saw there was no reason to despair; for the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. It is from thence I date my conversion.’— ‘ And do the minister, and the church of which you were a member, know of all this?’— ‘ Yes.’— ‘ Why did you not go and confess it before them, and be restored?’— ‘ Partly because I have removed my situation some miles from them; and partly because I felt in my conscience that I was a Baptist.’

“ After the conversation, I saw the minister who had told me of her, and informed him of the whole; adding that the church in his connexion had done well in excluding Margaret, and the Lord, I hoped, had blessed it to her salvation. He could not object to the propriety of my conduct in baptizing her, on my own principles. Next morning I rose at five o'clock, and baptized the three persons at a mill-dam, about five miles from the city; whither we went in a post-chaise, and returned about eight o'clock. There were upwards of a hundred people present.”

“ Thursday, July 24, travelled nearly forty miles to-day along the western coast, bearing southward. About six o'clock we reached Saltcoats. Here I found that the parish minister, on hearing that I was to collect at the Burgher meeting-house, resolved to have a sermon at the same hour in the church, and a collection for the Bible Society. He said, however, that if I chose to preach the sermon in the church, and let the collection be applied to the Bible Society, I was welcome to do so. As soon as this was mentioned to me by another person, I immediately sent to the clergyman, offering to relinquish my own object, and, if he was agreeable, to preach the sermon in the church, in favour of the Bible Society. This he acceded to, and I called on him before worship. I then observed that he must be aware of what he had proposed being contrary to the rules of the Assembly of the Church of Scotland; and that I should be sorry if any ill consequences were to follow on my account. He replied that his presbyters were well disposed, and he had no fears on that head. I then preached the sermon, and pleaded with all the energy I could for the Bible Society. After

worship, I went to my inn: then called to sup and lodge with the clergyman. (Such is the custom in Scotland.) While sitting in his house, I told him I felt happy in the opportunity of expressing my regard for the Bible Society, and requested him to add my guinea to the collection. But during my call at the inn, after worship, he had consulted with his friends on the subject of my having been deprived of a collection. He therefore answered me by saying, 'I cannot accept your guinea; and, moreover, I must insist on your accepting half the collection for your object; and you must make no objection whatever to it. Such is the conclusion of our session.' Finding him quite resolute, I yielded, and took half the collection, which, however, did not amount to 6*l*."

The departure of some missionaries with their wives, early in 1806, gave occasion to a valuable epistolary communication from Mr. Fuller, an extract from which may serve as a specimen of the affectionate correspondence which he maintained with his missionary brethren.

"MY VERY DEAR BRETHREN AND SISTERS,—There is the greatest necessity for us all to keep near to God, and to feel that we are in that path of which he approves. This will sustain us in times of trial. The want of this cannot be supplied by any thing else. Beware of those things which draw a veil between him and you, or that render a throne of grace unwelcome. If God be with you, you shall do well; you shall be blessings among the sailors, among the brethren in India, and among the natives. Be very conversant with your Bibles. The company we keep, and the books we read, insensibly form us into the same likeness. I love to converse with a Christian whose mind is imbued with the sentiments of the Scriptures. I find it advantageous to read a part of the Scriptures to myself before private prayer, and often to turn it into prayer as I read it. Do not read the Scriptures merely as preachers, in order to find a text, or something to say to the people, but read them that you may get good to your own souls. Look at the Saviour as he walks, as he walks before you; and then point others to him, John i. 35.

"Next to communion with your God and Saviour, cherish love to one another. Good sense and good temper may preserve you from falling out by the way, and exposing yourselves to the censure of spectators; but this is not enough. The apostolic precept which is so often repeated—'Little children, love one another,' includes more than an abstinence from discord, or the routine of civility. You must know one another, and love each other in the Lord. To do this, you must often think of the dying love of Christ towards you. When I have sometimes surveyed the church of which I am a pastor, individually, my mind has revolted from this member for this fault, and from another for that; but when I have met them at the table of the Lord, one thought has dissipated all these hard things:—'Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood!' Oh, (thought I), if my Saviour could find in his heart to lay down his life for them, who am I that I should withhold the tenderest regards from them? If he can forgive them, shall I be unforgiving? Nay more . . . . If he could lay down his life for *me*, and forgive *me*, who am I that I should cherish a hard and unforgiving heart towards my brethren?

"My dear brethren, know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified. Be this the summit of your ambition. For you to live must be Christ. You may never be of that literary consequence which some are; but if you possess a savour of Christ, you will be blessings in your generation; and, when you die, your names will be precious not only in India and Britain, but in the sight of the Lord.

“My dear sisters, it is not much that I have known of you; but what I have has tended to endear you to me. My heart is toward those young people in our Israel, of both sexes, who have offered themselves willingly in this Divine war! Treat your husbands with an attentive, respectful and obliging carriage, as I trust they will treat you. Treat each other as sisters, and the young woman that goes out with you too. Compel her, when she parts with you, to part weeping. Tears of this sort are worth more than thousands of compliments. Do not make confidants of one another in matters of offence; but, in a gentle and tender way, get into the habit of communicating to the party her faults; and encourage her to do the same by you. This rule will be necessary not only on your voyage, but through life. The God of all grace be with you! Present my kind love to the dear Captain Wickes. Accept the same to yourselves. My wife and daughter unite in wishing you prosperity in the name of the Lord.”

The limits of this memoir will not admit of an extended selection from Mr. Fuller's correspondence with his friends; but the following will suffice to show how feelingly he was accustomed to enter into their circumstances, and how deeply he was concerned to promote their best interests.

“MY DEAR FRIEND,—I find, by a letter, that you are in constant expectation of losing your son. Since the time that you and I corresponded, our circumstances, temptations, afflictions, and almost every thing else pertaining to us, have undergone a change. We have each had a portion of parental care; and now, having passed the meridian of life, we begin to taste the cup of parental sorrow. We often talk of trials, without knowing much of what we say: that is a trial, methinks, which lays hold of us, and which we cannot shake off. If we say, ‘Surely I could bear any thing but this!’ this shall often be the ill that we are called to bear; and this it is that constitutes it a trial. And why are afflictions called trials, but on account of their being sent to try what manner of spirit we are of? It is in these circumstances our graces appear, if we are truly gracious, and our corruptions, if we be under the dominion of sin; and too often, in some degree, if we be Christians. When I have experienced heavy trials, I have sometimes thought of the case of Aaron. He had two sons, fine young men, colleagues with their father; God accepted of their offering, and the people shouted for joy: every thing looked promising . . . when alas! in the midst of their glory, they sinned; and there went out a fire from the Lord, and devoured them. Well might the afflicted father say as he did: ‘And such things have befallen me!’ yet he ‘held his peace.’ I say, I have sometimes thought of this case, when I have been heavily afflicted; and have employed my mind in this manner:—Such things befell Aaron, the servant of the Lord, a much better man than I am: who am I that I should be exempted from the ills which are common to men, to good men, to the best of men? Such things befell Aaron as have not yet befallen me. He had two children cut off together; I have never yet lost more than one at once. His were cut off by an immediate judgment from Heaven, and without any apparent space being given for repentance: thus have not mine been. Yet even Aaron held his peace; and shall I murmur? ‘The just shall live by faith.’ God is telling us, in general, that all things work together for good to them that love him; but he has not informed us how: nor is it common, under afflictions, to perceive the good arising from them. It is *afterwards* that they yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness. If the Lord should remove your son, perhaps you are not without hopes of his salvation; and if the event should cause you to feel more than you have



yet felt of the perishable nature of all things under the sun, and draw your heart more towards himself and things above, where Jesus is, you may have occasion in the end to bless God for it. God knows we are strange creatures; and that we stand in need of strange measures to restrain, humble, and sanctify us.

“Give my love to your afflicted child, and give me leave to recommend to him, Him in whom alone he can be saved. I doubt not but you have recommended Christ to him, as the Saviour of the chief of sinners; yet you will not take it amiss if I address the following lines to him:—

“MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,—You know but little of me, nor I of you; but I love you for your parents’ sake. While health and spirits were afforded you, you thought, I presume, but little of dying; and perhaps what you heard by way of counsel or warning, from the pulpit or from other quarters, made but little impression upon you. A future world appeared to you a sort of dream, rather than a reality. The gratification of present desire seemed to be every thing. But now that Being against whom you have sinned has laid his hand upon you. Your present affliction seems to be of the nature of a summons: its language is, “Prepare to meet thy God, O sinner!” Perhaps you have thought but little of your state as a lost sinner before him; yet you have had sufficient proof, in your own experience, of the *degeneracy and dreadful corruption of your nature*. Have you learned from it this important lesson? If you have, while you bewail it before God, with shame and self-abhorrence, you will embrace the refuge set before you in the gospel. The name of Christ will be precious to your heart. God has given him to be the Saviour of the lost; and, coming to him as worthy of death, you are welcome to the blessing of eternal life. No man is so little a sinner but that he must perish for ever without him; and no man so great a sinner as that he need despair of mercy in him. He has died, the just for the unjust, that he may bring us to God. His blood cleanseth from sin, and the benefits of it are free. The invitations of the gospel are universal. Though God would never hear the prayers or regard the tears of a sinner, like you, *for your own sake*; yet he will hear from heaven, his dwelling-place, that petition which is sincerely offered *in the name of his Son*. Repent of your sin, and you shall find mercy: believe his gospel with all your heart, and you shall live. Plead the worthiness of Christ as the ground of acceptance, to the utter rejection of your own, and God will graciously hear, forgive, and save you. Every one that thus asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh the door of mercy shall be opened. In all your supplications for mercy, be sure you found your petitions on the worthiness of Christ alone. But if you can see no loveliness in him, nor beauty that you should desire him, depend upon it you are yet in your sins, and, so dying, you must perish. I do not know whether you have, at any time, been inclined to listen to the abominable suggestions of infidels; but if you have, you now perceive that those are principles that will not stand by you in the near approach of death. If the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world, be not now a comfort to you, you are comfortless. Look to him, my dear young friend, and live.”

To a member of the church:—

“MY DEAR FRIEND —:—I received your letter, and was affected in reading it. Ah! is it so, that you have indulged in secret sin for seven or eight years past, and that God, the holy and the jealous God, has now given you up to open sin, and that you have in a manner lost all power of resistance!

“It is not in my power, nor that of any creature, to enable you to decide

upon your former experience, while you are in this state of mind. If an apostle stood in doubt of a backsliding people, (Gal. iv. 20,) we must do the same—and even of ourselves, or, which is worse, our confidence will be delusion. The tree can only be known by its fruits. If the reproaches of the world, and the censures of the church, lead you to repentance—if you not only confess but forsake both your secret and open sins, and return to God by Jesus Christ—you will yet obtain mercy; and these visitations of God will prove to have been the ‘stripes’ of a Father on a disobedient child. But if you persist in your sins, you will prove yourself an enemy, and ‘God will wound the head of his enemies; and the hairy scalp of such a one as goeth on still in his trespasses,’ Ps. lxxviii. 21.

“There certainly is such a thing as for a man to ‘hear the word and not do it,’ and this is compared to the case of one who seeth his natural face in a glass, and straightway goeth away and ‘forgetteth what manner of man he was,’ and such are described as ‘deceiving their own selves,’ James i. 22—24. Perhaps there are few who have long sat under the preaching of the truth, but have at times beheld their own character and condition by it. Simon trembled, (Acts viii. 24,) and Felix trembled, Acts xxiv. 25. Often will conscience answer to the truth of what is spoken, even while some lust has the dominion over the soul. If, instead of producing a change of heart and life, these convictions be only transient—if, on going from the means of grace and plunging into worldly cares and company, all is forgotten—it is as when the seed was ‘picked up by the fowls of the air.’ And where these transient impressions are mistaken for the grace of God in the heart, there men ‘deceive their own selves.’

“In your present condition do not attempt to decide upon your past experiences. Your immediate concern is, whether you have ever repented and believed in Jesus before or not, now to repent and come to him. You may not be able to come as a backsliding Christian, but come as a guilty, perishing sinner. The door of mercy is not yet shut upon you. Read and pray over the 130th Psalm; also the 32d and 51st. When we think of the abounding of sin, it would seem as if none could be saved: yet when we think of the superaboundings of grace, and of the preciousness of that blood that was shed upon the cross, and which cleanseth from *all sin*, we must acknowledge that none need despair. O friend——, retrace your steps! Come back—come back! lest you plunge ere you are aware into the pit whence there is no redemption.—Read Jer. xxxi. 18—21.

“When a parent loses, or is in danger of losing, a child, nothing but the recovery of that child can heal the wound. If he could have many other children, that would not do it. Thus it was with Paul and the Corinthians:—‘If I make you sorry, who is he that maketh me glad, but the same that is made sorry by me?’ 2 Cor. ii. 2. Thus it is with me towards you. Nothing but your return to God and the church can heal the wound. What is my hope or joy or crown of rejoicing? Are not ye? Do not bereave me of my reward! But and if it be so, the loss will be yours more than mine. If I have but the approbation of God, I shall be rewarded; my loss will be made up; but who is to repair yours?

“I am still affectionately yours,

“A. FULLER.”

In 1806, Mr. Fuller published his “Dialogues, Letters, and Essays on various Subjects.” The latter part of this publication, under the title of Conversations between Peter, James, and John, personating Mr. Booth, himself, and Dr. Ryland, was designed to furnish the public with the substance of a series of private

letters to Dr. R. on the topics in discussion between himself and Mr. Booth, which, as they contained some pointed animadversions on the conduct of Mr. B., he had no wish to publish. The "Conversations" were distinguished not only by the absence of asperity, but by the development of the tenderest feelings of Christian affection.

It had been more than once insinuated that the views which Mr. Fuller had so long and so strenuously advocated, respecting the universal obligation to a cordial reception of the gospel, would not admit of a practical application to the consciences of ungodly persons, without a compromise of other important doctrines not less explicitly avowed. To evince the incorrectness of this surmise, as well as with the general design of doing good, he wrote the tract well known under the title of the "Great Question Answered." This address, which now forms one of the publications of the Religious Tract Society, has been translated into several of the continental languages, and obtained a most extensive circulation; it has been rendered eminently useful in the conversion of sinners, and has not been wanting in testimonies of approbation from some of his most strenuous opponents.

In the same year he published his "Expository Discourses on the Book of Genesis," a portion of sacred history which his own patriarchal simplicity, united with his deep knowledge of human nature, enabled him to illustrate with great felicity, and which the richness of evangelical sentiment pervading his mind qualified him to invest with peculiar charms.

It has been already intimated that the missionary undertaking had to encounter violent hostility, with which the secretary more than once successfully grappled. A remarkable example of this occurred in 1807. Certain individuals, not content with exciting apprehensions in the minds of the authorities in India, circulated among the proprietors at home pamphlets of an alarming and inflammatory character. These were written by Mr. Twining, Major Scott Waring, and a Bengal officer, and were followed by the introduction of the subject in a general court of proprietors. Having speedily replied to those pamphlets, Mr. Fuller, who had received intimation of the meditated attack, attended the court for the purpose of watching the enemy's proceedings. It is sufficient to say that their attempts were triumphantly defeated, leaving them no alternative, but to seek new weapons of attack. In the mean time, an application to the Marquis Wellesley, who had recently retired from the presidency of India, secured to the Society his lordship's cordial and powerful support. It was not long, however, before a favourable pretext was afforded to the enemies of religion for renewing the subject of their hostility before a court of proprietors. An expression reflecting on the character of Mahomet had, by the inadvertency or maliciousness of a native translator, found its way into one of the tracts circulated by the missionaries in Bengal. This, for a time, brought them into disagreeable contact with the government abroad, till a candid explanation and apology fully satisfied the governor in council. At the period of the introduction of this business to the court at home, which was early in 1808, Mr. Fuller received communications from the missionaries, giving a complete detail of the case, the circulation of which, accompanied by powerful appeals to the public, had the effect of once more defeating the projects of the enemy. The pamphlets written by Mr. Fuller, during this contest, appeared under the title of "An Apology for the late Christian Missions to India."

Under date of Jan. 27, 1808, he thus addresses his friend Dr. Ryland:—"I last night returned from Leicester, with a strong fever upon me, through excess

of labour. I am a little better to-day. My Apology for the Mission would have been finished by this time; but there are new pieces come out, as full of wrath as possible, which I am told I must notice. I am really distressed with public and private labours."

Towards the close of this year, the generous and pressing calls of his northern friends once more brought him to Scotland.—"I have been enabled," said he, on his return, "to collect as much as 2000*l.* in the course of six weeks, after a journey of 1200 miles. God be praised for all his goodness, and for the abundant kindness shown towards me and towards the mission."

In 1809 a case occurred in relation to which the most strenuous efforts have been made to involve Mr. Fuller in the charge of persecution. To these efforts the gratuitous admissions of some of his friends have given considerable countenance. An attempt having been made by certain Socinians resident at Soham to obtain possession of the place of worship belonging to the Calvinistic Dissenters, an appeal was made by the latter to the quarter sessions, which Mr. Fuller, upon the footing of former friendship, was requested to aid in conducting. It was discovered in the course of the action that such was the ambiguity of the legal tenure by which their chapel was held, that no effectual method presented itself of maintaining their just right, but an appeal to certain statutes at that time in force against "impugners of the Holy Trinity." This, it appears, was made by some of Mr. Fuller's colleagues, less versed than himself in the principles of religious liberty. He was certainly chargeable with indiscretion in placing himself in such a position as that others should be able to act without his knowledge, while he bore the principal share in the general proceedings and the responsibility connected with them. His "Narrative of Facts," published a considerable time afterwards, when the pressure of other matters had intervened, probably conveyed to the public mind a less favourable impression than a more distinct recollection of some minor particulars would have enabled him to make; but the charge of *wilful falsehood* must be added to that of persecution, if his own solemn declaration is not to be received, *that he no sooner learned from his attorney the grounds on which the case was proceeding than he most unequivocally refused to advance another step, alleging his unqualified disapprobation of the laws in question.* Had the writer of these lines the slightest demur respecting the truth of this statement, he would deem it most advisable to omit all reference to the subject. On the other hand, he can see no reason why, in order to escape the charge of partiality, he should suffer a character so beloved to lie under an unjust imputation, the more especially as one of his biographers, who at first laboured under the impression that Mr. Fuller's reputation must in this particular be sacrificed to justice, has since unequivocally declared, upon the most competent authority, that the onus of this proceeding lay upon another and not upon him—that the charge against Mr. Fuller is transferred "from his character to his discretion, from his principles to his prudence; and that it is to the latter only that any imputation can fairly attach."

From this ungracious contest Mr. Fuller found relief in the most cheering proofs of the success of his ministry. Writing to Dr. Ryland in 1810, he says, "There appears to be so much of an earnest inquiry after salvation among our young people, that I feel it necessary to be absent from them as short a time as possible. We have a weekly meeting in the vestry for all who choose to come for conversation . . . Our Monday and Friday night meetings are much thronged—the discourses in the latter have been mostly addressed to persons under some concern about their salvation."

It was, nevertheless, during these pleasing domestic engagements, in which his soul delighted, that he produced one of his most elaborate controversial pieces, entitled "Strictures on Sandemanianism." This publication, which closes a twenty years' controversy on faith, was suggested by the repeated attacks he had sustained from the followers of Messrs. Glass and Sandeman in Scotland and Ireland, and contains, in addition to the main questions in debate, some animadversions on the ecclesiastical polity of that body, which had in a greater or less degree influenced the organization of most of the churches in those countries.

In March, 1812, Mr. Fuller received intelligence of the death of his nephew Joseph Fuller, of whose future eminence and usefulness in the cause of God he had cherished the fondest hopes. The following account of this extraordinary youth is communicated in a letter to his beloved preceptor, Dr. Ryland:—

"MY DEAR BROTHER,—I have just received yours, and by the same post one from Little Bentley, dated the 23d, of which the following is an extract:—'This morning, about a quarter after seven o'clock, our dear Joseph left this world of sin and sorrow, and we trust is entered into rest. He could not talk much; but said, That gospel which I have recommended to others is all my support in the prospect of death. He was sensible to the last!' Thus God has blasted our hopes concerning this lovely youth. He was eighteen years old last October.

"Now it is fresh upon my mind, I will give you a few particulars of such things concerning him as fell under my notice:—

"In July, 1806, I took Mrs. Fuller to Bentley, on a visit to my brother and his family. Joseph was then under thirteen years old. We observed in him a talent for learning; and his parents seemed to think him not much suited to their business. Mrs. F. therefore proposed that he should come and live with us, and improve his learning. The following October he came, and we sent him to school, to our friend Mr. Mason, of Rowell. After being there three months, he spent the winter holidays at our house. One day he was looking over the Greek alphabet, and soon got it by heart. He obtained a few instructions before the holidays were ended; and, on his returning to school, I spoke to my worthy friend, the Rev. Mr. Brotherhood, of Desborough, near Rowell, requesting the favour of his teaching him the Latin and Greek languages. With this request Mr. B. not only readily complied, but generously declined any recompense for his trouble. On an evening, after the school-hours at Rowell, Joseph would walk over to Desborough, and spend an hour or two with Mr. B., who with Mrs. B. treated him as a young friend, rather than as a pupil. His diligence, sobriety, and good sense raised him in their esteem; and he had a great respect and esteem for them. In this course he continued through the years 1807 and 1808. He could talk of religion, and, I believe, from his childhood, had thoughts of the ministry; but as I saw no signs of real personal Christianity, I never encouraged any thing of the kind. In the autumn, I think, of 1808, we perceived an evident change in his spirit and behaviour. This was observed, not only at Kettering, but at Rowell. I found, too, that he wished to open his mind to me; and I soon gave him an opportunity. The result was, we were satisfied of his being the subject of repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. On April 30, 1809, I baptized him, and he became a member of the church at Kettering. Under these circumstances, I could not but think of his being employed in the work of the ministry, provided his own heart was in it. On gently sounding him upon it, I found it was. He was too much of a child

to be asked to speak before the church ; and yet we thought no time should be lost in improving his talents. A letter was therefore sent to the Bristol Education Society, through your hands, recommending him as a pious youth of promising talents for the ministry. In August, the same year, he went to Bristol. At the vacation, in the summer of 1810, he went home, and, on his return, towards the end of July, came by Kettering. At the church meeting, he preached from 1 Cor. ii. 2, 'For I determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.' He was then under seventeen years of age, and a mere lad in appearance ; but his thoughts were just and mature.

"From the first of his religious impressions, he expressed a desire to go to India as a missionary, if he were thought a suitable person. I did not discourage him, but told him he was too young, at present, to determine on a matter of such importance. On the above visit to us, in July, 1810, I inquired whether his mind continued the same on that subject. He answered, it did.

"His journey from Kettering to Bristol, which (being very fond of walking) he principally performed on foot, was, I fear, injurious to him. He got wet, as I afterwards learned, several times on the road. Towards the following Christmas, he told me, he began to feel the complaint on his lungs. It is now nearly a year, I suppose, since he left Bristol, to go to his father's house. After he had been there the greater part of the summer of 1811, he paid a visit, for a month or two, to the new academy at Stepney, where he was treated with great kindness by Mr. and Mrs. Newman, as he had been, in the spring of the same year, by Mr. and Mrs. Burls. Indeed, I may say, at every place he 'grew in favour with God and man.'

"Being myself in London, early in November, I took him with me down to Kettering. Here he stopped about six weeks ; during which we used means for the recovery of his health, but without effect. So far as his affliction would permit, he here enjoyed the company of his friends. He got over to Rowell, and to Desborough, to see his dear friends, Mr. Mason and Mr. Brotherhood. About Dec. 20, 1811, I took him to Cambridge, whence he was conducted home. On parting, we both wept, as not expecting to see each other again in the flesh. So it has proved. His father informs me, that on the last Lord's day in January, he was very desirous of going with him to Thorpe, to join in the Lord's supper ; which, though with much difficulty, he accomplished. His death is one of those mysteries in providence, not of very unfrequent occurrence, wherein God, after apparently forming and fitting an instrument for usefulness in this world, removes it to another. But 'it is well.' I do not remember to have known a lad of his years who possessed more command of temper, or maturity of judgment, or whose mind seemed more habitually directed to the glory of God."

Dr. Ryland, speaking of the first discourse delivered by this youth, in the lecture room of the college, says, "I was obliged to suppress my feelings and hurry out of the room, that I might not let a lad of sixteen see how much I was delighted with what he had been uttering."

A pulmonary attack, during the preceding summer, had seriously affected Mr. Fuller's health ; and though he was so far restored as to undertake a journey of 600 miles, his exhausted powers and increasing labours suggested the necessity of stated assistance in his pastoral duties, a service which was supplied by the Rev. J. K. Hall, a nephew of the late Rev. R. Hall.

Early in May, Mr. Fuller took a journey into Wales. From Abergavenny he wrote to Mr. Suteliff. After speaking of the low state of his health, and alluding to some malicious censures against the Baptists and their missionary undertaking,

he thus concludes, "Our wisdom is to be still and quiet, and to mind our own business. For my own part, my afflictions say to me, '*Study to show thyself approved unto God.*' What empty things are the applauses of creatures, and how idle the pursuit of them! I seem near the end of my course, and hope, through grace, and grace only, to finish it with joy. I have no transports, but a steady hope of eternal life, on the ground of my Saviour's death. I feel some freedom in my applications to God in his name. If I should die, I shall be able to say to the rising generation, '*God will surely visit you.*' A work is begun that will not end till the world be subdued to the Saviour. We have done a little for him, accompanied with much evil; the Lord grant that this may not be laid to our charge in that day."

The close of this year brought the afflictive intelligence of the destruction of the printing establishment at Serampore by fire. The loss occasioned by this calamity was estimated at upwards of 12,000*l.* Much as this news affected Mr. Fuller, he predicted the speedy reparation of the injury. Being then on a tour in Norfolk, he hastened home to arrange for a general appeal to the benevolence of the Christian public. This was answered by prompt and liberal subscriptions in all parts of the United Kingdom, and in the United States of America, which in a few weeks more than repaired the loss. On this occasion Mr. Fuller received the following testimony of Christian liberality from an eminent minister of the Establishment now deceased:—

"From the time I heard of the fire at Serampore, I felt desirous to assist in repairing the loss, and promoting the important work of translating the Scriptures into the Oriental languages. I view the subject as presenting a common claim upon the Christian world, and regard, with highest estimation, the labours of your Society in the East Indies.

"I have the pleasure to state that, including a donation remitted to me by my respected friend Dr. Kilvington, our collection at Bentinck Chapel, on Sunday last, has produced 130*l.*

"With my unfeigned prayer that the eternal God may prosper all these exertions to the promotion of his glory and the benefit of his church, I am, dear sir,

"Yours very faithfully,

"BASIL WOOD."

On communicating to the late Rev. Legh Richmond some pleasing intelligence from India, accompanied with specimens of type recast from the materials found in the ruins at Serampore, Mr. Fuller received the following affectionate reply:

"REV. AND DEAR BROTHER,—I receive your papers with thankful pleasure—they seem like specimens dropped from the midst of heaven by the angel in his flight with the everlasting gospel in his hand . . . . Happy are those that can cultivate true brotherly love and respect, although they cannot in every thing think and act together. There is still a wide field for mutual operation—there may be a few hedges and ditches to separate portions of the land; but it is all one farm—Glory be to the chief Husbandman and great Shepherd!—His grace and mercy be on such *subordinate* husbandmen and shepherds as you, and far more so,

Your unworthy fellow labourer,

"LEGH RICHMOND."

It will be seen from the preceding pages that it was Mr. Fuller's happiness to be acquainted with many of the most eminent and pious of the established clergy. Besides those to whom reference has already been made, we may men-

tion Drs. Erskine and Chalmers in Scotland; and in this country the Rev. John Owen and the venerable Berridge: in a letter to his friend Ryland, he thus describes an interview with the latter:—

“ . . . . . As to my Everton journey, I wrote something, as it was then fresh upon my mind, better than I can now. I greatly admired that Divine savour which all along mingled itself with Mr. Berridge’s facetiousness, and sufficiently chastised it. His conversation tended to produce a frequent but guiltless smile, accompanied with a tear of pleasure. His love to *Christ* appears to be intense. I requested him to give us a few outlines of his life and ministry. These were interesting, but too long to write. They will enrich an evening’s conversation, if I come to Northampton. When he had gone through, I asked him to pray for us. He said he was so faint he could not yet, and requested me to pray. I prayed, and concluded as usual by asking all in Christ’s name. He, without getting off his knees, took up the prayer where I had left it, in some such manner as this—‘ O Lord God! this prayer has been offered up *in the name of Jesus*: accept it, I beseech thee,’ &c., for five or six minutes, in a most solemn and savoury manner. We then took leave, with solemn prayer for blessings on each other, as if we had been acquainted for forty years, and were never to see each other again in this world. The visit left a strong and lasting impression on my heart of the beauty of holiness—of holiness almost matured.”

In 1813, on the renewal of the East India charter, Mr. Fuller visited the metropolis with a view to obtain the insertion of a clause granting a passage to the missionaries in British ships, instead of compelling them to make a circuitous voyage by America, as well as affording that legal protection in India to which the peaceable conduct of the missionaries in that country, not less than their natural privileges as British subjects, entitled them. Accompanied by Messrs. Sutcliff, Ivimey, and Burls, he obtained an interview with the Earl of Buckinghamshire, which ended in the request of his lordship to be furnished with a written statement of their wishes. Mr. Fuller lost no time in forwarding this to his lordship, and a similar communication was also made to the Earl of Liverpool. Petitions to parliament were forwarded from the various communities of Dissenters, while vast numbers of pious Episcopalians, feeling it to be a subject of common interest, joined in the appeal, which proved successful.

The following short epistle from the venerable philanthropist whose name it bears was written to Mr. Fuller in allusion to the above event, and to certain interesting intelligence received from India.

“ LONDON, Nov. 29, 1813.

“ MY DEAR SIR,—I return you many thanks for your friendly communication, and am sorry I did not receive it on Saturday till too late to write to you by return of the post. How striking that, at the very time when we were prosecuting our endeavours, Dr. Carey should be experiencing the need of such a regulation as we solicited, and express his wishes for such permission as, through God’s blessing, we finally obtained! In what manner we should proceed in respect of these transactions I am by no means as yet clear. The question deserves the most mature consideration; and I shall be happy to confer on it with like-minded friends. But it might assist us in forming a right decision to read the original correspondence, (if there are no parts of it which you had rather we should not peruse,) and, indeed, to receive all other information that you can give us: the more detailed and particular the better. ; But, my dear sir, joy!—joy!—joy! I have scarcely restrained myself, from my first taking up the pen, from breaking



out into these notes of exultation on the glad tidings which Dr. Carey's letter conveys—tidings so glad, and so important, that the value of them can scarcely be overrated. Five natives of high caste become Christians, keeping the Lord's day, and meeting for religious edification, without having had any intercourse with the missionaries—merely from reading the Scriptures, tracts, &c.—besides the hundred hopefuls! When I consider who and what Dr. Carey is and has been, and what encouragement the translations of the Scriptures into the native languages have received, I seem to hear in this incident the voice of the Almighty, saying, You are in the right path, press forward in it. I am much pressed for time to-day, and must break off, assuring you that I am ever, with cordial esteem and regard, yours very sincerely,

“W. WILBERFORCE.”

In the summer of this year Mr. Fuller paid his fifth and last visit to Scotland, where he was received with renewed proofs of affection perfectly overwhelming to his feelings. An incident occurred at Edinburgh which evinces, amidst his arduous labours, a deep interest in the welfare of his fellow townsmen. Learning that the Northamptonshire militia were in quarters at the castle, he went to see them, and, on finding four young men from Kettering, entered into conversation with them, invited them to attend divine worship, and, on his departure, presented one of them with a Bible.

In 1814, Mr. Fuller received a warning of his own dissolution in that of his valued friend and counsellor Mr. Sutcliff. Under date of March 24, he writes to Dr. Ryland as follows:—“I have just received an alarming letter from Olney, and must go, if possible, to see our dear brother to-morrow. Brother Sutcliff was kept ten days in London, took two days to get home, his legs swelled, blisters were applied, which drew water. They fear he has water in his chest: he cannot lie down, for want of breath, but sits, night after night, in a large chair. Well; the government is on *His* shoulders; ours will soon be from under the load; but while we are reducing in number and increasing in labour, it may be the heavier for a time. God grant we may finish our course with joy.”

Of this venerable man, who entered into his rest on the 22d of June, the late Rev. R. Hall engaged, at the solicitation of Mr. F., to furnish some account to the public—an engagement from which he subsequently excused himself. His letter to Mr. Fuller on this occasion affords a striking specimen of his characteristic diffidence.

“MY DEAR BROTHER,—I am truly concerned to be obliged to tell you that I cannot succeed at all in my attempts to draw the character of our dear and venerable brother Sutcliff. I have made several efforts, and have sketched out, as well as I could, the outlines of what I conceive to be his character, but have failed in producing such a portrait as appears to me fit for the public eye. I am perfectly convinced that your intimacy with him, and your powers of discrimination, will enable you to present to posterity a much juster and more impressive idea of him than I can. I am heartily sorry I promised it. But promises I hold sacred; and therefore, if you insist upon it, and are not willing to release me from my engagement, I will accomplish the task as well as I can. But if you will let the matter pass without reproaching me, *sub silentio*, you will oblige me considerably. It appears to me, that if I ever possessed a faculty of character-drawing, I have lost it, probably for want of use, as I am far from taking any delight in a minute criticism on character, to which, in my younger days, I was excessively addicted. Both our taste and talents change with the

progress of years. The purport of these lines, however, is to request you to absolve me from my promise, in which light I shall interpret your silence; holding myself ready, however, to comply with your injunctions.

“I am, my dear sir, your affectionate brother,

“R. HALL.”

An outline of Mr. Sutcliff's character was subsequently given in his funeral discourse, published by Mr. Fuller, and now inserted in this volume.

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## SECTION V.—1814, 1815.

Journeys into various parts of England—Ordination of Mr. Yates at Leicester—Commencement of last illness—Attempted excursion to the North of England—Last visit to London—Publication of sermons—Preparation of MSS. on the Revelation and on Communion—Return of disorder—Ordination of Mr. Mack—Aggravated symptoms of disease—Last sermon, and distribution of the Lord's supper—Visit to Cheltenham contemplated and relinquished—Last letter to Dr. Ryland—Dying expressions—Concluding scene—Funeral—Extract from Mr. Toller's sermon—Testimonies of the Rev. R. Hall, Dr. Newman, and Bible Society—Marble tablet—Letter of Mrs. Fuller to Dr. Ryland.—Appendix, containing notices of his family, &c.

UNDER the powerful impression of his favourite inspired maxim, “Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might,” Mr. Fuller continued his unwearied efforts on behalf of the mission. He thus writes to Dr. Ryland on the 26th May, 1814:—“Between now and the first week in August I have no rest. I give you my routes, that you may write no letters to me at Kettering while I am out, and may write, if occasion should require, to other places. June 6, I set off for Essex, where I shall collect between the 8th and the 20th; thence I go to London, to the annual meeting, on the 22d; come down to Kettering on the 24th or 25th; set off for the north of England on the 27th for five Lord's days. I expect to spend the first at Liverpool, the second at Manchester, the third at Leeds, the fourth at Newcastle, and the fifth at Hull.”

The termination of his labours was, however, rapidly approaching, an event of which he had recently received repeated intimations, and to which he looked forward with feelings equally removed from ecstasy and dismay. In the summer of 1814 he travelled through several of the midland counties, attended the annual meeting of the mission in London, and, after paying the last tribute to the remains of his beloved friend at Olney, set off for Lancashire and the north of England. From Durham he addressed a request to the East India directors for the passage of Mr. Yates,\* a missionary to Serampore, when a contumacious opposition to the provisions of the new enactment compelled him, after repeated and respectful solicitations, to appeal to the Board of Control. For this purpose he again visited London, where he obtained an interview with the Earl of Buckinghamshire. This matter being satisfactorily adjusted, he returned home, and the following week attended the designation of Mr. Yates at Leicester. He preached with unusual solemnity and affection, but could not do as at other times. His debilitated frame sank under the fatigue of the engagements.

During his stay at Leicester he appeared so absorbed in the concerns of the

\* Now the Rev. Dr. Yates, of Calcutta.—B.

mission, that his friends enjoyed but little of his society. On parting with them he intimated that he was very ill, that he should probably see them no more, that his work was nearly done, but that he should not spare time to nurse himself, and must labour as long as he could.

On Lord's day, Sept. 4, after preaching in the morning, he was taken seriously ill. On the 18th, addressing his friend Ryland, he says, "For the last fortnight I have been laid by and nearly confined to my bed. I know not when I have had so violent an attack of the bile. I had an inflammation about the liver, the effects of which are still upon me, so that I can scarcely walk. I hope to get out to meeting once to-day. I know not what to do with the missionary students, (from Olney,) being utterly unfit to entertain care of any kind. I thought it best to let them come to you. Here I must leave it. The writing of this letter has overcome me."

Having partially recovered, he proceeded with two friends on another journey to the north of England, to complete those engagements which had been abruptly broken off on his last excursion; but on reaching Newark he was compelled to return, leaving them to prosecute the object.

Writing to a friend soon after, he says, "I have preached only twice for the last five or six weeks, but am gradually though slowly recovering. Since I was laid by from preaching, I have written out my sermon, and drawn up a memoir for my dear brother Sutcliff. Your partiality for the memoir of dear Pearce will insure me one reader at least for that of Sutcliff. I hope the great and good Mr. Charles of Bala will find some one who will do justice to his memory. Mrs. Sutcliff died on the 3d of September, less than eleven weeks after her husband. Death has swept away almost all my old friends, and I seem to stand expecting to be called for soon. It matters not when, so that we be found in Christ."

In another letter he says, "Brother Sutcliff's last end was enviable: may mine be like his! Death has been making havoc of late among us. Yesterday I preached a funeral sermon, if so it might be called, for three of the members of our church, lately deceased. I feel as one who has the sentence of death, and whose great concern it is whether my religion will bear the test! Almost all my old friends are dead, or dying. Well, I have a hope that bears me up; and it is through grace. In reviewing my life, I see much evil—God be merciful to me a sinner!"

In December, having somewhat recruited his strength, he paid another visit to London, on which occasion he delivered a powerful and animated discourse on behalf of the British and Foreign School Society.\* Though this was one of his happiest efforts, it was evident to his London friends that they could expect to see his face no more. He was strongly advised to try the air and waters of Cheltenham, but deferred it to a milder season, using the "salts" as a substitute in the interim.

It was during the numerous engagements and afflictions of this year that he published his "Sermons on Various Subjects." This work consisted of sixteen discourses, worthy of the talents and piety of the author, and will be found in this volume, Numbers xi.—xxvi.

In the commencement of 1815 he prepared for the press his "Exposition of the Revelation" and "Letters on Communion." The latter treatise he consigned to the care of his esteemed friend Dr. Newman, with a request to publish it, in

\* A sketch of this sermon will be found in this volume, No. xxxix.—B.

case an anticipated production from the pen of Mr. Hall on the other side should seem to render it necessary. This publication, though not without marks of that shrewd and penetrating judgment which distinguished his controversial writings, is not remarkable for the most conclusive reasoning; and though it were too much to admit the justice of Mr. Hall's insinuation, that his mind was not fully made up on the subject, there is perhaps reason to suppose that a more ample discussion would have effected a considerable alteration in his views. The charge of bigotry, however, made against him, and others cherishing the same sentiments on this subject, says little for the understanding or charity of those who prefer it. True charity will never require the surrender of a man's principles as an evidence of his candour; and happy they who have learned that an honest refusal to unite in the partial use of some minor tokens of affection may consist with the exercise of the tenderest feelings of Christian love. Mr. Fuller describes a conversation with a Pædobaptist minister on this subject, which is highly creditable to both:—"I never saw more godliness, candour, or humility in any one. He talked with me, among other things, about baptism and strict communion. 'I think,' said he, before a number of his friends, 'you have a catholic heart: I should like to know the grounds on which you act; and I am almost sure they are not temper nor bigotry!' When I had stated them, he answered, 'Well; I think I can see the conscientiousness of your conduct, and am therefore glad I asked you.'"

In 1815, within three or four months of his decease, while labouring under the most depressed state of body and mind, occasioned by a disordered liver, he sat at his desk upwards of twelve hours a day.

On Feb. 1, he wrote to his brother at Isleham as follows: "... Well; 'the Lord liveth, and blessed be my rock!' I am conscious of no wicked way in me; but I feel myself to be an unprofitable servant. We shall soon finish our course: may it be with joy! If I am able next summer, it is in my mind to take a tour eastward to Wisbeach, Lynn, Fakenham, Norwich, Yarmouth, and some other places in Norfolk and Suffolk, and return by Isleham and Soham; but perhaps I may prove like Samson, who went out to do as at other times, and wist not that his strength was departed from him." He was under the necessity of placing himself under medical direction, to enable him to fulfil an engagement at Clipstone, a few miles from home, where on the 29th of March he attended the ordination of the late Rev. J. Mack. He addressed the church in a most impressive manner, from 2 John 8. On retiring from the pulpit, he said, in reply to the inquiries of his friends, "I am very ill—a dying man." On taking his leave, he said, "All is over—my work is nearly finished. I shall see you no more: the blessing of the Lord attend you—farewell." There can be no doubt that this exercise contributed greatly to the aggravation of his disorder. The following sabbath, April 2, he delivered his last sermon, from Isa. lxvi. 1, 2, "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool," &c. His discourse on this occasion was marked by a peculiar earnestness, and his subsequent pathetic though short address at the Lord's table, interrupted by solemn pauses, conveyed to the minds of the communicants a powerful impression that they were receiving the memorials of a Saviour's love from his hands for the last time. He seemed absorbed in the contemplation of a crucified, risen, and exalted Redeemer, and quoted with peculiar emphasis those lines:

"Jesus is gone above the skies," &c.

On the 9th, after sitting up in his bed, and speaking in affecting terms relative

to some family affairs, he said, "I feel satisfaction in the thought that my times are in the Lord's hands. I have been importuning the Lord that whether I live it may be to him, or whether I die it may be to him. Flesh and heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

April the 11th, he said, "Into thy hands I commit my spirit, my family, and my charge; I have done a little for God; but all that I have done needs forgiveness. I trust alone in sovereign grace and mercy. I could be glad to be favoured with some lively hopes before I depart hence. God, my supporter and my hope, I would say, 'Not my will, but thine be done!'"

'God is my soul's eternal rock,  
The strength of every saint.'

I am a poor sinner; but my hope is in the Saviour of sinners."

He now determined, by the advice of his physician, on going to Cheltenham; and his beloved flock, anxious that every possible accommodation should be afforded him, contributed most liberally to the supply of his wants. Writing to a friend in the town, who was prevented by illness from visiting him, he says—"April 19, I am ordered to go next Monday for Cheltenham. I should be happy to come and see you before I go; but whether the weather and my afflictions will permit I know not. When I shall return is uncertain. The Lord's supper must be suspended; my times are in the Lord's hand; but to me all is uncertain." On the following sabbath his disorder assumed a new and alarming appearance, and the journey was relinquished as impracticable.

On the 28th of April, he dictated the following letter to Dr. Ryland, and subscribed it with his own hand:

"MY DEAREST FRIEND,—We have enjoyed much together, which I hope will prove an earnest of greater enjoyment in another world. We have also wrought together in the Lord's vineyard, and he has given us to reap together in his vintage. I expect this is nearly over; but I trust we shall meet, and part no more. I have very little hope of recovery; but I am satisfied to drink of the cup which my heavenly Father giveth me to drink. Without experience, no one can conceive of the depression of my spirits; yet I have no despondency. 'I know whom I have believed, and that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.' I am a poor guilty creature; but Christ is an almighty Saviour. I have preached and written much against the *abuse* of the doctrine of grace; but that doctrine is all my salvation and all my desire. I have no other hope than from salvation by mere sovereign, efficacious grace, through the atonement of my Lord and Saviour. With this hope, I can go into eternity with composure. Come, Lord Jesus! Come when thou wilt! Here I am; let him do with me as seemeth him good!

"We have some who have been giving out, of late, that 'If Sutcliff and some others had preached more of Christ, and less of Jonathan Edwards, they would have been more useful.' If those who talked thus preached Christ half as much as Jonathan Edwards did, and were half as useful as he was, their usefulness would be double what it is. It is very singular that the mission to the East should have originated with men of these principles; and, without pretending to be a prophet, I may say, If ever it falls into the hands of men who talk in this strain, it will soon come to nothing.

"If I should never see your face in the flesh, I could wish one last testimony of brotherly love, and of the truth of the gospel, to be expressed by your coming

over and preaching my funeral sermon, if it can be, from Rom. viii. 10. I can dictate no more, but am ever yours,  
A. F."

On the same day one of his deacons, to whom he expressed himself as in great depression of body, replied, "I do not know any person, sir, who is in a more enviable situation than yourself—a good man on the verge of a blessed immortality." He modestly assented, and lifting up his hands exclaimed, "If I am saved, it will be by great and sovereign grace—BY GREAT AND SOVEREIGN GRACE!" On attempting to raise himself in bed, he said, "All my feelings are sinking, dying feelings." Seeing his wife in tears, he said, "We shall meet again! It will be well." While in a bath, he observed to his medical attendant, "I never before recollect to have had such depression of animal spirits accompanied with such calmness of mind." Though the disorder with which he was afflicted was such that many of the best regulated minds had been reduced almost to despair under its influence, he was frequently heard to say, "My mind is calm—no raptures, no despondency." And on one occasion he used the following emphatic expression, "*My hope is such that I am not afraid to plunge into eternity!*"

Addressing himself to one of his sons, he exclaimed, "All misery is concentrated in me!"—"Bodily misery only, father?"—"Yes, I can think of nothing else." More than once he said, "My breath is corrupt, my days are extinct."

On Lord's day, May the 7th, within an hour of his departure, overhearing the congregation singing in the chapel, which adjoined his house, he said to his daughter Sarah, "I wish I had strength enough."—"To do what, father?" He replied, "To worship, child;" and added, "my eyes are dim." On his daughter Mary entering the room, (the rest of the family surrounding the bed of their dying parent,) he said, "Come, Mary, come and help me." He was raised up in bed, and in that attitude continued for nearly half an hour, apparently joining in the devotions of his flock. The only words that could be distinctly heard were "help me," when, with his hands clasped and his eyes fixed upwards, he fell back, uttered two or three sighs, and expired. Thus died this devoted servant of Christ, May 7, 1815, in the sixty-second year of his age.

A letter from his colleague, the Rev. J. K. Hall, gives a further detail of the circumstances attendant on his death and funeral, of which the following are extracts:—

"I intend to fill this letter with news; though, as it will chiefly relate to Mr. Fuller's death, it will be news of a doleful kind. You have heard, I suppose, that this great and good man departed this life about half past eleven, last Lord's day morning. I was, at the time, preaching from Psal. xxiii. 4—'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil,' &c. He experienced what, at that moment, I was attempting to describe. Mr. Toller, the Independent minister, was, at the same time, preaching from Psal. lxxiii. 26—'My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.' As soon as we left our places of worship, every individual in the town probably heard the afflictive words, 'He is gone! He is gone!' and the melancholy news was soon despatched to different parts of the kingdom. As I had to preach in the afternoon, you may easily suppose that this circumstance would increase those feelings which I could not prevent on so solemn an occasion; I preached from Isa. ix. 6—'And the government shall be upon his shoulder.' This was the text from which Mr. Fuller preached, when he returned from my grandfather's funeral."

After describing the particulars of his illness and death, he adds, "The funeral is to be next Monday. I shall not send this off till it is over. You know

that Dr. Ryland, by Mr. Fuller's request, is to preach; and my uncle is to deliver the funeral oration."

"Tuesday afternoon, [May 16.]

"Mr. Hall has resigned to me (says Mrs. Hall) the task of finishing this letter; but as the mail will leave Kettering very soon, I can do little more than just mention that the last sad tribute of respect was yesterday evening paid to the remains of the great and good Mr. Fuller. The crowd which attended was immense. All the ministers in the town were invited, both Churchmen and Dissenters—Mr. Toller, Mr. Hogg, Mr. Bugg, with Mr. Brown and Mr. Towers, the Methodist preachers. No formal invitation was sent to any minister in the country, it being difficult to know where to draw the line; but numbers were attracted to the spot by motives of respect and affection. Mr. Grimshaw, a clergyman of the Establishment, came on purpose from Bedford. Mr. Hinton, of Oxford, and many others, with whom I was not acquainted, were there. I went to the meeting through Mr. Fuller's house (the doors not being open quite so soon) at three o'clock in the afternoon. About a quarter of an hour afterwards, the crowds assembled at the doors were admitted; the rush of people was astonishing; but no one, that I have heard of, received any injury. It was supposed there might be 2000 persons. The galleries were propped in several places, to prevent any accident; and, I am happy to say, there was not the slightest alarm. A quarter before five the funeral procession entered. The coffin was placed in the table-pew; the mourners in the seats on the right hand of the pulpit. Mr. J. H. first gave out a hymn. Mr. Toller then engaged in prayer, with great fervour and devotion: another hymn was sung. Dr. R. preached from Rom. viii. 10, and Mr. Robert Hall, preceded by another hymn, delivered the funeral oration. The corpse was then carried out and interred. A few words only were spoken, by Dr. Ryland, after the body was put into the grave."

The following is an extract from a discourse delivered by Mr. Toller, the Independent minister, on the sabbath following the death of his friend, and subsequently to Mr. Fuller's congregation at their request. The text was chosen from 1 Kings xiii. 30, "Alas, my brother!"

"With regard to the much-respected friend and Christian minister lately removed, it might appear unbecoming and indelicate in me to enter far into his character and case; particularly as this will be done to so much greater advantage on the approaching day; but thus much I could hardly satisfy myself without advancing on this occasion.

"I trust I am sincerely disposed to join in the general and just tribute which his friends and the public are disposed to pay to his abilities, his sound sense, and solid understanding, and to his unwearied diligence and unconquerable ardour in supporting and pursuing the interests of the best of causes; and that not only in the common duties of his profession, but more particularly in the propagation of Christianity in the foreign climes of India. Perhaps no individual, next to the unequalled Carey, no individual, at least at *home*, has done so much to promote that cause; and, considering the few advantages of early education which he enjoyed, the eminence to which he has risen, the influence he acquired, and the means of usefulness which he has collected and secured, are so much the more extraordinary, and reflect the greater credit on his memory. The variety and compass of his writings, though all bearing on one grand point, yet serve to show what sheer abilities, sound principle, ardent zeal, and perse-

vering application can do. I have read his works (some of them more than once) with much satisfaction, and, I trust, some improvement: that that improvement has not amounted to more, ought to be attributed to myself. I have not a doubt but that they have been of real and extensive use in the Christian church, in support of the radical principles of evangelical religion, and will continue to be so after his dust shall mingle with the 'clouds of the valley.' It is a satisfaction to me to reflect that, in the great leading views of vital Christianity, he expresses very nearly my own sentiments; though it is not to be expected that persons who think for themselves on sacred subjects should, in every point, 'see eye to eye.' You will not, therefore, expect that I should profess myself able to subscribe to every article in his theological creed: still, however, it is a pleasure to me to reflect now, that, differing only on points of subordinate importance, wherever that was the case we always *agreed* to differ.

"Though living in the same town, engaged in the same profession, and that under the banners of different denominations, for about thirty years, I do not recollect that ever an angry word passed between us, or a single jar occurred, by our means, among our respective connexions. At the same time, I would not mention this in the spirit of a vain compliment, either to him or to myself; but desire to be deeply sensible of a thousand deficiencies and errors in other respects; nor would I be understood, in a servile spirit of fulsome flattery, as representing him as a *faultless* character, or holding him up, in all respects, as a model of the Christian temper and disposition; for, alas! of whom can you say, 'Be ye followers of him,' unless you insert the restrictive clause—so far as he was 'a follower of Christ?'

"While, then, I think him an eminent loss to his family, a general loss to society and the church of Christ, and perhaps an irreparable loss to his own denomination, I trust I can, with truly Christian cordiality, follow him up to the foolstool of his Master's throne, and congratulate him on that 'Well done, good and faithful servant,' which, I have no doubt, he has received.

"I conclude with remarking that, in no one point, either from his writings, which I have read, or the sermons I have heard from him, or the interviews and conversations I have had with him,—in nothing can I so fully join issue with him as in the manner of his *dying*. Had he gone off full of rapture and transport, I might have said, 'O let me die the triumphant death of the righteous!' but it would have been far more than I could have realized or expected in my own case: but the state of his mind towards the last appears to have been, if I may so express it, 'after my own heart.' He died *as a penitent sinner at the foot of the cross*. At my last parting with him I shook hands with him twice, and observed, with some emotion, not expecting to see him more, 'We have lived harmoniously, many years, in the same place: I trust we shall, one day, meet above.' I think the last religious sentence he dropped to me was, 'Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.' He said to a young minister, 'I have no religious joys; but I have a hope, in the strength of which I think I could plunge into eternity.'

"Being reminded of his missionary labours, he replied, 'Ah! the object was unquestionably good;' but adverted to the *mixture* of motives to the influence of which we are liable in supporting the best of causes. To another friend, who was congratulating him in a similar state, he replied, 'I have been a great sinner; and, if I am saved at all, it must be by great and sovereign grace.' Here the dying minister—the dying friend, speaks all my heart; here, I come nearer to him at his death than I have ever done through the whole course of his life.



The testimony of a Christian conscience is, at all times, invaluable; but, in the dying moments of a fallen creature, it can afford no more than auxiliary support; the grand prominent hold of the trembling soul must be 'the golden chain that comes down from heaven.' It is the immediate, personal, realizing application; it is the broad palpable hope of salvation for penitent sinners, through the riches of divine grace in Christ Jesus our Lord, that throws every thing else into shades. It is not the voice of congratulation on the best spent life, however just, that is most acceptable, in those awful moments, to pious minds: *that* is often heard with trembling diffidence and conscious apprehension of contaminating motives and counteracting defects. The sweetest music, in the ears of expiring piety, must be struck from another string: 'This is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son—The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

"In all probability, my bones will be deposited not far from *his*; God grant that I may die in the same temper and the same hope; and that our spirits may be united in the day of the Lord! Amen."

A tomb was erected over the remains of Mr. Fuller, in the burial-ground adjoining his place of worship, and a tablet to his memory is placed by the side of the pulpit, with this inscription:—

IN MEMORY OF THEIR REVERED AND BELOVED PASTOR,  
THE REVEREND ANDREW FULLER,  
THE CHURCH AND CONGREGATION HAVE ERECTED THIS TABLET.  
HIS ARDENT PIETY,  
THE STRENGTH AND SOUNDNESS OF HIS JUDGMENT,  
HIS INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE OF THE HUMAN HEART,  
AND HIS PROFOUND ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE SCRIPTURES,  
EMINENTLY QUALIFIED HIM FOR THE MINISTERIAL OFFICE,  
WHICH HE SUSTAINED AMONGST THEM THIRTY-TWO YEARS.  
THE FORCE AND ORIGINALITY OF HIS GENIUS,  
AIDED BY UNDAUNTED FIRMNESS,  
RAISED HIM FROM OBSCURITY  
TO HIGH DISTINCTION IN THE RELIGIOUS WORLD.  
BY THE WISDOM OF HIS PLANS,  
AND BY HIS UNWEARIED DILIGENCE IN EXECUTING THEM,  
HE RENDERED THE MOST IMPORTANT SERVICES  
TO THE BAPTIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY;  
OF WHICH HE WAS THE SECRETARY FROM ITS COMMENCEMENT,  
AND TO THE PROSPERITY OF WHICH HE DEVOTED HIS LIFE.  
IN ADDITION TO HIS OTHER LABOURS,  
HIS WRITINGS ARE NUMEROUS AND CELEBRATED.  
HE DIED MAY 7TH, 1815, AGED 61.\*

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\* Perhaps this is the proper place to introduce a general view of Mr. Fuller's person habits, and character, which I regret that my valued brother has not incorporated in the memoir.

No man knew Mr. Fuller better than his earliest biographer, the Rev. J. W. Morris. He says:—

"In person, he was above the middle stature, tall, stout, and muscular; his sombre aspect impressive of fear, and repulsive to approach. And being, as he said, 'of an athletic frame, and of a daring spirit, he was often in early life engaged in such exercises and exploits as might have issued in death, if the good hand of God had not preserved him.' Alluding to those days of vanity, he would quote with sensible emotion, the words of the prophet, 'let not the mighty man glory in his might;' but having been a famous wrestler

The following testimonies will show the general estimation in which the character of the deceased was held. The first is from the pen of the late Rev. Robert Hall, A. M.

in his youth, he seldom met with a stout man without making an ideal comparison of strength, and possessing some of his former feelings in reference to its exercise. If necessity required, he was still by no means deficient in courage, of which some evidence was given after he removed to Kettering. When his rest was disturbed by the conduct of disorderly persons, he would sometimes rise in the night, rush alone into the street, half-dressed, and quell the disturbance, without any apprehension of danger.

"His nerves were uniformly so firm, that he seemed to be made almost without fear; and such was his invincibility and perfect self-command, that it may be doubted whether he was ever seen in a state of agitation. Often would he divert himself with the saying of old lady Huntingdon, who, on noticing the effeminacy of modern times, would 'thank God that she was born before nerves were in fashion;' and whether Mr. Fuller also enjoyed this felicity or not, no man was less troubled with nervous sensibilities than himself. About the year 1793, the shock of an earthquake was felt across the kingdom, a little before eleven o'clock at night. Mr. Fuller had preached that evening at Braybrook, a few miles from Kettering, and had just retired to rest. The friend at whose house he lodged, being much alarmed, awoke him, by reporting the dreadful tidings of an earthquake! 'Very well!' said he, 'I must sleep,' and settled down to rest, while the frightened family were penetrated with dread and consternation.

"His mode of living had an air of patriarchal simplicity; he seldom indulged in any thing more than the plainest food, and was very moderate in the use of fermented liquor. He carried his idea of economy to an extreme, deeming it scarcely allowable to eat animal food more than once a day: and when he occasionally departed from this rule, he would remark that it was a luxury somewhat like that of the prophet, who had 'bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening.' \* \* \*

"He was generally regular in his hours of rest, and possessed an even flow of spirits, bordering upon cheerfulness. Being requested to publish something upon religious melancholy, for the relief of persons afflicted with it, he replied, 'I know little or nothing about it; and what could any body write on such a subject?' In the early part of life, when in company with a chosen friend, he was fond of 'the heel of an evening;' and while engaged on religious topics, he would sometimes indulge in close and ardent conversation till the dawning of the day. He seldom allowed himself in night studies, or made any great efforts in early rising. He was the disciple of nature, and loved the order established in her empire. When some persons wondered how he wrote so much, preached so often, and entered upon such a multiplicity of engagements, he used very pleasantly to tell a tale about Dr. Gill. A gentleman having heard of his great learning and voluminous writings, called upon him to inquire by what extraordinary means he had achieved so much, and wherein his peculiar habits consisted. The doctor answered, that he did not know there was any thing extraordinary about it; for he ate, and drank, and slept, and rose like other people. And though Mr. Fuller may be said to have done the work of almost ten men, he never seemed to be hurried, or to use any extraordinary means to accomplish it.

"In domestic life, he was calm and tranquil, reposing in the bosom of his family with great contentment and satisfaction. No man more enjoyed the softened pleasures of 'home, sweet home,' or entered with greater feeling into its interests and concerns; yet he never returned from his numerous fatiguing journeys to indulge himself in ease, or like one who sought a refuge from the intensity of labour, but solely with the view of renewing and multiplying his efforts in another form. Instead of requiring a total seclusion from every interruption, or burying himself six feet deep in his study, in order to prepare the numerous publications, which in one shape or other were constantly issuing from his pen, he generally sat at his desk, surrounded with the members of his family, in their common sitting-room, where, with astonishing rapidity, he composed his various papers for the press, and maintained at the same time a most extensive and unremitted correspondence with the four quarters of the globe. He needed no excuse for delay, nor had any one cause to complain of his want of punctuality."

Dr. Cox, in sketching the character of Mr. Fuller, in his excellent History of the Baptist Missionary Society, says:—

"Fuller was a kind of oak of the forest,—sturdy, unbending, athletic, both in body and mind. His general aspect and manner were forbidding; and throughout life he was rather dominant than attractive. His perceptions were clear; his conduct decided. He was a man of whom advice would naturally be asked in the ordinary affairs of life; but especially so on great occasions. The value of his opinions would never fail to compensate for the repulsiveness of his manner; and yet that repulsiveness was exceedingly ameliorated in the free intercourse of friendship; when, indeed, he would sometimes appear to have changed his nature, exhibiting extreme sensibility and softness. The author has repeatedly seen him melted down into kindness, so that he could be as gentle as a lamb; but whenever truth required it, his unyielding integrity uniting with the harsher elements of his spirit, made him bold as a lion.

"He had not, like Carey, to use a favourite phrase of his own, a *turn* for languages; but, notwithstanding the deficiencies of his education, he applied to them with some suc-

“I cannot refrain from expressing, in a few words, the sentiments of affectionate veneration with which I always regarded that excellent person while living, and cherish his memory now that he is no more; a man whose sagacity enabled him to penetrate to the depths of every subject he explored, whose conceptions were so powerful and luminous, that what was recondite and original

cess, so as to be able to understand the Greek Testament, and form a good idea of the merits of a criticism; but he was not attracted by the study, and had he even possessed leisure, probably would never have pursued it to any great extent. Yet he had a mind and a heart to appreciate the literary efforts of others; entering into their design with much acuteness and discrimination.

“He was less qualified for the missionary field than for the missionary cabinet. He seemed to be made for the niche he occupied. His forte was to maintain important points by deliberate inquiry and discussion, and he gained support to the mission no less by the celebrity of his name than by the force of his appeals. He was slow in coming to a conclusion, chiefly because judgment rather than imagination or passion predominated; nor, till he had frequently revised his thoughts, did he sufficiently feel his competency to give an opinion, or undertake a course of action; but having once decided, he was the most immovable of men. Give him time and space, he was an admirable controversialist; but he was not *ready* as a reasoner, and therefore would not have been able, with the best advantage, to encounter the dexterous evasions and extemporaneous plausibilities of the more learned or witty of the oriental disputants. The author was present at a vehement discussion between him and Robert Hall. The latter, with his characteristic acuteness and volubility, fairly perplexed, and not a little displeased his antagonist. Fuller’s replies were slowly conceived, as well as slowly uttered; and stood little chance before the never-ceasing torrent of powerful reasoning, or confusing eloquence, rapid words, and pungent satire of his friend. He was at length compelled, in his own emphatic manner, to exclaim, — Well, brother Hall, I cannot answer you off-hand; but put it down on paper and I will meet you.”

“Fuller was an extraordinary preacher; plain, practical, judicious, full of rich scriptural illustrations; in manner slow and solemn. The influence which he acquired by his talents in the pulpit, and by his clear illustrations of divine truth through the press, fitted him to take a lead in the conduct of the mission. He was exactly adapted to remove objections, to afford lucid statements, to urge the important claims of the object upon a yet inactive community, to raise contributions at home, and to give counsels abroad. He was just the man to direct the minds of a committee, to appreciate and examine candidates for foreign labour, to take a comprehensive view of what might be accomplished, and to plead the cause, when needful, before friends and foes. Having once embarked, and taken the helm, he was ever at his post, watchful, firm, and persevering, at all seasons; joyous, but never careless, when skies were bright; fearless amidst storms. As a man, a minister, a theological writer, an acute controversialist, as one of the founders, but especially as secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society, his name will be transmitted with distinguished honour to admiring generations.”

The following paragraphs, written by the editor of these volumes, and printed several years since, may be allowed to close this long note.

“More than a quarter of a century has elapsed since Mr. Fuller was called from a life of extraordinary labour to his rest and reward; but I seem yet to have before me his commanding person, and to hear the deep-toned sounds of his voice. No one who ever listened to him as a preacher can ever forget him.

“Imagine a tall and somewhat corpulent man, with gait and manners, though heavy and unpolished, not without dignity, ascending the pulpit to address his fellow immortals on the great themes of life and salvation. His authoritative look and grave deportment claim your attention. You could not be careless if you would; and you would have no disposition to be so, even if you might. He commences his sermon, and presents to you a plan, combining in a singular manner the topical and textual methods of preaching, and proceeds to illustrate his subject, and enforce its claims on your regard. You are struck with the clearness of his statements; every text is held up before your view so as to become transparent; the preacher has clearly got the correct sense of the passage, and you wonder that you never saw it before as he now presents it; he proceeds, and you are surprised at the power of his argument, which appears to you irresistible. You are melted by his pathos, and seem to have found a man in whom are united the clearness of Barrow, the scriptural theology of Owen, and the subduing tenderness of Baxter or Flavel.

“Andrew Fuller was providentially raised up at a period when coldness benumbed some parts of the Christian church, and errors obscured the glory of others. Untaught in the schools, he had to work his way through all kinds of difficulty; to assume the attitude of a controversialist even against his own section of the church, as well as against the enemies of the common faith; and to contend against prejudices of every sort, that truth might spread, and Christian zeal be roused into action. The wonder rather is, that one short life should have accomplished so much, than that so little was effected.”—B.

appeared familiar; what was intricate, easy and perspicuous in his hands; equally successful in enforcing the practical, in stating the theoretical, and discussing the polemical branches of theology: without the advantages of early education, he rose to high distinction among the religious writers of his day, and, in the midst of a most active and laborious life, left monuments of his piety and genius which will survive to distant posterity. Were I making his eulogium, I should necessarily dwell on the spotless integrity of his private life, his fidelity in friendship, his neglect of self-interest, his ardent attachment to truth, and especially the series of unceasing labours and exertions, in superintending the mission to India, to which he most probably fell a victim. He had nothing feeble or undecisive in his character; but, to every undertaking in which he engaged, he brought all the powers of his understanding, all the energies of his heart; and if he were less distinguished by the comprehension than the acumen and solidity of his thoughts—less eminent for the gentler graces than for stern integrity and native grandeur of mind, we have only to remember the necessary limitation of human excellence. While he endeared himself to his denomination by a long course of most useful labour, by his excellent works on the Socinian and deistical controversies, as well as his devotion to the cause of missions, he laid the world under lasting obligations.”

The same eloquent writer, in his brief memoir of Mr. Toller, has sketched, with a masterly hand, a comparative delineation of the peculiar excellences of both his friends.

“It has rarely been the privilege of one town, and that not of considerable extent, to possess at the same time, and for so long a period, two such eminent men as Mr. Toller and Mr. Fuller. Their merits as Christian ministers were so equal, and yet so different, that the exercise of their religious functions in the same place was as little adapted to produce jealousy as if they had moved in distant spheres. The predominant feature in the intellectual character of Mr. Fuller was the power of discrimination, by which he detected the minutest shades of difference among objects which most minds would confound. Mr. Toller excelled in exhibiting the common sense of mankind in a new and impressive form. Mr. Fuller never appeared to so much advantage as when occupied in detecting sophistry, repelling objections, and ascertaining, with a microscopic accuracy, the exact boundaries of truth and error: Mr. Toller attached his attention chiefly to those parts of Christianity which come most into contact with the imagination and the feelings, over which he exerted a sovereign ascendancy. Mr. Fuller convinced by his arguments, Mr. Toller subdued by his pathos; the former made his hearers feel the grasp of his intellect, the latter the contagion of his sensibility. Mr. Fuller’s discourses identified themselves after they were heard with trains of thought; Mr. Toller’s with trains of emotion. The illustrations employed by Mr. Fuller (for he also excelled in illustration) were generally made to subserve the clearer comprehension of his subject; those of Mr. Toller consisted chiefly of appeals to the imagination and the heart. Mr. Fuller’s ministry was peculiarly adapted to detect hypocrites, to expose fallacious pretensions to religion, and to separate the precious from the vile; he sat as ‘the refiner’s fire, and the fuller’s soap.’ Mr. Toller was most in his element when exhibiting the consolations of Christ, dispelling the fears of death, and painting the prospects of eternity. Both were original; but the originality of Mr. Fuller appeared chiefly in his doctrinal statements, that of Mr. Toller in his practical remarks. The former was un-

questionably most conversant with speculative truth, the latter possessed, perhaps, the deeper insight into the human heart.

“Nor were the characters of these eminent men, within the limits of that moral excellence which was the attribute of both, less diversified than their mental endowments. Mr. Fuller was chiefly distinguished by the qualities that command veneration; Mr. Toller by those which excite love. Laborious, zealous, intrepid, Mr. Fuller passed through a thousand obstacles in the pursuit of objects of public interest and utility: Mr. Toller loved to repose, delighting and delighted, in the shade of domestic privacy. The one lived for the world; the other for the promotion of the good of his congregation, his family, and friends. An intense zeal for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, sustained by industry that never tired, a resolution not to be shaken, and integrity incapable of being warped, conjoined to a certain austerity of manner, were the leading characteristics of Mr. Fuller; gentleness, humility, and modesty, those of Mr. Toller. The secretary of the Baptist Mission attached, in my opinion, too much importance to a speculative accuracy of sentiment; while the subject of this memoir leaned to the contrary extreme. Mr. Fuller was too prone to infer the character of men from their creed; Mr. Toller to lose sight of their creed in their character.

“Between persons so dissimilar, it was next to impossible a very close and confidential intimacy should subsist: a sincere admiration of each other’s talents, and esteem for the virtues which equally adorned them both, secured, without interruption, for more than thirty years, those habits of kind and respectful intercourse which had the happiest effect in promoting the harmony of their connexions, and the credit of religion.

“Much as Mr. Fuller was lamented by the religious public in general, and especially in his own denomination, I have reason to believe there was not a single individual, out of the circle of his immediate relatives, who was more deeply affected by his death than Mr. Toller. From that moment he felt himself nearer to eternity; he accepted the event as a most impressive warning of his own dissolution; and, while a thousand solemn and affecting recollections accompanied the retrospect of a connexion which had so long and so happily subsisted, one of his favourite occupations was to revive a mental intercourse, by the frequent perusal of the sermons of his deceased friend. It is thus that the friendship of high and sanctified spirits loses nothing by death but its alloy; failings disappear, and the virtues of those whose ‘faces we shall behold no more’ appear greater and more sacred when beheld through the shades of the sepulchre.”

“It is pleasing to reflect,” observes Dr. Newman, “that a spontaneous homage was paid to him by persons of all ranks and degrees. Men of education and learning, men of distinction in wealth and office, the poor and illiterate, Christians in the Establishment and out of it, of all denominations, hung delighted on his lips.”

The Committee of the British and Foreign Bible Society, in a minute dated May 22, 1815, testify their estimate of his worth in the following terms:—“This Committee learn, with deep regret, the decease of the late Rev. Andrew Fuller, secretary to the Baptist Missionary Society; and, impressed with a sense of the valuable services rendered by that excellent individual, in promoting the translation and publication of the sacred Scriptures in the East, desire to unite their condolence on this afflictive event with that of their Baptist brethren, to whom he was more particularly allied, and of the Christian world,

by whom his memory will deserve to be held in affectionate and grateful veneration.”\*

To these public testimonies may be added one relative to his domestic virtues, from his bereaved widow, who thus writes to Dr. Ryland :—

“I think, dear sir, there was no one better acquainted with the dear deceased, in his public character, than yourself: we can, therefore, give you no information on that head; but far be it from me to wish it to be held up in the style of panegyric. I am certain that would have ill accorded with his sentiments and feelings; and I know that this may be safely left to your discretion. But I cannot forbear adding my testimony to my late dear husband’s conduct in his domestic character; which, so far as his mind was at liberty to indulge in such enjoyments, I must testify to have been, ever since I had the happiness of being united to him, of the most amiable and endearing kind. But to so great a degree was he absorbed in his work as scarcely to allow himself any leisure or relaxation from the severest application; especially since, of late years, his work so accumulated on his hands. I was sometimes used to remark, how much we were occupied; (for, indeed, I had no small share of care devolved upon me in consequence;) his reply usually was, ‘Ah, my dear, the way for us to have any joy is to rejoice in all our labour, and then we shall have plenty of joy. If I complained that he allowed himself no time for recreation, he would answer, ‘Oh no: all my recreation is a change of work.’ If I expressed an apprehension that he would soon wear himself out, he would reply, ‘I cannot be worn out in a better cause. We must work while it is day;’ or, ‘Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might.’”

“There was a degree of bluntness in his manner; which yet did not arise from an unsociable or churlish disposition, but from an impatience of interruption in the grand object of his pursuit.† In this sense, he seemed not to know his relations or friends. Often, when a friend or an acquaintance on a journey has called, when they had exchanged a few words, he would ask, ‘Have you any thing more to say?’—or something to that effect—‘if not, I must beg to be excused;’ at the same time, asking them to stay and take some refreshment, if they chose. Yet, you know, dear sir, he had a heart formed for the warmest and sincerest friendship with those whose minds were congenial with his own, and who were engaged in similar pursuits; and I never knew him to be weary of their company. I am fully persuaded that my dear husband fell a sacrifice to his unremitting application to the concerns of the mission: but I dare not murmur. The Lord has done as it pleased him; and I know that whatever he does is right.”

The following anecdote will illustrate some of the most distinguishing features of Mr. Fuller’s character. Among these none was more conspicuous than his originality, which is thus referred to by himself, in a conversation with a friend on the philosophical character of Dr. Franklin: “Well,” said Mr. Fuller, “what

\* Alas that this Society, as well as the American Bible Society, should have since descended from the high ground they once occupied, and after more than twenty years co-operation with the Baptist Missionaries in India, should have withheld their support, because they translated the words relating to baptism.—B.

† Morris mentions this same trait of Mr. Fuller’s character, in his Memoirs. He says, “Having been often reminded of his stern behaviour, which had become rather a general subject of complaint, he ventured one day to mention it in a company of ministers, by way of appeal. One of them replied, ‘Why, sir, you do not appear likely to make war without some just occasion; but it is pretty evident, (pointing to his eyebrows) that you keep up a formidable peace establishment.’ The company of course enjoyed the pleasantry of this remark, till another of them perceiving the effect it was likely to produce, added, ‘We had better retreat; or we shall be in danger of putting brother Fuller’s troops into motion.’”—B.

do you call a philosopher, or in what respect was he one?" "Oh! he seems to have made rules for himself in childhood, which regulated him even in old age." Mr. Fuller replied, "If this be any mark of a philosopher, you will make me one.—My father was a farmer, and in my younger days it was one great boast among the ploughmen that they could plough a straight line *across* the furrows or ridges of a field. I thought I could do this as well as any of them. One day, I saw such a line, which had just been drawn, and I thought, 'Now I have it.' Accordingly, I laid hold of the plough, and, putting one of the horses into the furrow which had been made, I resolved to keep him walking in it, and thus secure a parallel line. By and by, however, I observed that there were what might be called wriggles in this furrow; and, when I came to *them*, they turned out to be *larger* in mine than in the original. On perceiving this, I threw the plough aside, and determined *never to be an imitator*."

There were times when he could appreciate and enjoy the works of art, but these were evidently made to yield to matters of higher moment; and what was observed of John Howard, by an eloquent living writer, was equally true of Mr. Fuller, that "as invisible spirits, who fulfil their commission of philanthropy among mortals, do not care about pictures, statues, and sumptuous buildings; no more did he, when the time in which he must have inspected and admired them would have been taken from the work to which he had consecrated his life." A friend, conducting Mr. F. through the University of Oxford, pointed out an object of peculiar interest among the splendid edifices that surrounded them. "Brother," replied he, "I think there is one question which, after all that has been written on it, has not been yet answered:—What is justification?" His friend proposed to return home and discuss the subject; to which Mr. F. readily agreed, adding, "that inquiry is far more to me than all these fine buildings."

Though rarely accustomed to obtrude himself on the attention of strangers, no man could more admirably preserve the consistency of his character in all companies. On one occasion, travelling in the Portsmouth mail, he was much annoyed by the profane conversation of two young men who sat opposite. After a time, one of them, observing his gravity, accosted him with an air of impertinence, inquiring, in rude and indelicate language, whether on his arrival at Portsmouth he should not indulge himself in a manner evidently corresponding with their own intentions: Mr. Fuller, lowering his ample brows, and looking the inquirer full in the face, replied in measured tones, "Sir, I am a man that fears God." Scarcely another word was uttered during the remainder of the journey.

His aversion to display, and especially of attainments to which he could lay but a moderate claim, is remarkable in his disclaimer of any thing approaching to erudition; and though his remarks on the English Translation of the Scriptures evince a shrewd perception of its merits, and those on the proper and improper use of terms discover an equal acquaintance with the general principles of language, it is observable that he more freely availed himself of the use of critical comment in one page of his "Letters of Agnostos," where he was concealed from public view, than in all the rest of his works united.

Under the influence of those pensive feelings to which he was subject, especially in later life, he would often sing, to a tune remarkable for its plaintive simplicity, a hymn commencing with the following stanzas:—

"I sojourn in a vale of tears,  
Alas, how can I sing?  
My harp doth on the willows hang,  
Distuned in every string;

My music is a captive's chain ;  
 Harsh sounds my ears do fill :—  
 How can I sing sweet Zion's song  
 On this side Zion's hill !”

One evening, having composed a tune, not remarkable for its scientific structure, he carried it for the inspection of a musical friend. “It’s in a flat key, sir,” observed his friend.—“Very likely,” replied Mr. F. in a plaintive tone, “very likely ; I was born in a flat key.” His ideas of psalmody, which will be found among his miscellaneous pieces, are singular and not unworthy of attention.

His mode of living was characterized by simplicity, and he would frequently remark that the great difference between the comfort of one man and another often depended on the fact, that the one *simplified* his wants—the other *multiplied* them. Though his manners were occasionally harsh, and there were times in which he might be betrayed into needless severity, it was less attributable to a morose disposition than to an unpolished manner, of which his intercourse with society never entirely divested him. No man more sincerely estimated the importance of what he emphatically termed “*Christian politeness*,” which he esteemed as equally removed from the heartless complaisance of a Chesterfield and the affected moroseness of a Johnson.\*

Mr. Fuller excelled principally as a writer, yet his preaching was exceedingly interesting and instructive. His phraseology, though occasionally quaint, was, for the most part, clear, dignified, and emphatic. His arrangement was comprehensive, and he was remarkable for a felicitous discovery and a happy application of all the attributes of his subject and the terms of his text. Exposition was a favourite exercise ; and he was accustomed to regard a ministry in which this occupied a subordinate place as equally wanting in Scriptural authority and practical advantage. He expounded a large portion of the books of the Old and New Testament. Such of these as are not published were left in short-hand, in an unfinished state, and part of them perished by fire.

Mr. Fuller was succeeded by his colleague, the Rev. John Keen Hall, M. A.,

\* There certainly were times when Mr. Fuller could be sufficiently severe, even in the domestic circle, and when he could give reproof in a manner not easily forgotten. He was once spending a few days in a family where the husband and wife were not very happy together, and where the lady was not remarkable for her kindness to her lord. One evening, after Mr. F. had been preaching, and forcibly urging Christian duty, the good woman, according to the fashion of the school to which she belonged, remarked, “Ah, sir, we are poor creatures, and can do nothing.” “You are quite mistaken, madam,” replied he, “you can do a great deal.” “Why, what can I do?” asked the lady, somewhat excited. “Why, madam,” replied he, with a tone and manner which can only be imagined by those who knew him, “you can quarrel with your husband.” The lady said no more.

I may here copy from Dr. Cox’s history of the first fifty years of the Baptist Missionary Society, already referred to, another anecdote of the same general character. The reader will not be displeased that it gives him a view also of the amiable Sutcliff.

“Having been engaged,” says the Dr., “in a double lecture with Mr. Fuller, at Walgrave, the ministers were taking their places at dinner afterwards, when it was usual for those who had preached to sit at the top of the table. Being then very young, and somewhat overawed by the seniors present, the position was timidly declined. Mr. Fuller knitted his brows, and said, in a manner no one would wish to tempt a second time, ‘Come, sir, I like every man to take his proper place ; what do you hesitate for?’ At the end of the repast, Mr. Sutcliff, with a gentle tap on the shoulder, whispered, ‘I want to speak with you.’ We accordingly retired ; when, in his softest manner, he said, ‘My dear young brother Cox, I see that my brother Fuller has somewhat hurt your mind ;’ it was admitted. ‘Well,’ said he, ‘don’t be disconcerted or discouraged. It is his manner ; he does not mean any thing unkind ; he really loves you. My brother Fuller sometimes serves me just the same : he speaks, on a sudden, perhaps very harshly ; but I know him, and let it pass ; and he will soon be as confiding and affectionate as ever.’ Here were the men ;—Fuller, severe, prone to command, little disposed to make even proper allowances, yet capable of strong attachment ; Sutcliff, kind, peaceful, humble, generous-hearted, and wise.”—B.



who, after sustaining the pastoral office fourteen years, during which he was greatly endeared to his people, was suddenly called to his reward, in the prime of life, a few weeks after his second marriage; and was succeeded by the Rev. W. Robinson, the present pastor.

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 APPENDIX.

MR. FULLER left an aged mother, a widow, three sons, and two daughters, to mourn his loss. His mother, who had been for several years confined to her bed by infirmity, died in the faith of the gospel, in May, 1816, her age being upwards of ninety. His daughter Sarah, who was in a debilitated state of health at the time of his death, regarded that event as conveying a peculiarly solemn lesson to herself. Viewing with complacency his pallid corpse, she observed, "I shall lie there very soon,"—a presentiment which, alas, was realized. Her bereaved and disconsolate mother witnessed the only remaining companion of her widowhood falling under premature decay. Some of the distinguishing characteristics of this amiable and interesting young female were exhibited in a narrative composed by her mother, and inserted in the second edition of Dr. Ryland's Memoir of Mr. Fuller. A few extracts from this may not be unacceptable:—

"Her disposition, from a child, was amiable. Integrity was a prominent feature in her character. She appeared to possess an habitual tenderness of conscience, and was the subject of early convictions of sin, which, though transient in childhood, were more permanent as she advanced in years; but, owing to a natural reservedness, accompanied by a fear of deceiving herself and others, it was very difficult to ascertain the real state of her mind and feelings; and, when she had unbosomed herself, she seemed to repent, as though she had said something which, after all, might not be true: and this suspicion of herself continued almost to the last. About the beginning of her last illness, in reply to the affectionate inquiries of her sister, she said, 'I feel a great deal; but am afraid to speak it, lest I should deceive myself and others. Having had a religious education, it is easy to talk about religion; and I am afraid lest what I have felt should be merely the effect of having enjoyed such a privilege, and so entirely wear off. I know religion in theory; but am fearful lest it should be in theory only.' She wept much, and promised to communicate as much of her mind as she could; begging, however, that her sister would not mention it to any one; 'for,' said she, 'possibly, what I now feel may be only on account of my affliction; and then, if I recover, it may all wear off, and I may bring a disgrace upon religion.'

"On being told of a young person who wished that, whenever she died, it might be of a consumption, that time might be afforded her to repent, she said, it was 'so *unreasonable* to expect mercy, after having lived in sin as long as she *could*!'

"In public worship she was a very attentive hearer, and clearly understood and approved the doctrines of the gospel. Prayer-meetings were her peculiar delight; and her punctuality in attending them was truly exemplary: if any of her friends seemed indifferent to them, observing, 'It is only a prayer-meeting,' she would express great disapprobation.

"It was pleasing to observe the earnest desire she manifested for the spiritual

welfare of others, especially of the young. Her diligence as a teacher in the Sunday school was worthy of observation; and she was extremely anxious for the adoption of a plan which had been proposed for the private religious instruction of some of the elder children of the school, nor would she rest till she saw it accomplished, though her diffidence would not allow her to take any active part in it. She once said to her mother in reference to this subject—‘Mother, when will you speak about it? I feel as if we were doing no good; and it is so *wicked* to live here only to eat, and drink, and sleep!’

“During her illness, she spent most of her time, when able, in reading the Psalms and the New Testament; and when too weary herself to read, she would hear the Bible read with great pleasure.

“Though, doubtless, she felt the natural love of life, yet she was never heard to express the smallest degree of impatience under her long and trying affliction; and her mind became more calm and composed, as her prospects of being restored to her friends declined. The only concern she manifested in this particular was in the idea of leaving her mother, to whom, after her father’s death, she was especially endeared by her tender and dutiful attentions, and who she knew would deeply feel the loss of her society. She one time said to her—‘I am quite happy, and have little wish to live but on your account.’\* Seeing her mother greatly distressed, she in the tenderest manner endeavoured to reconcile her to the loss of her by saying, ‘Dear mother, do not lay your account with pining after me when I am gone; you have other children who will need your care, and you don’t know what trouble you might have on my account if I were to live.’ Being asked if she did not feel happy in the thought of meeting her dear departed friends in glory, she replied—‘I do not think of that, so much as of seeing *God* and praising him.’ A few days before she died, she requested her sister to pray for her speedy release. The next day she said to her mother—‘I think I am going . . . I feel so calm and comfortable.’ A short time before, she said she had no desire to live longer, unless it might be for the glory of God, and that she might serve him. To a friend who was speaking of his trials being so great, that, were it not for his family, he could be glad to leave the world, she said—‘Take care of your *motives*, whether they are to glorify God, or merely to get rid of trouble.’—In short, the thoughts of serving and glorifying God, whether in this world or another, seemed to take place of all other considerations. She did not, however, attach any merit to the best of services; and her reliance for salvation was solely on the atonement of the Redeemer. She said he was all her hope, and all her desire.

“When her younger brothers visited her a few weeks previous to her death, her earnestness with them was very affecting. On the morning of the day on which she died, she expressed an anxious desire of speaking to all the young people of her acquaintance, (mentioning several by name,) in order, if possible, to convey to them the strong impression of the weight of eternal things which filled her own mind, in the near prospect of eternity; and said, if she had a wish to live, it was that she might see them come forward, and declare themselves on the side of Christ. Being asked if she was happy, she replied,

\* She was peculiarly distressed at the thought of leaving her mother, confined by the charge of an aged and infirm parent to a house already the scene of melancholy recollections, which must be much increased by her own departure, and prayed earnestly and continually that God would spare her life beyond that of her grandmother; a request which was remarkably answered, her grandmother, who had enjoyed a series of uninterrupted internal health till within a few weeks of her decease, being interred a few days before the death of Miss Fuller.

‘Quite so; but I feel no raptures: and, if my dear *father* did not, how can I expect it?’

“At her request, Mr. Hall was sent for, to whom she spoke with much earnestness, lamenting to how little purpose she had lived, and desiring him, if he thought proper, to improve her death in a sermon to young people; entreating him to be very particular in warning them not to put off the concerns of religion; and especially the children of the sabbath school; expressing her regret that she had so much neglected speaking to them on that important subject, and her intention, if she had been spared, to have attended more to her duty in this respect.

“This was her last effort, as she scarcely spoke a sentence afterwards, but lay with great composure and serenity of aspect, waiting for her change, which took place between four and five o’clock in the afternoon of June 11, 1816. Her age was nineteen years.

“She was interred on Sabbath evening, June 16; when an impressive discourse was addressed to a crowded audience, by Mr. Hall, from Psalm cii. 23, 24.”

To her bereaved mother Miss Fuller had been a wise and faithful counsellor in difficulty, and a sympathizing friend in affliction. Mrs. Fuller now removed to a small house near the residence of her daughter-in-law Mrs. Levet; but subsequently was induced, by several considerations, to remove to Bristol, where, after a residence of two years, she died, October 29, 1825, in the sixty-second year of her age.

She was a woman of superior mind, and much reading and reflection. Though a constitutional reserve, confirmed by the retired scenes of her early life, rendered her less adapted to that social intercourse which her station required, this defect was counterbalanced by a pre-eminent share of discretion, by which she not only avoided many of those evils which an incautious deportment on the part of a minister’s wife has been known to occasion; but, with the aid of a sound judgment, rendered the most essential service to her husband as a confidential adviser in difficulties. Mr. Fuller, in a passage of his diary, has recorded the following brief testimony:—“I have found my marriage contribute greatly to my peace and comfort, and the comfort of my family; for which I render humble and hearty thanks to the God of my life.”

Though she was peculiarly at home in domestic engagements, her unwearied industry afforded opportunity for the record of her private views and feelings on a variety of subjects, as well as of numerous extracts from approved authors. After the lamented decease of her husband, and amidst various perplexing avocations, chiefly connected with the publication of the first edition of his works, and distressing anxiety relative to her daughter, she transcribed the exposition of the Psalms from Mr. Fuller’s short-hand MS. Her sight suffered from the intense application; nor was it till within a short time of her death that the laborious undertaking was completed.

Few persons have maintained a more close and devout intercourse with God than Mrs. Fuller; her exercises of mind were pre-eminently devotional; and the Psalms of David, and the poetical works of her favourite Watts, were a never-failing source of interest and profit. As she was not accustomed to keep a chronological diary, and frequently committed her writings to the flames, the following fragments are nearly all that can be found, and probably these owe their present existence to an oversight:—

“*That I may be found in Him.*”—Oh what a word is that! When any per-

son departs this life, it is usual to say of their friends and relatives, they have *lost* such a friend. True it is, they are lost to this world. They have no more share in any thing that is done under the sun; but, if they were believers in Christ, they will be *found* in Him, at the last day. Who can estimate the full extent of such an expression as this, or the state of blessedness it includes? To be found in Christ is to be interested in all he has done and suffered—his atonement, his righteousness, his intercession. O Lord, grant that I may thus be found in that day: not having on my own righteousness; but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

“I have this evening heard of the death of a member of the church, who died full of peace and hope. I desire to feel thankful for the support afforded her, and would humbly pray that I may be so favoured in my latter end. Oh to be a follower of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises!”

“I have been thinking, this morning, of the privileges the people of God enjoy in *the communion of spirits*—if I may so call it. However distantly they may be situated from each other in person, there is one general place of rendezvous for kindred minds—this is a throne of grace. Oh how much we live below our mercies, and wrong each other and ourselves, when we do not to the full avail ourselves of this distinguishing privilege! Surely this, improved as it ought, would in a great degree compensate for the absence of dear friends from each other. We might here be the means of rendering the most effectual assistance to each other. O my soul! I would now charge thee, before the Father of mercies and the God of all grace, to be found more constantly and more earnestly engaged in this important branch of Christian duty. O Thou, from whom every good and perfect gift cometh! I look up to thee for grace and strength to enable me to discharge this and every other part of duty; for all my sufficiency is of thee.”

“O Lord! thy footsteps are in the deep waters. All things seem dark around me, as it respects thy dispensations, both in a way of providence and grace. Will light and deliverance ever arise? ‘To the upright there ariseth light in darkness.’ Oh may I be found of that number! O Lord, I have no distrust of thy veracity and faithfulness to thy promises, but I distrust myself. May it be my chief concern to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, both for myself and my children; and then I may safely trust that every other needful good will be added.”

A continual dread of death was a bar to much of that enjoyment which the consolations of the gospel are calculated to yield when “flesh and heart fail.” This, however, near the close of her life was happily dissipated, and she met her “last enemy” with composure, in the full possession of “a good hope through grace.”

Her remains, agreeably to her own request, were conveyed to Kettering, and deposited beneath the same tomb as those of her beloved husband and daughter; on which occasion a discourse was delivered by Mr. Hall from the words above quoted, which had been frequently used by her as indicative of the foundation of her confidence in the prospect of death.

# SERMONS AND SKETCHES.

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## I.

### THE NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF WALKING BY FAITH.\*

[Preached at Nottingham, before the Northamptonshire Association, June 2, 1784.]

“We walk by faith, not by sight.”—2 Cor. v. 7.

MUCH is said concerning faith in the holy Scriptures, especially in the New Testament; and great stress is laid upon it, especially by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. This, I apprehend, is not very difficult to be accounted for. Ever since the fall of man, we have been entirely dependent on the mercy of God, through a Mediator. We all lie at his discretion, and are beholden to his mere sovereign grace for all the happiness we enjoy. We have nothing on which we can rely for the possession or continuance of any good, but the word and will of God. The only life, therefore, proper for a fallen creature in our world, is a life of *faith*—to be constantly sensible of our dependence upon God, continually going to him, and receiving all from him, for the life that now is and that which is to come.

Believers, and they only, are brought to be of a spirit suitable to such a kind of life. The hearts of all others are too full of pride and self-sufficiency; but these are contented to be pensioners on the bounty of another, can willingly commit their all into Christ's hands, and venture their present and everlasting concerns upon his word. “The just shall live by faith.”

*Self-renunciation*, and *confidence in another*, are ideas which seem ever to accompany that of faith. The apostle speaks of being *justified* by faith; that is, not by our own righteousness, but by the righteousness of another:—of *living* by faith; that is, not by our own earnings, so to speak, but by the generosity of another:—of *standing* by faith; that is, not upon our own legs, as we should say, but upon those of another: and here,—of *walking* by faith; which is as much as if he had said,—We walk, not trusting our own eyes, but the eyes of another; we are blind, and cannot guide ourselves; we must therefore rely upon God for direction and instruction. This, my brethren, is the life we must live, while in this world, and this

\* There is sometimes something instructive in the history of a sermon. Many a minister could disclose interesting facts as to the origin of some of his most useful discourses. This sermon, delivered at the annual session of the Association, when, in the recommendation of a monthly meeting for prayer, originated the great missionary enterprise, was not composed with strenuous application in prospect of the service he had undertaken. On his way to the Association, the roads in several places were flooded, and Mr. F. came to one part which being deep, and he a stranger, he was somewhat reluctant to go on. A plain countryman residing in the neighbourhood, and better acquainted with the depth of the water than our traveller, recommended him to urge his horse through the water. “Go on, sir, you are quite safe.” Mr. Fuller went on, but the water touched his saddle, and he paused to think. “Go on, sir,” exclaimed the man, “all is right.” Taking the man at his word, the traveller proceeded, and the text was suggested “We walk by faith, not by sight.” He delivered the sermon, which his brethren wisely requested him to print.—B.

the manner in which we must walk in our progress toward the heavenly state. Great is the wisdom and goodness of God in so ordering it; great glory hereby redounds to him, and great good accrues to us.

All I shall attempt will be to *explain the NATURE, and show the IMPORTANCE, of the Christian's walk by faith.* Both are necessary: the one, that we may form just ideas of what we have to do; and the other, that we may feel our hearts excited to do it. Oh may the same *Spirit* who indited the sacred passage breathe upon us, that these ends may be accomplished!

1. Let us inquire **WHAT IS INTENDED** by the sacred writer, when he says, "We walk by faith, not by sight." Faith and sight, it is easy to see, here stand opposed; as, indeed, they do in many other parts of Scripture; especially in that remarkable definition of faith wherein the apostle to the Hebrews calls it "the evidence of things not seen." But what *kind* of sight it is opposed to may deserve our attentive inquiry.

And here, before I proceed any further, in order to make the way clear, I will advert to a notion which has been too generally received, but which appears to me unscriptural and pernicious; what I refer to is, that faith is to be considered as opposed to *spiritual* sight, or spiritual discernment. It is true I never heard of any person, either in preaching, writing, or conversation, who said so in express words; but expressions are often used which convey the same idea. When the terms *faith* and *sense* are used, it is common with many to understand, by the latter, *sensible communion with God.* So it is common to hear a life of faith opposed to a life of *frames* and *feelings.* Those times in which we have the most spiritual *discernment* of God's glory, *sensible* communion with him, and *feel* our love most ardently drawn out to him, are thought to have the least of the exercise of faith. It is common to say,—There is no need for faith then; at those times we live by sense: but that when all our graces seem dead, and we can see no evidence from which to draw the favourable conclusion, then is the time to walk by faith. The meaning is, then is the time to believe all is well, and so rest easy, whether we have evidence that it is so or not.

Thus we have often heard several passages of Scripture applied, or rather miserably misapplied; for instance, that in the last chapter of Habakkuk: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." As if by the fig-tree not blossoming, &c. were meant the Christian graces not being in exercise; and that then was the time to walk by faith, to rejoice in the God of our salvation! That passage also concerning Abraham, "who, against hope, believed in hope," has been understood as if to be strong in faith, giving glory to God, like Abraham, was to maintain an unshaken persuasion of the goodness of our state, whether we have evidence or no evidence.

So also that passage in the fiftieth of Isaiah has been frequently brought for this purpose: "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." As though a state of darkness there meant a state of mind wherein a person could *discern* no evidence whatever of his being a good man; and as though such were there encouraged to make themselves easy, and leave the matter with God, not doubting the goodness of their state. Our Lord's rebuke to Thomas has been understood in the same manner: "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." As if a blessing should rest upon those who, destitute of

all discernible evidence of their Christianity, nevertheless believe it with an unshaken confidence. If this is to walk by faith, then faith must stand opposed to *spiritual sight* or *spiritual discernment*.

I doubt not but there is such a thing as to live upon *frames*; which ought to be guarded against. If I imagine, for instance, that God changes as I change—that he admires me at one time, and not another—or that his great love, whence all my hope of salvation springs, rises and falls according to the state of my mind; this is, doubtless, to dishonour God, as it strikes at the immutability of his love. So if I derive my chief consolation from reflecting upon what *I am*, instead of reflecting upon what *Christ is*, this is to dishonour Christ, and may very properly stand opposed to living by faith. But this is not the common idea of living upon frames. It has been usual with many to account that man to live upon frames, who, when he is stupid, and dark, and carnal, cannot be confident about the safety of his state; and him to live by faith who can maintain his confidence in the worst of frames. Allow me, brethren, to offer three or four plain reasons against this notion of the subject.

1. Faith is the only *means* of spiritual discernment and communion with God; and therefore cannot be opposed to them. Our best frames are those in which faith is most in exercise; and our worst when it is the least. Faith is the eye of the mind. It is that by which we realize invisible and spiritual objects, and so have fellowship with God. Yes, it is by this grace that we “behold the glory of the Lord,” and are changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the “Spirit of the Lord.”

2. If faith is opposed to spiritual discernment and communion with God, then it must *work alone*; it must never act in conjunction with any of those graces wherein we *feel* our hearts go out to God; for this would be to confound faith and sense together. But this is contrary to fact. When we have most faith in exercise, we have most love, most hope, most joy; and so of all the graces; all sweetly act in harmony. Thus the Scriptures represent it as ever accompanied by other graces; especially by love, purity, and lowliness of heart. It is expressly said to “work by love;” and, it should seem, never works without it. It is also said to “purify the heart.” The exercise of faith, therefore, and the exercise of holiness, can never be separated. Equally true is it that it is ever attended with “lowliness of heart.” There are two instances of faith recorded which our Lord particularly commended, saying, he had not seen such great faith, no, not in Israel: the one was the case of the woman of Canaan, and the other that of the Roman centurion; and both these were attended with great humility. The one was contented to be treated as a dog, and the other thought himself unworthy that Christ should come under his roof. A confidence unaccompanied with these, if it may be called faith at all, seems nearly to resemble what the apostle James called “faith without works;” which he pronounced to be “dead, *being alone*.”

3. If faith is to be understood in this sense, then it not only works without other graces, but *contrary to them*. The Scriptures encourage a spirit of self-examination and godly jealousy. These are modest and upright graces, and constitute much of the beauty of Christianity. “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith,” say the inspired writers; “try your own selves!”—“Let us fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of it.”—“Let us pass the time of our sojourning here in fear.” But always to be confident of the safety of our state, let the work of sanctification go on as it may, is not only unfriendly to such a spirit, but subversive of it. Hence it is common, with some, to call every degree of godly jealousy by the name of *unbelief*,

and to impute it to the *enemy*; yea, to shun it, and cry out against it, as if it were itself a devil! This is not the most favourable symptom of an honest heart. Surely a heart truly upright would not wish to receive comfort itself, but upon solid evidence; and where it was taught to call such a fear by the name of *unbelief* I know not; I think I may say, it never came from the word of God. If the veracity of God were called in question, no doubt it would be unbelief; but the question, at those times, with a sincere mind, is not whether God will prove faithful in saving those that trust in him, but whether he be indeed the subject of that trust. His doubts do not respect God, but himself. Love and fear are the two great springs and guardians of right action. When love is in exercise, we do not stand in need of fear to stimulate or guide us; but when we are not constrained by the former, it is well to be restrained by the latter.

4. Faith, in that case, must be *unsupported by evidence*. God's word affords us no warrant to conclude ourselves interested in his promises, and so in a state of safety, unless we bear the characters to which the promises are made. We have no right, for instance, to apply to ourselves that promise—"Fear thou not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness,"—unless we bear the character of the party there addressed. This is expressed in the foregoing verse, "But thou, Israel, art *my servant*," &c. If, from the real desire of our hearts, we yield not ourselves *servants* to God, no impression of this passage upon our minds can warrant us to conclude that God is indeed our God, or that we shall be strengthened, helped, or uphelden by him. So also no man has any right to conclude himself interested in that promise, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee," unless he be so *drawn* from the love of sin, self, and the world, as to love God better than any of them. But if we are to hold fast the confidence of our safety, whatever be the condition of our mind or the evils in our conduct, then we are, in that instance, to believe without evidence. If the work of sanctification be the only Scriptural evidence of our interest in Christ, then, in proportion to that work increasing or declining, our evidence must be strong or weak. When we degenerate into carnality and indifference, it must of course, diminish. To say, then, that those are the times in which we exercise most faith, is the same thing as to say we exercise most faith when we have least evidence; and, consequently, it must be a kind of faith, if it be faith at all, that is unsupported by evidence.\*

There are but two cases, that I recollect, in the whole system of true

\* All true faith must have TRUTH for its foundation. That faith to which the Scriptures promise salvation is founded upon evidence; and that evidence is the TESTIMONY of God. Hence it is, with great propriety, by the apostle, defined the *belief of the truth*. This definition includes more than many seem to apprehend. To believe the truth in reality is cordially to credit the account which God has given of himself, of us, of sin, of Christ, of earth, of heaven, &c. Whoever thus realizes divine truth must, of necessity, feel its influence. The same apostle tells us that those who receive the word as it is find it *effectually* to work in them. Hence we are said to be *sanctified through the truth*, to know the truth, and to be *made free* by it. I cannot believe God to be that amiable and gracious being which his word represents him to be, without loving him. I cannot believe myself to be that vile and worthless being that God represents me to be, without abhorring myself in dust and ashes. If I really credit what God hath said of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, it is impossible but that I should hate it, and perceive its dreadful demerit, and plainly see myself righteously condemned for being a subject of it. If I really believe the record that God has given of his Son, that is the same thing as to think of his excellences, in measure, as God thinks of them; and, in that case, I cannot but embrace him with all my heart, and venture my everlasting all upon his atonement. If, from my heart, I believe what God hath said of the vanity of this world, and the substantial bliss of that to come; if I realize the emptiness of all the enjoyments of the former, and the eternal weight of



Christian experience, which so much as seem to resemble this notion; and these are, in fact, essentially different from it. One is that of *the most eminent Christians having a general and well-grounded persuasion of their interest in Christ, even at those times wherein they may not experience such evident and sensible exercises of grace as they do at other times.* But then, it is to be observed, grace has more ways than one of being in exercise: the grace of love, for instance; sometimes it is exercised in the most tender and affectionate feelings of the heart towards Christ, longing to be with him, and to enjoy him, in the world to come; at other times, it works more in a way of serving him, and promoting his interest in the present world. This latter may not so sensibly strike the person himself as being an exercise of love; but perhaps other people may consider it superior evidence.

The industrious peasant, sitting in his evening chair, sees his children gathering round him, and courting his affections by a hundred little winning ways. He looks, and smiles, and loves. The next day he returns to his labour, and cheerfully bears the burden of the day, in order to provide for these his little ones, and promote their interest. During his day's labour, he may not feel his love operate in such sensible emotions as he did the evening before. Nay, he may be so attentive to other things as not immediately to have them in his thoughts. What then? he loves his children: indeed he gives proof of it, by cheerfully enduring the toils of labour, and willingly denying himself of many a comfort, that they might share their part; and were he to hear of their being injured or afflicted, he would quickly feel the returns of glowing affection, in as strong, and perhaps stronger, emotions than ever.

Thus the believer may have real love to God in exercise, exciting him to a cheerful and habitual discharge of duty, and a careful watch against evil, and yet feel little, or none, of that desirable tenderness of heart which, at other times, he experiences. He has grace in exercise, only it does not

glory pertaining to the latter; I shall necessarily labour, not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life.

If this be a just notion of faith, then it will follow, 1. *That all unconverted men are truly, and in the most literal and proper sense of the word, UNBELIEVERS.* Whatever they may pretend, they do not realize what God has revealed of his character or their own, of the nature of sin and its dreadful demerit, of the excellence of Christ, of the vanity of this world, and the solid bliss of the next. Nor can this their unbelief be removed but by their becoming entirely new creatures, by a work of the almighty Spirit of God. 2. *That a mere cold assent to things, commonly called believing the doctrines of the gospel, unaccompanied with love to them, or a dependence on Christ for salvation, is very far from being true saving faith.* Let but the doctrines of the gospel be really and heartily believed, as God has revealed them, and, as before said, it will be impossible but that we should feel a determination to venture upon Christ alone for salvation, with all the proper effects of living faith. But persons may profess to believe those doctrines when they do not, or may believe them partially, but not as God has revealed them. Yea, a person may think these his professions to be true, and these his notions to be just, and yet be an infidel at heart. The Jews professed to believe Moses, and no doubt verily thought they did; but our Lord told them, "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me." We are under a necessity, therefore, of concluding that, where these effects are not produced, the faith of such persons is, in a great degree, *pretended*, and not real; and in that degree in which it is real, it is very *superficial*; it reaches only to the shell of truth, at farthest. The essence and glory of the gospel is by them neither discerned nor believed. 3. *That all that confidence which is unsupported by evidence, held fast by so many, is not faith, but presumption or delusion.* If faith is the belief of the truth, then whatever I believe ought to be a truth, and a truth supported by evidence, prior to, and independently of, my believing it. This is certainly the case respecting the excellence and all-sufficiency of Christ. He is what he is, whether I believe it or not. However I may disallow him, he is chosen of God, and precious. Whatever real excellence I at any time discern or believe to be in him, I only believe the truth, and what would have been the truth if I had never believed it. Faith, therefore, draws aside the veil, and discovers things in some measure as they are. So if that persuasion which I may have of my interest in Christ have any right to the name of faith, it must be a truth, and a truth capable of being proved by Scripture evidence at the time.

work in the same way as it does at some other times; and he in general enjoys a conscious satisfaction that the more he knows of God, his holy law, and glorious gospel, the more he loves them. During this, he may have an abiding satisfaction that things are right with him. But this is a very different thing from a person, at all events, maintaining the safety of his state; yea, and reckoning himself, in so doing, to be strong in faith, giving glory to God, while carnality governs his spirit, and folly debases his conversation.

The other case is when, on a failure of evidence from a reflection on *past* experiences, the believer has recourse to an *immediate application* to the Lord Jesus Christ, casting himself directly on his mercy, and relying on his word; seeing he has said, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." This case no doubt often occurs. The believer, through the prevalence of carnality, with some other causes, too often finds his evidences for glory so obscured, that past experiences will afford but small consolation. At such a time, his mind is either easy and carnally disposed, (in that case, a few painful fears will do him no harm,) or else his heart is depressed with perplexity and gloom, in which case nothing is better than immediately to go to Christ as a poor sinner for salvation. This is the shortest, and it is commonly the surest way. It is not best in such a state of mind to stand disputing whether we have believed or not; be that as it may, the door of mercy is still open, and the Redeemer still says, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." It is best, therefore, to make a fresh venture of our souls upon him; that if we have never before trusted in him, we may now.

This is no more than he has a *warrant* at any time to do, let things be as they may with him; for though internal qualifications are necessary to our concluding ourselves *interested in* Christ, yet it is not so in respect of *application* to him. The perplexed soul need not stay, before he ventures, to inquire whether he be fit to come to Christ. It is not required that he should prove his saintship before he applies for mercy, though it is before he claims an interest in gospel blessings. All that is necessary here is that he be sensible of his being a vile and lost sinner; and *that* is not to be considered as a *qualification, giving him a right to come*, but as a state of mind *essential to the act itself of coming*.

Many a Christian has found sweet rest to his soul by such a direct application to Christ; and surely it would be much better for Christians who go almost all their life in painful perplexity, lest they should be mistaken at last, if, instead of perpetually poring on past experiences, they were to practise more in this way. This would furnish them with present evidence, which is much the best, and what God best approves; for he loves to have us continue to exercise our graces, and not barely to remember that we have exercised them some time or other heretofore. This in some sort may be called walking by faith, and not by sight; and, in this case, faith may in some sense be opposed to spiritual sight. It is opposed to that discernment which we sometimes have of being true Christians, from a review of past experiences. But then this is ever attended with *present spiritual discernment* of Christ's excellence, and a longing desire after interest in him; and herein essentially differs from what we have been opposing. Confidence in the one case is nothing else but carnal security, tending to make men easy without God: confidence in the other is an actual venture of the soul afresh on the Lord Jesus, encouraged by his gracious testimony. The subject of the one considers himself as an established saint; the other as a poor lost sinner, and deals with Christ for salvation just as he did when he first applied to him. To the one we say, "Be not high-minded, but

fear;" to the other, "Fear not, thou shalt not be ashamed; none ever trusted in him, and was confounded."

In what sense then do we walk by faith, and not by sight? I answer in general, Walking by faith is a GOING FORWARD IN THE WAYS OF GODLINESS, AS INFLUENCED, NOT BY SENSIBLE, BUT BY INVISIBLE OBJECTS—OBJECTS OF THE REALITY OF WHICH WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE BUT THE TESTIMONY OF GOD. But perhaps faith may be considered as opposed to sight more particularly in *three* senses; namely, to corporal sight, to the discoveries of mere reason, and to ultimate vision.

I. To walk by faith is opposed to walking by *corporal sight*. In this sense we shall find it plentifully used in the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews, concerning Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and others. Thus Abel, by faith, offered a more excellent offering than Cain. God had said in effect, once for all, that he would never speak nor be spoken to in a way of friendship by any of the human race, but through a mediator. This was intimated partly by man's being debarred from all access to the tree of life, partly by the promise of the woman's Seed, and partly by the institution of sacrifices. Cain overlooked all these, and approached God without an *expiatory* sacrifice; as if there had been no breach between them, and so no need of an atonement. This was an instance of daring *unbelief*. Abel, on the contrary, took God at his word, perceived the evil of sin and the awful breach made by it, dared not to bring an offering without a victim for atonement, had respect to the promised Messiah, and thus, by faith in the *unseen* Lamb, offered a more excellent offering than Cain.

Thus also it is said of Noah, "By faith he, being warned of God of *things not seen* as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world," &c. No doubt the world were ready to despise Noah, while building his ark, as an enthusiast whose faculties were probably deranged, who put himself to a deal of trouble, and wanted to put other people to as much, merely through a notion that ran in his head that the world should be drowned. Why, was there any thing in the world that looked like it, or seemed to portend such an event? Nothing at all: all things seemed to continue as they were from the creation. What then could induce Noah to do as he did? Nothing but the testimony of God, which he credited, and acted accordingly.

So also it is said of Abraham, when called to go into another country, "by faith he obeyed, and went out, *not knowing whither he went*." A pretty errand it would seem to his friends and neighbours! It is possible that some of these, observing him preparing for a journey, might inquire whither he was going.—Going? I am going to a land which *the Lord is to show me*.—And have you ever seen this land?—No: I neither know the country, nor a step of the way to it.—A fine tale, indeed! but, seriously, what in the world can move you to such an undertaking?—I rely upon the *testimony of God*. He hath said, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, unto a land *that I will show thee*:" I take him at his word, and act accordingly.

These were cases in point for the apostle to quote. The Hebrews seemed hardly contented with an *unseen* High Priest, an *invisible* religion. They had been used to priests and sacrifices that they could hear, and see, and handle with their bodily senses. Like their fathers by Moses, therefore, they were ready to say of Jesus,—We know not where he is gone; come, let us make us a captain, and return to Judaism.—Judaism! says the apostle—methinks true Judaism would condemn you. All your forefathers acted upon a principle which you seem about to abandon. They walked by faith, not

by sight. They lived, they died, in the faith, even in the faith of that very Messiah of whom you make so light.

In this sense, it is easy to see, faith and sight are to be taken in our Lord's rebuke to Thomas, when he says, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." It is as if he had said,—You think you have acted very prudently;—but what must the Christian world do in after-ages, if they act upon your principle? Christianity in the whole of it will depend upon testimony; whoever receives it after your death, yea, in your lifetime, besides yourselves, must receive it upon your testimony. Blessed are they that shall cordially so receive it; and blessed had you been, Thomas, to have set them the example, by believing the testimony of your brethren.

2. Faith may be considered as opposed to the discoveries of *mere reason unassisted by revelation*. In this sense it seems to be used in reference to Sarah. "Through faith she received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised." How Sarah should have a son was not only indiscernible by the corporal eye, but by an eye of reason; since it must be, if at all, entirely beside the common course of nature. She had nothing to rely upon in this case but the promise of God.

We do not suppose faith and *right* reason to be opposites: that be far from us. On the contrary, nothing is more evident than that Christianity is entirely a rational system; and it is its glory that it is so. We should never have been required to give a *reason* for the hope that is in us, if there had been no reason to be given. But though nothing in revelation be contrary to right reason, yet there are many things which our reason could never have found out, had they not been made known by the Supreme Intelligence. The plan of redemption by Jesus Christ, in particular, contains a set of truths which the eye had never seen, nor the ear heard, nor had they entered the heart of man to conceive, had not God revealed them to us by his Spirit. For all the pleasure that we enjoy, brethren, in contemplating these glorious truths, we are wholly indebted to the testimony of God. Indeed, so far are they from being discoverable by mere reason, that every blessing contains in it abundantly more than men or angels could have asked or thought! It staggers our reason to receive it, even now it is told us. At every pause we must stand and wonder, saying, "Is this the manner of man, O Lord!"

Not only was our reason incapable of finding out many truths before they were revealed; but even now they are revealed, they contain things above our comprehension. It is one thing to say that Scripture is contrary to *right* reason, and another thing to say it may exhibit truths too great for *our* reason to grasp.\* God must have told us nothing about his own existence

\* May not the great disputes which have taken place concerning *faith* and *reason*, as if the one were opposite to the other, have arisen, in a great degree, from using the term *reason* without defining it? The word *reason*, like the word *understanding*, has two senses. 1. It signifies *the fitness of things*. So the apostles used it, when they said, "It is not *reason* that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables;" that is, it is not *fit* or *proper*. 2. It signifies *our power or capacity of reasoning*. So it is said of Nebuchadnezzar that his *reason* returned to him; that is, his *power or capacity of reasoning*. Now it is easy to see that these are two essentially different ideas: the one is perfect and immutable, remaining always the same; the other is shattered and broken by sin, and liable to a thousand variations through blindness and prejudice. No Divine truth can disagree with the former; but it may be both above and contrary to the latter.

If people were to talk, in matters of science and philosophy, as some have affected to talk in religion, they would be treated as fools, and deemed unworthy of attention. A philosopher, for instance, tells an unlettered countryman that it is generally thought that the earth turns round, every day, upon its own axis, and not the sun round the earth. The countryman replies, "I don't believe it." "Very likely," says the philosopher; "but why

and infinite perfections, if he had told us nothing but what we could fully comprehend. In this case, it becomes us to know our littleness, and to bow our understandings to the Supreme Intelligence. It is the most rational thing in the world so to do. If God has said any thing, we ought to rest assured that so it is. In these cases, we ought to trust his eyes, so to speak, rather than our own, and be content to walk by faith, not by sight.

3. Faith may be considered as opposed to *ultimate vision*. The saints in glory are described as "seeing Christ as he is," as "knowing even as they are known," and as being citizens of a city where there shall be "no night," and where they shall need "no candle, neither light of the sun, nor light of the moon, *for the Lord God shall be the light thereof*." Our knowledge of things there will be immediate and intuitive, and not, as it is here, through the medium of the word and ordinances. The sacred Scriptures are to us (with reverence be it spoken) like a letter from a distant friend; but when we come face to face, *ink and paper shall be needed no more*. However, for the present, it is otherwise. We are yet in the body; and while such, as the apostle observes in the verse preceding the text, "we are absent from the Lord," and must be glad of these helps. Let us make much of this letter, and be thankful that we can walk by it through this world, as by a "light in a dark place," till we come to a better, where we shall no more walk by faith, but by sight.

Thus far I have dwelt chiefly upon the *terms*; but, that we may obtain a more comprehensive view of the *thing itself*, (namely, of a Christian's walking by faith,) let us take a view of a few of those circumstances and situations through which he has to pass during the present life. It is in these that faith, as well as every other grace, is exercised. Allow me, then, to request your attention, brethren, to four or five observations on the subject

1. There are many *dark seasons in God's providential dealings with us*, in which we can see no way of escape, nor find any source of comfort, but *the testimony of God*. God's friends are not distinguished in this world by an exemption from trying providences; he views that, methinks, as too trifling a badge of distinction. They shall be known by what is far more noble and advantageous; namely, by patience, obedience, submission, and Divine support under them. Moreover, as we profess to be friends of God, and to trust the salvation of our souls, with all our concerns, in his hands, he sees it proper to prove the sincerity of our professions, and the stability of our hearts. He brings us into such circumstances, therefore, as shall try us, whether we will confide in him or not.

Christ has told his followers, once for all, that "all power in heaven and earth is in his hands;" that he is "Head over all things to the church;" that he "will surely do them good;" that however things may seem, "all things shall work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose;" that as to temporal things, let them but "trust in the Lord, and do good, and they shall dwell in the land, and verily

not?" "It is contrary to my *reason*." "Contrary to your reason? that may be; but I hope you do not think that every thing contrary to *your* reason is contrary to *right* reason!" Were men of the greatest understanding but to consider that there is a far greater disproportion between some truths respecting the existence of a God and their capacities than between any truths of human science and the capacity of the most ignorant rustic, they would be ashamed to disbelieve a truth because it is not according to *their* reason.

It is right, and stands commended in Scripture, *to apply our hearts to understanding*; but it is wrong, and stands condemned in Scripture, by the same pen, and in the same page, to *lean to our own understanding*. So, I apprehend, it is right to adhere to *right* reason, and to use all means to find out what it is; but it is wrong and presumptuous to set up *our* reason as a standard competent to decide what is truth, and what is error; for that is the same thing as supposing that our ideas of fitness and unfitness always accord with the real fitness of things.

they shall be fed;" and as to eternal things, if they have a few light afflictions, they shall last but for a "moment," and shall "work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." These promises seem easy to be believed, when things are smooth and pleasing; and it is very natural for us, in a day of prosperity, to talk of these things, and try and comfort those with them who are labouring in adversity. But the greatest trial is when it comes home to ourselves. Then it is well if we fall not under the reproof of Eliphaz, "Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees: but now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled." Then, if ever, is the time for us to walk by faith, and not by sight.

We create to ourselves *darlings*, and place much of our happiness in their enjoyment. God not unfrequently takes these first away, as being most his rivals. If one child is more beloved than all the rest, if he must be clothed with a coat of many colours, the coat must quickly be returned without the owner; yes, the period must soon arrive when it shall be said, *Joseph is not!* These, with a few more strokes of the kind, will try Jacob's faith to the uttermost; and he will find it hard work to reconcile promises with providences. "Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good;" but "all these things are against me." Ah, he fails! He fails, like Asaph in a similar condition, who could not see how God could be "good to Israel," when "waters of a full cup were wrung out to them." The Shunammitish woman will set us a better example than either the patriarch or the prophet. "Is it well?" said Elisha's servant, when her child lay dead in her house. She replied, "*It is well.*" This was, in effect, saying,—Whether I can see it or not, I know he doth all things well.—This is believing when we cannot see, taking God at his word, against all the rebellion of sense and feeling. This is what Jacob should have done; but oh that Jacob had failed alone! If to resemble him, in this instance, would constitute us Israelites, we should most of us be *Israelites indeed!*

We are often very thrifty in *devising plans* for futurity, and apt to promise ourselves great degrees of happiness, when they are accomplished. Here it is common for God to throw confusion upon our schemes, and cause things to run in a different channel from what we expected. Job, while in prosperity, sat, like a bird in her well-feathered nest, and thought within himself,—I shall live to enjoy numerous years of uninterrupted prosperity, to see children's children, and then go down to the grave in peace; or, as he himself afterwards, in the bitter hour of reflection, expressed it, "I said, I shall die in my nest, I shall multiply my days as the sand!" Well, so he did at last; but there was a melancholy chasm in his life, which he never expected. Such there are, more or less, in all our lives; and, in such situations, it is well if we do not think hard of our best Friend. Some have been ready to ask, Is this love? Is this His doing who has said, I will surely do thee good? Yes, and you shall see it in the end, as Asaph did; who, after he had been to God's sanctuary, and saw things as they were, went home, it seems, and penned the seventy-third Psalm, beginning it all in ecstasy, saying, "*Truly God is good to Israel!*" Christians, how criminal, how cruel, that He that never failed us at any time should be so mistrusted as he is! It should seem to suggest as if he were such a God that we cannot trust him out of sight!

How amiable is that spirit, how happy is that heart, that, in every situation, places unbounded confidence in JEHOVAN'S word! Such may be hedged up on every side, and encompassed, like Israel at the Red Sea, with seemingly insurmountable difficulties; yet, even herè, they will follow Israel's example, they will cry unto God, and rely upon his mercy. If means

can be used, they will use them; if not, they will "stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." "Speak unto the children of Israel," said the Lord, "that they go forward." Go forward! they might have replied; what, leap at once into the jaws of destruction! But nothing of this. At first, indeed, their faith seemed to fail them, but they soon recovered themselves. "Speak unto the children of Israel," said the Lord, "that they go forward"—they went—a way was made in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters. Well may it be said, BY FAITH Israel passed through the Red Sea. Minds thus disposed might defy the united sources of worldly sorrow to render them unhappy. Let *poverty* stare them in the face, let pinching *want* stretch over them her miserable sceptre, they have been known, even here, by faith, to break forth into songs of praise. Thus sang good Habakkuk, (and this evidently appears to be his situation, and not a state of *spiritual declension*,) "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Thus also sang the church, even in her captivity, when her country was laid waste, Jerusalem razed to the ground, and the temple burnt to ashes: "The *Lord* is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in *him*!"

2. In all our *approaches to and fellowship with Christ*, it is by *faith* in the account that God has given of him in his word. Christ's excellence, undertaking, and benefits are the joy, and even the life, of our souls, if we are true Christians. But what *evidence* have we of all or any of these? Yea, what evidence have we that there is, or ever was, such a person as *JESUS CHRIST*? or if there was, that he was the Messiah, the Son of God? We neither saw him alive, nor die, rise again, nor ascend to heaven. We never saw the miracles he wrought, nor heard the voice from the excellent glory, saying, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him." We speak of his personal excellences, Divine and human; of his love, zeal, righteousness, meekness, patience, &c.; but what know we of them? We rejoice in his being constituted our Surety, to obey the law and endure the curse in our stead; but how know we that so indeed it is? We glory in the imputation of his righteousness, and exult in the hope of being found in him, and being for ever with him, faultless before his throne, to serve him day and night in his temple; but on what do we rely for all this? If our expectations are but just, truly they are noble; but if groundless, extravagant. Are they, then, well-founded? Yes, *the testimony of God* is the rock whereon they rest. He has told us by the mouth of his servants, the inspired writers, all that is necessary for us to know, of the character, conduct, and errand of his Son; of every office he sustained, and every end for which he came into the world. To all this he has added that "whosoever believeth on him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." So they have preached, and so we have believed. We have, through grace, ventured our everlasting ALL in his hands; nor is it in the hands of we know not whom: "we know whom we have trusted, and are persuaded that he is able to keep that which we have committed to him against that day." For though none of these things are visible to our mortal eye, yet, having evidence that God has said them, we are satisfied. We would as soon trust God's word as our own eyes. Thus we walk, like Moses, "as seeing him who is invisible;" and thus answer to that description, "Whom having *not seen* ye love, in whom, though now ye see him not, yet *believing*, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

In all our applications to Christ, we have to rely merely upon the testimony of God. Here is a poor, self-condemned sinner, who comes pressing through the crowd of discouraging apprehensions, that he may, so to speak,

touch the hem of the Redeemer's garment, and be made whole. As he approaches, one set of thoughts suggests, How can such a monster hope for mercy? Is it not doubtful whether there be efficacy enough in the blood of Christ itself to pardon such heinous crimes?—I know my crimes are heinous beyond expression, replies the burdened soul, and I should doubtless give up my case as desperate, but that I have heard of him that "he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." I will go, therefore; who can tell?—As he goes, other objections assail him, questioning whether Christ can *find in his heart* to accept of such a one?—I should think not, indeed, rejoins the poor man; but he has said, "Him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out." I know, were I to consult nothing but my feelings, and only to fix my eyes on the enormity of my sin, I should utterly despair; but encouraged by HIS WORD, I will go forward; I will walk by faith, not by sight: O, I hear him say, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden—and ye shall find rest unto your souls!" This, this is what I want! Depart from me, all ye that vex my soul: I will go in the strength of the Lord God!

3. We have to *give up many present enjoyments*, for Christ's sake, wherein we have no *visible* prospect of recompense, none of any kind but what arises from *the promise of God*. Self-denial is one of the initial laws of Christ's kingdom. Far from enticing people into his service by promises of wealth, ease, and honour, he set out with this public declaration, "Who-soever will be my disciple must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." But who would enter upon these terms? Who would give up houses, lands, friends, and reputation, and expose himself to hardships, persecution, and death, for nothing? Yet many followed him, and that to the day of their death; yea, and upon these very terms too: "they left all, and followed him." What then induced them? Did not they act irrationally? Prophets, apostles, and martyrs!—what mean ye? Have ye no regard for yourselves? What! are you destitute of the feelings of men?—No such thing; we "have respect unto the recompense of reward."—Reward! what can that be? nothing surely below the sun, unless it were every thing the reverse of what is agreeable to human nature!—True; but our Lord has declared, "Who-soever shall forsake houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold and inherit everlasting life." We rely upon this, and this supports us.

God's friends, in all ages, have forsaken sensible for invisible enjoyments. Encouraged by considerations like these, Ruth forsook her father and her mother, and the land of her nativity, and came to a people whom she knew not. It was this that determined her to go forward, when, as Naomi told her, there were no earthly prospects before her. It was this that made her resolve not to go back with Orpah, but to cast in her lot with the friends of the God of Israel. "The Lord recompense thy work," said Boaz to her afterwards, "and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust!"

The same things influenced Moses, it seems, to refuse a crown. It has been thought that, in virtue of his adoption, he might have been king of Egypt; but that throne not only, like other thrones, exposed him that sat thereon to numberless snares, but probably was inaccessible to any but those who would continue the system of idolatry and oppression. In that case Moses, in order to become king of Egypt, must have sacrificed a good conscience, despised a crown of glory that fadeth not away, and united in persecuting his own and the Lord's people. Moses seems fully to have weighed this matter. The result was, he "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to



enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming even the *reproach* of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." He, therefore, freely leaves the life of a courtier; avows himself the friend of the poor despised captives; and dares to retire into Midian, to lead the life of an obscure shepherd. I say, he *dared* to retire; for it required a greater degree of courage thus to deny himself, than to stand in the forefront of a battle, or to face the mouth of a cannon! But "by faith he forsook Egypt, and went and lived a stranger in a strange land; for he endured as seeing him who is invisible;" yes, "he had respect unto the recompense of reward."

In short, through this, the holy tribes of martyrs, in all ages, loved not their lives unto the death. By faith in invisible realities, as the apostle to the Hebrews largely proves, they bore all manner of cruelties, not accepting deliverance itself upon dishonourable conditions; suffered all kinds of deaths with unremitting fortitude, and, in some sort, like their glorious Leader, triumphed over principalities and powers when they fell.

Indeed, every man in the world may be said to walk either by faith or by sight. There is not only a giving up sensible for invisible enjoyments, by *actually parting with them*, but by *not setting our hearts upon them*, as our chief good. This may be done where there is no call actually to give them up, and is done by all real Christians in the world. Men whose chief good consists in the profits, pleasures, or honours of this life live by *sight*; they derive their life from objects before their eyes, having neither patience nor inclination to wait for a portion in the world to come. But good men, as well the rich as the poor, derive their life from above, and so live by faith; their "life is hid with Christ in God."

Perhaps here, as much as any where, is required the peculiar exercise of faith. For one actually divested of earthly good to look upward, and set his heart on things above, is faith; but for one still possessed of this—one on whom Providence smiles, prospering him in all he sets his hand to, blessing him with wife and children, houses and lands, in abundance—for him to exercise such a degree of indifference to all these as to derive his chief happiness from invisible realities, this is faith indeed! This seems to have been exemplified in Abraham, and other patriarchs. Of him it is said, "By faith he sojourned in the Land of Promise, as in a strange country." How is this? We do not wonder that when he and Sarah went into Egypt, on account of a famine, he should consider himself a sojourner there; but how is it that he should do so in Canaan, the Land of Promise, his own estate, as it were? The next verse informs us; "for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." So Jacob, when before Pharaoh, called his whole life a *pilgrimage*, though the far greater part of it was spent in the Land of Promise; and "they that say such things," adds the apostle, "declare plainly that they seek a country." Though God had given them the good land, they would not make it their *chief* good. They could not be contented with this Canaan, but longed for another. Noble souls! bid them lift up their eyes eastward, and westward, and northward, and southward, and tell them all they can see is their own; still they will not live by sight, but by faith; "they will desire a better country, that is, a heavenly."

4. There are many low and distressing seasons to which the *church of God* is subject, in which there is little or no *visible* ground of encouragement, scarcely any but what arises from *the promise of God*. The whole church of God, as individuals, has, in all ages, had its day of adversity set over against the day of prosperity. Israel, after their deliverance from Egypt and settlement in Canaan, enjoyed pretty much prosperity, especially in the days of David and Solomon. But afterwards, by a series of provocations,

they procured to themselves the Babylonish captivity. At that melancholy period, those amongst them that feared the Lord must be supposed to be all in darkness. Jerusalem laid waste; the temple burnt with fire; Judah carried captive; ah, what becomes of God's interest in the world! The "foundations" of his visible kingdom seemed to be "laid in the holy mountains" round about Jerusalem; if these are destroyed, what can the righteous do? They had long sighed and cried for the idolatrous abominations of their countrymen, and prayed and hoped that mercy might be lengthened out; but now all seems over. For their idolatry, they must go, and have enough of idolaters: they that feared the Lord must also go with them. By the rivers of Babylon they must go, and sit down. Those that had been used to sound the high praises of God in Zion must now hang their harps upon the willows, as having no use for them! Nor is this the worst; they must be taunted, and their God derided, by their insulting lords: "Come," said they, "sing us one of the songs of Zion;" as if they had said, Now see what your religion has availed you! This was your favourite employ, and these were the songs wherewith you addressed your Deity, in whom you confided to deliver you out of our hands; what think you now? Poor Zion! "She spreadeth forth her hands, but there is none to comfort her. The Lord hath commanded that her adversaries should be round about her:" her captive sons can only remember Jerusalem and weep! Alas, "how can they sing the Lord's song in a strange land!"

But is there no help from above? Is there no physician there? Yes, the God whom Babel derides, but Judah adores, looks down, and sees their affliction. To his disheartened friends, in this situation, he addresses himself, saying, "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." As if he should say, For a season you must walk by faith, and not by sight; but, trust me, that season shall soon be over. Seventy years, and Babel shall fall, and Judah return! By these declarations the church was encouraged in her captivity, and furnished with an answer to her insulting foes; yea, and, what is wonderful, breaks forth into one of the Lord's songs in a strange land! (Hearken, O Babel, to "one of the songs of Zion!") "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me; he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness. Then she that is mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the Lord thy God?"

This is encouraging to us as *churches* and as *ministers*. We have, in many cases, to walk in darkness, and have no light, and to go on in our ministrations, in a great degree, like the prophet Isaiah, lamenting that there are so few who have believed our report, so few to whom the arm of the Lord has been revealed. When death removes worthy characters, we must sometimes live, and lament to see their places unoccupied by others of the like character; and, what is worse, instead of increase by Christ's conquests, we must sometimes live to see a decrease by the conquests of the evil one! Many a faithful minister has had to preach, year after year, till, either by public scandals or private disgusts, many of his people have gone off, and walked no more with him. But let him then remember the testimony of God: "Him that honoureth me I will honour." Let him go on, and faithfully discharge his duty, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear; let him, and those that are with him, walk by faith, and not by sight. It often proves that, after such a night of weeping, comes a morning of re-

joicing. Let us not be discouraged; better breath than ours has been spent apparently in vain. Our Lord himself seemed to labour in vain, and to spend his strength for nought; but he comforted himself in this, (herein leaving us an example,) "Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength."

This may encourage and direct us in larger concerns; concerns which respect the *whole interest of Christ* in the world. If we compare the present state of things, or even the past, with the glorious prophecies of the word of God, we cannot think, surely, that all is yet accomplished. By these prophecies the Christian church is encouraged to look for great things at some period or other of her existence. She is taught to look for a time when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea;" when "a nation shall be born at once;" when "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ;" and he "shall reign from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." But surely, for the present, though great things, upon the whole, have been done in the world, yet nothing like this has ever come to pass. Instead of the world being conquered, what a great part yet continues to stand out against him! Heathenism, Mahomedism, popery, and infidelity, how extensive still their influence! In all probability not a single country, city, town, village, or congregation has ever yet been brought wholly to submit to Christ! Nay, is it not very rare to find, in any one of these, so many real friends as to make even a majority in his favour? May not the Christian church then, for the present, adopt that language, "We have been with child, we have as it were brought forth wind, we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth, neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen?" What then, shall we despair? God forbid! "The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry;" and, meanwhile, "the just shall live by faith."

Let us take encouragement, in the present day of small things, by looking forward, and hoping for better days. Let this be attended with *earnest and united prayer* to him by whom Jacob must arise. A life of faith will ever be a life of prayer. O brethren, let us pray much for an outpouring of God's Spirit upon our ministers and churches, and not upon those only of our own connexion and denomination, but upon "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours!"

Our hope of a *better state; when this is over*, is built on faith in God's testimony. We have no sort of evidence but this that any such state exists. We cannot *see* any thing of the kind, or aught from which we can infer it. We cannot learn it from any of our senses. Reason itself could never have found it out. Reason might have taught us the idea of a *future* state, but not of a future state of *bliss*. Though much might be argued from the fitness of things, to prove that man is not made barely for the present life, yet nothing could thence be drawn to prove that *rebels* against the Supreme Being should live in a state of eternal felicity; no, for this we are wholly indebted to the *word of promise*. Hence faith is said to be "the *substance, ground, or foundation* of things hoped for." Supported by *that*, we sustain our heaviest losses; and, attracted by *these*, we come up out of great tribulations, following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, till we shall overcome, and "sit down with him in his throne, as he also hath overcome, and is set down with his Father in his throne."

II. We will now add a few words on the IMPORTANCE of such a life. If, all things considered, it would have been best for us to have always *seen* our

way before us,—to have been guided, so to speak, with our own eyes, and not to have implicitly followed the directions of God,—no doubt so it would have been ordered. But he who perfectly, and at once, saw the beginning and end of all things, judged otherwise. With the highest wisdom, no doubt, he formed the resolution, “the just shall live by faith.” It may be impossible for us, in the present state, to find out all the reasons for this resolution; but two or three seem to present themselves to our view.

1. Such a life brings *great glory to God*. Confidence is universally a medium of honour. To confide in a fellow creature puts honour upon him in the account of others, and affords a pleasure to himself; especially if he be a wise and upright character, as it gives him an opportunity of proving his wisdom and fidelity. Though the great God cannot be *made* more honourable than he *is*, by any thing we can do, yet his honour may, by this, be made more *apparent*. We honour him, so far as we form just conceptions of him in our own minds, and act so as to give just representations of him to others. God is graciously pleased to declare that “he takes pleasure in those that hope in his mercy;” and why? surely among other things, because it gives him occasion to display the glory of his grace. And as he takes pleasure in those that hope in his mercy and rely upon it, so he takes pleasure in ordering things so that we may be put to the trial, whether we will rely on him or not. It was this which induced him to lead Israel through the wilderness, rather than by the ready road to Canaan. He knew they would be, *in fact*, dependent upon him, let them be where they would; but they would not be *sensible* of that dependence, nor have so much opportunity of entirely trusting him, in any way as in this; and so it would not be so much for the glory of his great name. He therefore would lead a nation, with all their little ones, into an inhospitable desert, where was scarcely a morsel of meat to eat, and, in many places, not a drop of water to drink; “a land of deserts and of pits, of scorpions and fiery flying serpents:” here, if any where, they must be sensibly dependent on God. They must be fed and preserved immediately from heaven itself, and that by miracle, or all perish in a few days! Here God must appear to be what he was—here mercy and truth must appear to go with them indeed!

What an opportunity was afforded them to have walked these forty years by faith! what grounds for an entire confidence! but, alas, their faithless hearts perverted their way, and, in the end, proved their ruin! Ten times they tempted God in the desert, till at length he swore, concerning that generation, that, for their unbelief, they should die in the wilderness, and never enter his rest. Few, if any, besides Joshua and Caleb, would dare to trust him, notwithstanding all his wonders and all his mercies! they, however, for their part, took hold of his strength, and thought themselves *able*, having God on their side, to encounter any thing! Their spirit was to walk by faith, and not by sight; and herein it is easy to see how they glorified God.

O brethren, let *the glory of God* lie near our hearts! Let it be dearer to us than our dearest delights! Herein consists the criterion of true love to him. Let us, after the noble example of Joshua and Caleb, “follow the Lord fully.” Let us approve of every thing that tends to glorify him. Let us be reconciled to his conduct, who “suffers us to hunger, that we may know that man lives not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” If he should bring us into hard and difficult situations, situations to an eye of sense impossible to be endured, let us remember that it is that he may give us an opportunity of glorifying him, by trusting him in the dark. The more difficult the trial, the more glory to

him that bears us through, and the greater opportunity is afforded us for proving that we can indeed trust him with *all* our concerns—that we can trust him when we cannot see the end of his present dispensations.

Those very much dishonour God who profess to trust him for another world, but in the common difficulties of this are perpetually murmuring, peevish, and distrustful. How different was it with Abraham, in offering up his son Isaac. What, offer up Isaac! my son, my only son of promise! Why, is not the Messiah to spring out of his loins? What are to become of all the nations of the earth, who are to be *blessed* in him? How natural and excusable might such questions have seemed! much more so than most of our objections to the Divine conduct. Sense, in this case, had it been consulted, must have entered a thousand protests. But the *father of the faithful* consulted not with flesh and blood, not doubting but God knew what he was about, if he himself did not. (Oh that we may prove ourselves the *children* of faithful Abraham!) *Against hope*, in appearance, *he believed in hope* of Divine all-sufficiency; fully persuaded that what God had promised he was able to perform, he stretched forth his obedient arm; nor had he recalled it, had not Heaven interposed: he was “strong in faith, giving glory to God.”

2. It is productive of *great good to us*. The glory of God and the good of those that love him (thanks be to his name!) always go together. It is equally to their benefit as to his honour, for instance, to *lie low* before him, and to feel their *entire dependence* upon him. It is essential to the real happiness of an intelligent creature to be in its *proper place*, and to take a complacency in being so. But nothing tends more to cultivate these dispositions than God’s determining that, at present, we should walk by faith, and not by sight. Faith, in the whole of it, tends more than a little to abase the fallen creature; and to *walk* by faith (which is as much as to acknowledge that we are blind, and must see with the eyes of another) is very humbling. The objects of our desire being frequently for a time withheld, and our being at such times reduced to situations wherein we can *see* no help, and thus obliged to repose our trust in God, contribute more than a little to make us feel our dependence upon him. Agur saw that a constant fulness of this world was unfriendly to a spirit of entire dependence upon God; therefore he prayed, “Give me not riches; lest I be full, and deny thee.” Whatever tends to *humble* and *try* us, tends to “do us good in the latter end.”

Great and wonderful is the *consolation* that such a life affords. In all the vicissitudes of life and horrors of death, nothing can cheer and fortify the mind like this. By faith in an unseen world we can endure injuries without revenge, afflictions without fainting, and losses without despair. Let the nations of the earth dash, like potsherd, one against another; yea, let nature herself approach towards her final dissolution; let her groan as being ready to expire, and sink into her primitive nothing; still the believer lives! His all is not on board that vessel! His chief inheritance lies in another soil!

“His hand the good man fastens on the skies,  
And bids earth roll, nor feels her idle whirl!”

3. It will *make vision the sweeter*. It affords a great pleasure, when we make a venture of any kind, to find ourselves at last not disappointed. If a considerate man embark his all on board a vessel, and himself with it, he may have a thousand fears, before he reaches the end of his voyage; yet should he, after numberless dangers, safely arrive, and find it not only answer, but far exceed his expectations, his joy will then be greater than if he had run no hazard at all. What he has gained will seem much sweeter than if it had fallen to him in a way that had cost him nothing. Thus believers

venture their all in the hands of Christ, persuaded that he is able to keep that which they have committed to him against that day. To find at last that they have not confided in him in vain—yea, that their expectations are not only answered, but infinitely outdone—will surely enhance the bliss of heaven. The remembrance of our dangers, fears, and sorrows will enable us to enjoy the heavenly state with a degree of happiness impossible to have been felt, if those dangers, fears, and sorrows had never existed.

My hearers! we all of us live either by faith or by sight; either upon things heavenly or things earthly. If on the former, let us go on, upon the word of God; everlasting glory is before us! But if on the latter, alas, our store will be soon exhausted! All these dear delights are but the brood of time, a brood that will soon take to themselves wings, and, with her that cherished them, fly away. O my hearers! is it not common for many of you to suppose that those who live by faith in the enjoyments of a world to come live upon mere imaginations? But are ye not mistaken? It is your enjoyments, and not theirs, that are imaginary. Pleasures, profits, honours, what are they? The whole form only a kind of *ideal* world, a sort of splendid *show*, like that in a dream, which, when you wake, all is gone! At most it is a *fashion*, and a fashion that *passeth* away. To grasp it is to grasp a shadow; and to feed upon it is to feed upon the wind. Oh that you may turn away your eyes from beholding these vanities, and look to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the substantial realities beyond the grave, for your never-failing portion!

But if not, if you still prefer this world, with its enjoyments, to those which are heavenly, how just will it be for the Lord Jesus to say to you, at the last great day, *Depart!* Depart, you have had your reward! you have had your choice; what would you have? You never chose me for your portion: you, in effect, said, of me and my interest, "We will have no part in David, nor inheritance in the son of Jesse: see to thyself, David." Ah, now, see to thyself, sinner!

Christians, ministers, brethren, all of us! let us realize the subject. Let us pray, and preach, and hear, and do every thing we do with eternity in view! Let us deal much with Christ and invisible realities. Let us, whenever called, freely deny ourselves for his sake, and trust him to make up the loss. Let us not faint under present difficulties, but consider them as opportunities afforded us to glorify God. Let us be ashamed that we derive our happiness so much from things below, and so little from things above. In one word, let us fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life!

## II.

[To the Rev. Robert Fawkner, at his ordination, at Thorn, Bedfordshire, Oct. 31, 1787.]

THE QUALIFICATIONS AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF A FAITHFUL MINISTER ILLUSTRATED BY THE CHARACTER AND SUCCESS OF BARNABAS.

“He was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit, and of faith; and much people was added to the Lord.”—Acts xi. 24.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

IT is a very important work to which you are this day set apart. I feel the difficulty of your situation. You need both counsel and encouragement; I wish I were better able to administer both. In what I may offer, I am persuaded you will allow me to be free; and understand me, not as assuming any authority or superiority over you, but only as saying that to you which I wish to consider as equally addressed to myself.

Out of a variety of topics that might afford a lesson for a Christian minister, my thoughts have turned, on this occasion, upon that of *example*. Example has a great influence upon the human mind; examples from Scripture especially, wherein characters the most illustrious in their day, for gifts, grace, and usefulness, are drawn with the pencil of inspiration, have an assimilating tendency. Viewing these, under a Divine blessing, we form some just conceptions of the nature and importance of our work, are led to reflect upon our own defects, and feel the fire of holy emulation kindling in our bosoms.

The particular example, my brother, which I wish to recommend to your attention, is that of Barnabas, that excellent servant of Christ and companion of the apostle Paul. You will find his character particularly given in the words I have just read.

Were we to examine the life of this great and good man, as related in other parts of Scripture, we should find the character here given him abundantly confirmed. He seems to have been one of that great company who, through the preaching of Peter and the other apostles, submitted to Christ soon after his ascension; and he gave early proof of his love to him, by selling his possessions, and laying the price at the feet of the apostles for the support of his infant cause. As he loved Christ, so he loved his people. He appears to have possessed much of the tender and affectionate, on account of which he was called “Barnabas—a son of consolation.” Assiduous in discovering and encouraging the first dawns of God’s work, he was the first person that introduced Saul into the company of the disciples. The next news that we hear of him is in the passage which I have selected. Tidings came to the ears of the church at Jerusalem of the word of the Lord being prosperous at Antioch, in Syria. The church at Jerusalem was the mother church, and felt a concern for others, like that of a tender mother towards her infant offspring. The young converts at Antioch wanted a nursing father; and who so proper to be sent as Barnabas? He goes; and, far from envying the success of others, who had laboured before him, he “was glad to see the grace of God” so evidently appear; “and exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.” As a preacher, he does not seem to have been equal to the apostle Paul; yet so far was he from caring about being eclipsed by Paul’s superior abilities, that he went in search of him, and brought him to Antioch, to assist him in the work of the Lord. It may well be said of such a character, that he was a

“good man, and full of the Holy Spirit, and of faith.” Oh that we had more such ministers in the church at this day! Oh that we ourselves were like him! Might we not hope, if that were the case, that, according to God’s usual manner of working, more *people would be added to the Lord?*

There are three things, we see, which are said of Barnabas in a way of commendation: he was “a good man, full of the Holy Spirit, and of faith.” Thus far he is held up for our example: a fourth is added, concerning the effects which followed; “and much people was added unto the Lord.” This seems to be held up for our encouragement. Permit me, my dear brother, to request your candid attention, while I attempt to review these great qualities in Barnabas, and by every motive to enforce them upon you.

I. HE WAS A GOOD MAN. It were easy to prove the necessity of a person being a good man, in order to his properly engaging in the work of the ministry: Christ would not commit his sheep but to one that loved him. But on this remark I shall not enlarge. I have no reason to doubt, my brother, but that God has given you an understanding to know him that is true, and a heart to love him in sincerity; I trust, therefore, such an attempt, on this occasion, is needless. Nor does it appear to me to be the meaning of the evangelist. It is not barely meant of Barnabas that he was a *regenerate* man, though that is implied; but it denotes that he was *eminently* good. We use the word so in common conversation. If we would describe one that more than ordinarily shines in piety, meekness, and kindness, we know not how to speak of him better than to say, with a degree of emphasis, He is a *good* man. After this eminence in goodness, brother, may it be your concern, and mine, daily to aspire!

Perhaps, indeed, we may have sometimes heard this epithet used with a sneer. Persons who take pleasure in treating others with contempt will frequently, with a kind of proud pity, speak in this manner: Aye, such a one is a *good* man; leaving it implied that goodness is but an indifferent qualification, unless it be accompanied with greatness. But these things ought not to be. The apostle Paul did not value himself upon those things wherein he differed from other Christians; but upon that which he possessed in common with them—charity, or Christian love. “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity; I am nothing.”

My dear brother, *value the character of a good man in all the parts of your employment; and, above all, in those things which the world counts great and estimable.* More particularly,

1. Value it *at home in your family.* If you walk not closely with God there, you will be ill able to work for him elsewhere. You have lately become the head of a family. Whatever charge it shall please God, in the course of your life, to place under your care, I trust it will be your concern to recommend Christ and the gospel to them, walk circumspectly before them, constantly worship God with them, offer up secret prayer for them, and exercise a proper authority over them. There is a sort of religious gossiping which some ministers have indulged to their hurt; loitering about perpetually at the houses of their friends, and taking no delight in their own. Such conduct, in a minister and master of a family, must, of necessity, root out all family order, and, to a great degree, family worship; and, instead of endearing him to his friends, it only exposes him to their just censure. Perhaps they know not how to be so plain as to tell him of it at their own houses; but they will think the more, and speak of it, it is likely, to each



other, when he is gone. I trust, my brother, that none of your domestic connexions will have to say when you are gone, He was loose and careless in his conduct, or sour and churlish in his temper; but rather, *He was a good man.*

2. Value this character in your *private retirements.* Give yourself up to "the word of God, and to prayer." The apostle charged Timothy, saying, "Meditate on these things, give thyself wholly to them;" or, "be thou *in* them." But this will never be, without a considerable share of the *good man.* Your heart can never be *in* those things which are foreign to its prevailing temper; and if your heart is not in your work, it will be a poor lifeless business indeed. We need not fear exhausting the Bible, or dread a scarcity of Divine subjects. If our hearts are but kept in unison with the spirit in which the Bible was written, every thing we meet with there will be interesting. The more we read, the more interesting it will appear; and the more we know, the more we shall perceive there is to be known. Beware also, brother, of neglecting secret *prayer.* The fire of devotion will go out if it be not kept alive by an habitual dealing with Christ. Conversing with men and things may brighten our gifts and parts; but it is conversing with God that must brighten our graces. Whatever ardour we may feel in our public work, if this is wanting, things cannot be right, nor can they in such a train come to a good issue.

2. Value it in your *public exercises.* It is hard going on in the work of the ministry, without a good degree of spirituality; and yet, considering the present state of human nature, we are in the greatest danger of the contrary. Allow me, brother, to mention two things in particular, each of which is directly opposite to that spirit which I am attempting to recommend. One is, an *assumed earnestness, or forced zeal,* in the pulpit, which many weak hearers may mistake for the enjoyment of God. But though we may put on violent emotions—may smite with the hand, and stamp with the foot—if we are destitute of a genuine feeling sense of what we deliver, it will be discerned by judicious hearers, as well as by the Searcher of hearts, and will not fail to create disgust. If, on the contrary, we feel and realize the sentiments we deliver, emotions and actions will be the natural expressions of the heart; and this will give weight to the doctrines, exhortations, or reproofs which we inculcate; what we say will come with a kind of Divine authority to the consciences, if not to the hearts of the hearers. The other is, being under the influence of *low and selfish motives* in the exercise of our work. This is a temptation against which we have especial reason to watch and pray. It is right, my brother, for you to be diligent in your public work; to be instant in season and out of season; to preach the gospel not only at Thorn, but in the surrounding villages, wherever a door is opened for you: but while you are thus engaged, let it not be from motives of policy, merely to increase your auditory, but from love to Christ and the souls of your fellow sinners. It is this only that will endure reflection in a dying hour. The apostle Paul was charged by some of the Corinthian teachers with being *crafty,* and with having *caught* the Corinthians *with guile;* but he could say, in reply to all such insinuations, in behalf of himself and his fellow labourers, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world."

4. Value it in the *general tenor of your behaviour.* Cultivate a meek, modest, peaceful, and friendly temper. Be generous and humane. Prove by your spirit and conduct that you are a lover of all mankind. To men in general, but especially to the poor and the afflicted, *be pitiful, be courteous.* It is this, my brother, that will recommend the gospel you proclaim. Without

this, could you preach with the eloquence of an angel, you may expect that no good end will be answered.

5. Prize the character of the good man *above worldly greatness*. It is not sinful for a minister, any more than another man, to possess property; but to aspire after it is unworthy of his sacred character. Greatness, unaccompanied with goodness, is valued as nothing by the great God. Kings and emperors, where that is wanting, are but great "beasts, horned beasts," pushing one at another. When Sennacherib vaunted against the church of God, that he would "enter the forest of her Carmel, and cut down her tall cedars," the daughter of Zion is commanded to *despise* him. God speaks of him as we should speak of a buffalo, or even of an ass: "I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest." Outward greatness, when accompanied with goodness, may be a great blessing; yet, even then, it is the latter, and not the former, that denominates the true worth of a character. Once more,—

5. Value it *above mental greatness*, or greatness in gifts and parts. It is not wrong to cultivate gifts; on the contrary, it is our duty so to do. But, desirable as these are, they are not to be compared with goodness. "Covet earnestly the best gifts," says the apostle, "*and yet show I unto you a more excellent way;*" viz. *charity, or love*. If we improve in gifts and not in grace, to say the least, it will be useless, and perhaps dangerous, both to ourselves and others. To improve in gifts, that we may be the better able to discharge our work, is laudable; but if it be for the sake of popular applause, we may expect a blast. Hundreds of ministers have been ruined by indulging a thirst for the character of the *great* man, while they have neglected the far superior character of the *good* man.

Another part of the character of Barnabas was that.

II. HE WAS FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. The *Holy Spirit* sometimes denotes his extraordinary gifts, as in Acts xix., where the apostle Paul put the question to some believers in Christ whether they had received the Holy Spirit; but here it signifies his indwelling and ordinary operations, or what is elsewhere called "an unction from the Holy One." This, though more common than the other, is far more excellent. Its fruits, though less brilliant, are abundantly the most valuable. To be able to surmount a difficulty by Christian patience is a greater thing in the sight of God than to remove a mountain. Every work of God bears some mark of Godhead, even a thistle, or a nettle; but there are some of his works which bear a peculiar likeness to his holy moral character: such were the minds of men and angels in their original state. This will serve to illustrate the subject in hand. The extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit are a communication of his *power*; but in his dwelling in the saints, and the ordinary operations of his grace, he communicates his own *holy nature*; and this it was of which Barnabas was full. To be full of the Holy Spirit is to be full of the *dove*, as I may say; or full of those fruits of the Spirit mentioned by the apostle to the Galatians; namely, "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness."

To be sure, the term *full* is not here to be understood in an unlimited sense; not in so ample a sense as when it is applied to Christ. He was filled with the Spirit *without* measure, but we *in* measure. The word is doubtless to be understood in a comparative sense, and denotes as much as that he was habitually under his holy influence. A person that is greatly under the influence of the love of this world is said to be *drunken* with its cares or pleasures. In allusion to something like this, the apostle exhorts that we "be not drunken with wine, wherein is excess; but *filled* with the

Spirit." The word "filled," here, is very expressive; it denotes, I apprehend, being *overcome*, as it were, with the holy influences and fruits of the blessed Spirit. How necessary is all this, my brother, in your work! Oh how necessary is "an unction from the Holy One!"

1. It is this that will enable you to *enter into the spirit of the gospel, and preserve you from destructive errors concerning it*. Those who have an unction from the Holy One are said to "know all things; and the anointing which they have received abideth in them, and they need not that any man teach them, but as the same anointing teacheth them all things, and is truth, and is no lie." We shall naturally fall in with the dictates of that spirit of which we are full. It is for want of this, in a great measure, that the Scriptures appear strange, and foreign, and difficult to be understood. He that is full of the Holy Spirit has the contents of the Bible written, as I may say, upon his heart; and thus its sacred pages are easy to be understood, as "wisdom is easy to him that understandeth."

It is no breach of charity to say, that if the professors of Christianity had more of the Holy Spirit of God in their hearts, there would be a greater harmony among them respecting the great truths which he has revealed. The rejection of such doctrines as the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the total depravity of mankind, the proper Deity and atonement of Christ, justification by faith in his name, the freeness and sovereignty of grace, and the agency of the Holy Spirit, may easily be accounted for upon this principle. If we are destitute of the Holy Spirit, we are blind to the loveliness of the Divine character, and destitute of any true love to God in our hearts; and if destitute of this, we shall not be able to see the reasonableness of that law which requires love to him with all the heart; and then, of course, we shall think lightly of the nature of those offences committed against him; we shall be naturally disposed to palliate and excuse our want of love to him, yea, and even our positive violations of his law; it will seem hard, very hard indeed, for such little things as these to be punished with everlasting destruction. And now, all this admitted, we shall naturally be blind to the necessity and glory of salvation by Jesus Christ. If sin is so trifling an affair, it will seem a strange and incredible thing that God should become incarnate to atone for it; and hence we shall be very easily persuaded to consider Christ as only a good man, who came into the world to set us a good example; or, at least, that he is not equal with the Father. The freeness and sovereignty of grace also, together with justification by imputed righteousness, will be a very strange sound in our ears. Like the Jews, we shall "go about to establish our own righteousness, and shall not submit to the righteousness of God." It will seem equally strange and incredible to be told that we are by nature utterly unfit for the kingdom of God; that, therefore, we *must* be born again; that we are so bad that we cannot even come to Christ for life, except the Father draw us; yea, and that our best doings after all, are unworthy of God's notice. It will be no wonder if, instead of receiving these unwelcome and humiliating doctrines, we should coincide with those writers and preachers who think more favourably of our condition, and the condition of the world at large; who either deny eternal punishment to exist, or represent men in general as being in little or no danger of it. And having avowed these sentiments, it will then become necessary to compliment their abettors (including ourselves in the number) as persons of a more rational and liberal way of thinking than other people.

My dear brother, of all things, be this your prayer, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me!" If once we sink into such a way of performing our public work as not to depend on his enlightening and enlivening influences, we *may* go on, and probably *shall* go on, from one degree of evil to another.

Knowing how to account for the operations of our own minds, without imputing them to a Divine agency, we shall be inclined, in this manner, to account for the operations in the mind of others; and so, with numbers in the present age, may soon call in question even "whether there be any Holy Spirit."

2. Being full of the Holy Spirit will give a *holy tincture to your meditation and preaching*. There is such a thing as the mind being habitually under the influence of Divine things, and retaining so much of a savour of Christ as that Divine truths shall be viewed and expressed, as I may say, in their own language. Spiritual things will be spiritually discerned, and if spiritually discerned, will be spiritually communicated. There is more in our *manner* of thinking and speaking upon Divine truth than perhaps, at first sight, we are aware of. A great part of the phraseology of Scripture is by some accounted unfit to be addressed to a modern ear; and is, on this account, to a great degree laid aside, even by those who profess to be satisfied with the sentiments. Whatever may be said in defence of this practice, in a very few instances, such as those where words in a translation are become obsolete, or convey a different idea from what they did at the time of being translated, I am satisfied the practice in general is very pernicious. There are many sermons, that cannot fairly be charged with untruth, which yet have a tendency to lead off the mind from the simplicity of the gospel. If such Scripture terms, for instance, as "holiness, godliness, grace, believers, saints, communion with God," &c., should be thrown aside as savouring too much of cant and enthusiasm, and such terms as, *morality, virtue, religion, good men, happiness of mind*, &c., substituted in their room, it will have an amazing effect upon the hearers. If such preaching is the gospel, it is the gospel heathenized, and will tend to heathenize the minds of those who deal in it. I do not mean to object to the use of these latter terms, in their place; they are some of them Scriptural terms: what I object to is putting them in the place of others, when discoursing upon evangelical subjects. To be sure, there is a way of handling Divine subjects after this sort that is very clever and very ingenious; and a minister of such a stamp may commend himself, by his ingenuity, to many hearers: but, after all, God's truths are never so acceptable and savoury to a *gracious* heart as when clothed in their own native phraseology. The more you are filled, my brother, with an unction from the Holy One, the greater relish you will possess for that savoury manner of conveying truth which is so plentifully exemplified in the Holy Scriptures. Further,

3. It is this that will make the doctrines you preach, and the duties you inculcate, seem *fitted in your lips*. I allude to a saying of the wise man: "The words of the wise are pleasant, if thou keep them within thee; they shall withal be fitted in thy lips." It is expected that there should be an agreement between the character of the speaker and the things which are spoken. "Excellent speech becometh not a fool." Exhortations to holiness come with an ill grace from the lips of one who indulges himself in iniquity. The opposite of this is what I mean by the doctrines and duties of religion being *fitted in your lips*. It is this that will make your face shine, when you come forth in your public labours, like the face of Moses when he had been conversing with God in the holy mount.

4. It is this that will give a *spiritual savour to your conversation in your visits to your friends*. Though religious visits may be abused; yet you know, brother, the necessity there is for them, if you would ascertain the spiritual condition of those to whom you preach. There are many faults also that you may discover in individuals which it would be unhandsome, as well as unfriendly, to expose in a pointed manner in the pulpit, which

nevertheless ought not to be passed by unnoticed. Here is work for your private visits; and, in proportion as you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you will possess a spirit of love and faithfulness, which is absolutely necessary to successful reproof. It is in our private visits also that we can be free with our people, and they with us. Questions may be asked and answered, difficulties solved, and the concerns of the soul discussed. Paul taught the Ephesians, not only publicly, but "from house to house." Now it is being full of the Holy Spirit that will give a spiritual savour to all this conversation. It will be as the holy anointing oil on Aaron's garments, which diffused a savour on all around him.

5. This will also teach you *how you ought to behave yourself in every department you are called to occupy*. It will serve instead of ten thousand rules; and all rules without it will be of no account. This it is that will teach you to be of a meek, mild, peaceful, humble spirit. It will make such a spirit be natural to you. "As touching brotherly love," said the apostle to the Thessalonians, "ye need not that I write unto you, for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another."

6. In short, it is this that will denominate you *the man of God*. Such was Barnabas, and such, my brother, was your predecessor, whose memory is dear to many of us;\* and such, according to all that I have heard, was his predecessor, whose memory is equally dear to many here present.† Each, in his day, was a burning and shining light; but they shine here no more. May you, my brother, and each of us, be followers of them, as they also were of Christ!

Another part of the character of Barnabas is,

III. HE WAS FULL OF FAITH. It may be difficult to ascertain with precision the real meaning and extent of this term; but, I should think, in this connexion it includes, at least, the three following ideas:—having the mind occupied with Divine sentiment; being rooted and grounded in the truth of the gospel, and daily living upon it. The first of these ideas distinguished him from those characters whose minds are void of principle; the next, from such as are always hovering upon the borders of scepticism; and the last, from those who, though they have no manner of doubts about the truth of the doctrines of the gospel, yet scarcely ever, if at all, feel their vital influence upon their hearts and lives. Let us review each of these a little more particularly.

1. His mind was *well occupied, or stored with Divine sentiment*. How necessary is this to a gospel minister! It is to be feared that many young men have rushed into the work of the Lord without any decided principles of their own; yea, and have not only begun in such a state of mind, but have continued so all through their lives. Alas! what can the churches expect from such characters? What can such a void produce? How can we feed others with knowledge and understanding if we ourselves are destitute of them? To say the least, such ministers will be but "unprofitable servants." But this is not all; a minister that is not inured to think for himself is constantly exposed to every false sentiment, or system, that happens to be presented to him. We sometimes hear of a person *changing his sentiments*; and, doubtless, in many cases it is just and right he should change them: but there are cases in which that mode of speaking is very improper; for, in reality, some persons have no sentiments of their own to change; they have only changed the sentiments of some one great man for those of another.

2. He had a *firm persuasion of the truth of that gospel which he preached to others*. He was rooted and grounded in the gospel. The great contro-

\* The Rev. David Evans.

† The Rev. William Butfield.

versy of that day was whether the gospel was true; whether Jesus was the Messiah; whether he, who so lately expired on the cross, was the Son of God; and whether his death was the way to obtain eternal life. There were great temptations for a person who should view these things through a medium of sense to think otherwise. The popular opinion went against it. To the Jews it was a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. Those who adhered to the gospel, thereby exposed themselves to cruel persecutions. But Barnabas "was full of faith;" he was decidedly on the Lord's side; he "believed on the Son of God," and had the "witness" of the truth of his gospel "within himself."

Preaching the gospel is bearing a *testimony* for God; but we shall never be able to do this to any good purpose, if we be always hesitating and indulging a sceptical disposition. There is no need of a dogmatical, overbearing temper; but there is need of being rooted and grounded in the truths of God. "Be not carried about," said the apostle to the Hebrews, "with strange doctrines: it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace." But he elsewhere condemns the character of those who are "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

3. That gospel which he preached to others *he himself lived upon*. "The word preached," we are told, "did not profit some, because it was not mixed with faith in them that heard it." This will equally hold good in the case of the preacher as of the hearer. If we mix not faith with the doctrine we deliver, it will not profit us. Whatever abilities we may possess, and of whatever use we may be made to others, unless we can say, in some sort, with the apostle John, "That which we have seen with our eyes, and looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life—that declare we unto you," our own souls may, notwithstanding, everlastingly perish! This is a very serious matter, and well deserves our attention as ministers. Professors in the age of Barnabas might be under greater temptations than we are to question whether Jesus was the true Messiah: but we are under greater temptations than they were of resting in a mere implicit assent to the Christian religion, without realizing and living upon its important truths.

The studying of Divine truth as *preachers* rather than as *Christians*, or, in other words, studying it for the sake of finding out something to say to others, without so much as thinking of profiting our own souls, is a temptation to which we are more than ordinarily exposed. If we studied Divine truths as Christians, our being constantly engaged in the service of God would be friendly to our growth in grace. We should be "like trees planted by the rivers of waters, that bring forth fruit in their season," and all that we did would be likely to "prosper." But if we study it only as preachers, it will be the reverse. Our being conversant with the Bible will be like surgeons and soldiers being conversant with the shedding of human blood, till they lose all sensibility concerning it. I believe it is a fact that, where a preacher is wicked, he is generally the most hardened against conviction of any character whatever. Happy will it be for us if, like Barnabas, we are "full of faith" in that Saviour whom we recommend—in that gospel which it is our employment to proclaim.

IV. We now come to the last part of the subject, which is held up by way of encouragement: **AND MUCH PEOPLE WAS ADDED UNTO THE LORD.** When our ministry is blessed to the conversion of sinners, to the bringing them off from their connexion with sin itself to a vital union with Christ; when our congregations are filled, not merely with professors of religion, but with sound believers; when such believers come forward and offer themselves willingly for communion, saying, "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you;" then it may be said that "much people is

added unto the Lord." The connexion between such additions, and eminency in grace and holiness in a minister, deserve our serious attention.

I think it may be laid down as a rule, which both Scripture and experience will confirm, that *eminent spirituality in a minister is usually attended with eminent usefulness*. I do not mean to say our usefulness depends upon our spirituality, as an effect depends upon its cause; nor yet that it is always in proportion to it. God is a Sovereign; and frequently sees proper to convince us of it, in variously bestowing his blessing on the means of grace. But yet he is not wanting in giving encouragement to what he approves, wherever it is found. Our want of usefulness is often to be ascribed to our want of spirituality, much oftener than to our want of talents. God has frequently been known to succeed men of inferior abilities, when they have been eminent for holiness, while he has blasted others of much superior talents, when that quality has been wanting. Hundreds of ministers, who, on account of their gifts, have promised to be shining characters, have proved the reverse; and all owing to such things as pride, unwatchfulness, carnality, and levity.

Eminency in grace, my brother, will contribute to your success in three ways:—

1. It will fire your soul *with holy love to Christ and the souls of men*; and such a spirit is usually attended with success. I believe you will find that, in almost all the great works which God has wrought in any period of time, he has honoured men of this character, by making them his instruments. In the midst of a sore calamity upon the murmuring Israelites, when God was inclined to show mercy, it was by the means of his servant Aaron running with a censer of fire in his hand, and standing between the living and the dead! The great reformation that was brought about in the days of Hezekiah was by the instrumentality of a man "who wrought that which was good and right and truth before the Lord his God;" and then it follows, "and in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, *he did it with all his heart, and prospered.*"

There was another great reformation in the Jewish church, about the time of their return from Babylon. One of the chief instruments in this work was Ezra, "a ready scribe in the law of his God"—a man who had "prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments"—a man who "fasted and prayed at the river Ahava," previously to his great undertaking—a man who was afterwards "sorely astonished, and in heaviness, and would eat no meat, nor drink water, but fell upon his knees, and spread out his hands unto the Lord his God, on account of the transgressions of the people." Another great instrument in this work was Nehemiah, a man that devoted himself wholly to the service of God and his people, labouring night and day, and was not to be seduced by the intrigues of God's adversaries, nor yet intimidated by their threatenings; but persevered in his work till it was finished, closing his labours with this solemn prayer and appeal, "Think upon me, O my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people."

Time would fail me to speak of all the great souls, both inspired and un-inspired, whom the King of kings has delighted to honour: of Paul, and Peter, and their companions; of Wickliff, and Luther, and Calvin, and many others at the Reformation; of Elliot, and Edwards, and Brainerd, and Whitefield, and hundreds more whose names are held in deserved esteem in the church of God. These were men of God; men who had great grace, as well as gifts; whose hearts burned in love to Christ and the souls of men. They looked upon their hearers as their Lord had done upon Jerusalem,

and wept over them. In this manner they delivered their messages; "and much people were added unto the Lord."

2. Eminency in grace will *direct your ends to the glory of God, and the welfare of men's souls*; and where this is the case, it is usually attended with a blessing. These are ends which God himself pursues; and if we pursue the same, we are "labourers together with God," and may hope for his blessing to attend our labours; but if we pursue separate and selfish ends, we walk contrary to God, and may expect God to walk contrary to us. Whatever apparent success may attend the labours of a man whose ends are evil, all is to be suspected; either the success is not genuine, or, if it be, it is not in a way of blessing upon him, nor shall it turn out, at last, to his account. It must be an inexpressible satisfaction, brother, to be able to say as the primitive ministers and apostles did: "James, a servant of God—Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ—We seek not yours, but you."

3. Eminency in grace will enable you to *bear prosperity in your ministry without being lifted up with it; and so contribute towards it*. It is written of Christ, in prophecy, "He shall build the temple of the Lord, and shall bear the glory." He does bear it indeed; but to bear glory without being elated is no easy thing for us. I am often afraid lest this should be one considerable reason why most of us have no more real success in our work than we have; perhaps it is not safe for us to be much owned of God; perhaps we have not grace enough to bear prosperity.

My dear brother, permit me to conclude with a word or two of serious advice. First, "Watch over your own soul, as well as the souls of your people." Do not forget that ministers are peculiarly liable, while they keep the vineyard of others, to neglect their own. Further, "Know your own weakness, and depend upon Christ's all-sufficiency." Your work is great, your trials may be many; but let not your heart be discouraged. Remember what was said to the apostle Paul, "my grace is sufficient for thee, my strength is made perfect in weakness;" and the reflection which he makes upon it, "When I am weak, then am I strong." Finally, *Be often looking to the end of your course, and viewing yourself as giving an account of your stewardship*. We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, and give account of the deeds done in the body. Perhaps there is no thought more solemn than this, more suitable to be kept in view in all our undertakings, more awakening in a thoughtless hour, or more cheering to an upright heart.

I have only to request, my dear brother, that you will excuse the freedom of this plain address. I have not spoken so much to instruct you in things which you know not, as to remind and impress you with things which you already know. The Lord bless you, and grant that the solemnities of this day may ever be remembered with satisfaction, both by you and your people!



## III.

[Preached at a Ministers' Meeting, held at Clipstone, April 27, 1791.]

## INSTANCES, EVIL, AND TENDENCY OF DELAY, IN THE CONCERNS OF RELIGION.

“Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built.”—Hag. i. 2.

WHEN the children of Judah were delivered from their captivity, and allowed, by the proclamation of Cyrus, to return to their own land, one of the principal things which attracted their attention was the rebuilding of the house of God, which had been destroyed by the Babylonians. This was a work which Cyrus himself enjoined, and upon which the hearts of the people were fixed. It was not, however, to be accomplished at once; and as the worship of God was a matter of immediate and indispensable concern, they set up an *altar*, on which to offer sacrifices and offerings, till such time as the temple should be built.

In the second year after their return, the foundation of the Lord's house was laid; but opposition being made to it, by the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin, the work ceased all the days of Cyrus, until the reign of Darius, commonly distinguished by the name of Darius Hystaspes. During this period, which seems to have been about fourteen years, the people sunk into a spirit of indifference. At first they desisted from necessity; but afterwards, their attention being turned to the building and ornamenting of houses for themselves, they seemed very well contented that the house of the Lord should lie waste. For this their temper and conduct the land was smitten with barrenness; so that both the vintage and the harvest failed them. God also raised up Haggai and Zechariah to go and remonstrate against their supineness; and the efforts of these two prophets were the means of stirring up the people to resume the work.

The argument which the people used against building the house of God was that *the time was not come*. It is possible they waited for a counter-order from the Persian court; if so, they might have waited long enough. A work of that nature ought to have been prosecuted of their own accord; at least they should have tried. It did not follow, because they were hindered once, that therefore they should never succeed. Or perhaps they meant to plead their present weakness and poverty. Something like this seems to be implied in the 4th verse, where they are reminded that they had strength enough to build and ornament houses for themselves. It looks as if they wished to build, and lay by fortunes for themselves and their families, and *then*, at some *future* time, they might contribute for the building of the house of God.

There is something of this procrastinating spirit that runs through a great part of our life, and is of great detriment to us in the work of God. We know of many things that should be done, and cannot in conscience directly oppose them; but still we find excuses for our inactivity. While we admit that many things should be done which are not done, we are apt to quiet ourselves with the thought that they need not be done *just now*: “The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built.”

In discoursing to you upon the subject, brethren, I shall take notice of a few of the most remarkable cases in which this spirit is discovered; and then endeavour to show its evil nature and dangerous tendency.

I. IN RESPECT TO THE CASES, OR INSTANCES, IN WHICH IT IS DISCOVERED. A small degree of observation on mankind, and of reflection upon the work-

ings of our own hearts, will furnish us with many of these; and convince us of its great influence on every description of men, in almost all their religious concerns.

1. It is by this plea that *a great part of mankind are constantly deceiving themselves in respect to a serious attention to the concerns of their souls.* These are, doubtless, of the last importance; and there are times in which most men not only acknowledge this truth, but, in some sort, feel the force of it. This is the case, especially, with those who have had a religious education, and have been used to attend upon the preaching of the gospel. They hear from the pulpit that men *must* be born again, *must* be converted, and become as little children, or never enter into the kingdom of God. Or the same things are impressed upon them by some threatening affliction or alarming providence. They feel themselves at those times very unhappy; and it is not unusual for them to resolve upon a sacrifice of their former sins, and a serious and close attention in future to the affairs of their souls. They think, while under these impressions, they *will* consider their ways, they *will* enter their closets, and shut to the door, and pray to the Lord that he would have mercy upon them; but, alas! no sooner do they retire from the house of God, or recover from their affliction, than the impression begins to subside, and then matters of this sort become less welcome to the mind. They must not be utterly rejected; but are let alone *for the present.* As conscience becomes less alarmed, and danger is viewed at a greater distance, the sinner, by degrees, recovers himself from his fright, and dismisses his religious concern, in some such manner as Felix did his reprover, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will call for thee."

It is thus with the ardent *youth*; in the hour of serious reflection, he feels that religion is of importance; but his heart, still averse from what his conscience recommends, rises against the thought of sacrificing the prime of life to the gloomy duties of prayer and self-denial. He does not resolve *never* to attend to these things; but the *time* does not seem to be come. He hopes that the Almighty will excuse him a *few years*, at least, and impute his excesses to youthful folly and imbecility. It is thus with the *man of business*; there are times in which he is obliged to retire from the hurry of life; and, at those times, thoughts of another life may arrest his attention. Conscience at those intervals may smite him for his living without prayer, without reflection, without God in all his thoughts; and what is his remedy? Does he lament his sin, and implore mercy through our Lord Jesus Christ? No, nor so much as promise to forsake it *immediately*; but *this* he promises, that when *this* busy time is over, and *that* favourite point is gained, and *those* intricate affairs are terminated, *then* it shall be otherwise. It is thus with persons in *single life*: they will be better when they get settled in the world. It is thus with the *encumbered parent*: she looks forward to the time when her family shall get off her hands. It is thus with the *drunkard* and the *debauchee*: wearied in their own way, they intend to lead a new life as soon as they can but shake off their old connexions. In short, it is thus with great numbers in all our towns, and villages, and congregations: they put off the great concern to *another time*, and think they may venture at least a little longer, till all is over with them, and a dying hour just awakens them, like the virgins in the parable, to bitter reflection on their own fatal folly.

2. This plea not only affects the unconverted, but *prevents us all from undertaking any great or good work for the cause of Christ, or the good of mankind.* We see many things that should be done; but there are difficulties in the way, and we wait for the removal of these difficulties. We are

very apt to indulge a kind of prudent caution, (as we call it,) which foresees and magnifies difficulties beyond what they really are. It is granted there may be such things in the way of an undertaking as may render it impracticable; and, in that case, it is our duty for the present to stand still; but it becomes us to beware lest we account that impracticable which only requires such a degree of exertion as we are not inclined to give it. Perhaps the work requires *expense*; and Covetousness says, Wait a little longer, till I have gained so and so in trade, till I have rendered my circumstances respectable, and settled my children comfortably in the world. But is not this like ceiling our own houses, while the house of God lies waste? Perhaps it requires *concurrence*; and we wait for every body to be of a mind, which is never to be expected. He who through a dread of opposition and reproach desists from known duty is in danger of being found among the "fearful, the unbelieving, and the abominable."

Had Luther and his contemporaries acted upon this principle, they had never gone about the glorious work of the Reformation. When he saw the abominations of popery, he might have said, These things ought not to be, but what can *I* do? If the chief priests and rulers in different nations would but unite, something might be effected; but what can *I* do, an individual, and a poor man? I may render myself an object of persecution, or, which is worse, of universal contempt; and what good end will be answered by it? Had Luther reasoned thus—had he fancied that, because princes and prelates were not the first to engage in the good work, therefore the time was not come to build the house of the Lord—the house of the Lord, for any thing he had done, might have lain waste to this day.

Instead of waiting for the removal of difficulties, we ought, in many cases, to consider them as purposely laid in our way, in order to try the sincerity of our religion. He who had all power in heaven and earth could not only have sent forth his apostles into all the world, but have so ordered it that all the world should treat them with kindness, and aid them in their mission; but, instead of that, he told them to lay their accounts with persecution and the loss of all things. This was no doubt to try their sincerity; and the difficulties laid in our way are equally designed to try ours.

Let it be considered whether it is not owing to this principle that so few and so feeble efforts have been made for the propagation of the gospel in the world. When the Lord Jesus commissioned his apostles, he commanded them to go and teach "all nations," to preach the gospel to "every creature;" and that notwithstanding the difficulties and oppositions that would lie in the way. The apostles executed their commission with assiduity and fidelity; but, since their days, we seem to sit down half contented that the greater part of the world should still remain in ignorance and idolatry. Some noble efforts have indeed been made; but they are small in number, when compared with the magnitude of the object. And why is it so? Are the souls of men of less value than heretofore? No. Is Christianity less true or less important than in former ages? This will not be pretended. Are there no opportunities for societies, or individuals, in Christian nations, to convey the gospel to the heathen? This cannot be pleaded so long as opportunities are found to trade with them, yea, and (what is a disgrace to the name of Christians) to buy them, and sell them, and treat them with worse than savage barbarity? We have opportunities in abundance the improvement of navigation, and the maritime and commercial turn of this country, furnish us with these; and it deserves to be considered whether this is not a circumstance that renders it a duty peculiarly binding on us.

The truth is, if I am not mistaken, we wait for we know not what; we seem to think "the time is not come, the time for the Spirit to be poured

down from on high." We *pray* for the conversion and salvation of the world, and yet *neglect the ordinary means* by which those ends have been used to be accomplished. It pleased God, heretofore, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believed; and there is reason to think it will still please God to work by that distinguished means. Ought we not then at least to try by some means to convey more of the good news of salvation to the world around us than has hitherto been conveyed? The encouragement to the heathen is still in force, "*Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*:" but how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?"

Let it be further considered, whether it is not owing to this principle that so few and so feeble efforts are made for the propagation of the gospel *in places within our reach*. There are many dark places in our own land—places where priests and people, it is to be feared, are alike destitute of true religion, "*all looking to their own way*, every one for *his gain from his quarter*." Were every friend of Jesus Christ to avail himself of that liberty which the laws of his country allow him, and embrace every opportunity for the dissemination of evangelical principles, what effects might we hope to see! Were every true minister of the gospel to make a point of preaching as often as possible in the villages within his reach; and did those private Christians who are situated in such villages open their doors for preaching, and recommend the gospel by a holy and affectionate behaviour, might we not hope to see the wilderness become as a fruitful field? Surely, in these matters, we are too negligent. And when we do preach to the unconverted, we do not feel as if we were to do any good. We are as if we knew not how to get at the hearts and consciences of people. We cast the net, without so much as expecting a draught. We are as those who cannot find their hands in the day of battle, who go forth not like men accustomed to conquest, but rather like those inured to defeat. Whence arises all this? Is it not owing, at least a considerable degree of it, to a notion we have that *the time is not come* for any thing considerable to be effected?

3. It is this plea that keeps many from a *public profession of religion by a practical acknowledgment of Christ*. Christ requires of his followers that they confess his name before men; that they be baptized, and commemorate his dying love in the ordinance of the supper. Yet there are many who consider themselves as Christians, and are considered so by others, who still live in the neglect of these ordinances. I speak not now of those who consider themselves as having been baptized in their infancy, but of such as admit the immersion of believers to be the only true baptism, and yet do not practise it, nor hold communion with any particular church of Christ. It is painful to think there should be a description of professed Christians who live in the neglect of Christ's commands. What can be the motives of such neglect? Probably they are various: there is one, however, that must have fallen under your observation; that is, *the want of some powerful impression upon the mind, impelling them, as it were, to a compliance*. Many persons wait for something of this sort; and because they go from year to year without it, conclude that *the time is not come*; or that it is not the mind of God that *they* should comply with those ordinances; at least, that they should comply with them *at present*. Impressions, it is allowed, are desirable, provided it be truth or duty that is impressed; otherwise they deserve no regard; but be they as desirable as they may, the want of them can never justify our living in the neglect of known duty. Nor are they at all adapted to show us *what is duty*, but merely to excite to the performance of that

which may be proved to be duty without them. We might as well wait for impressions, and conclude, from the want of them, that the time is not come for the performance of other duties as those of baptism and the Lord's supper.

Some are kept from a public profession of Christ's name by mere mercenary motives. They have relations and friends that would be offended. The fear of being disinherited, or injured, in some sort, as to worldly circumstances, has made many a person keep his principles to himself, till such time as the party whose displeasure he fears shall be removed out of the way. This is wicked; as it amounts to a denial of Christ before men, and will, no doubt, expose the party, if he die without repentance for it, to be denied by Christ before his Father at the last day. "Lord," said one, "I will follow thee, but let me first go and bury my father"—"Let me first go and bid them farewell who are at home," says another: "Jesus answered, Let the dead bury their dead, follow thou me."—"No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

4. It is this plea that keeps us from a *thorough self-examination and self-denial*. The importance of being right in the sight of God, and our liability to err, even in the greatest of all concerns, render a close and frequent inquiry into our spiritual state absolutely necessary. It is a dangerous, as well as an uncomfortable life, to be always in suspense; not knowing what nor where we are, nor whither we are going. There are seasons, too, in which we feel the importance of such an inquiry, and think we *will* go about it, we *will* search and try our ways, and turn from our sins, and walk more closely with God. Such thoughts will occur when we hear matters urged home upon us from the pulpit, or when some affecting event draws off our attention from the present world, and causes us to reflect upon ourselves for our inordinate anxiety after it. We think of living otherwise than we have done; but when we come to put our thoughts into execution, we find a number of difficulties in the way, which too often deter us, at least *for the present*.—Here is an undertaking that must first be accomplished, before I can *have time*; here is also a troublesome affair that I must get through, before I can be *composed*; and then here are such temptations that I know not how to get over *just now*: if I wait a little longer, perhaps they may be removed.—Alas! alas! thus we befool ourselves; thus we defer it to another time, till the impressions on our minds are effaced, and then we are less able to attend to those things than we were at first. As one who puts off the examination of his accounts, and the retrenchment of his expenses, till, all on a sudden, he is involved in a bankruptcy; so do multitudes, in the religious world, neglect a close inspection into the concerns of their souls, till, at length, either a departure from some of the great principles of the gospel, or some foul and open fall, is the consequence.

5. It is this principle that keeps us from *preparedness for death, and thus being ready when our Lord shall come*. There is nothing that Christ has more forcibly enjoined than this duty: "Be ye also ready, for at such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."—"What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." Why do we not immediately feel the force of these charges, and betake ourselves to habitual watchfulness, and prayer, and self-denial, and walking with God? Why are we not as men who wait for the coming of their Lord? Is it not from a secret thought that *the time is not come*? We know we must die, but we consider it as something at a distance; and thus, imagining that our Lord delayeth his coming, we delay to prepare to meet him, so that when he cometh he findeth us in confusion. Instead of our loins being girt, and our lights burning, we are engaged in a number of plans and pursuits, to the neglect of those things which, notwith-

standing the necessary avocations of life, ought always to engross our supreme attention.

Let us next proceed to consider,

II. THE EVIL NATURE AND DANGEROUS TENDENCY OF THIS PROCRASTINATING TEMPER.

I need not say much to prove to you that it is a sin. The conscience of every one of you will assist me in that part of the work. It is proper, however, in order that you may feel it the more forcibly, that you should consider wherein its evil nature consists.

1. It is *contrary to the tenor of all God's commandments*. All through the Scriptures we are required to attend to Divine things immediately, and without delay. "Work while it is called to-day; the night cometh when no man can work."—"To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." "While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light."—"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."

God not only requires us, in general, to do what we do quickly, but calls us to serve him particularly *under those temptations or afflictions* which we find placed in our way. The terms of discipleship are, "Deny thyself; take up thy cross, and follow me." He does not call upon us to follow him barely when there are no troubles nor difficulties to encounter, nor allow us, when those difficulties occur, to wait a fairer opportunity; but to take our cross, as it were, upon our shoulders, and *so* follow him. It would be of use for us to consider every situation as a post in which God has placed us, and *in which* he calls upon us to serve and glorify him. If we are poor, we are required to glorify God by contentment; if afflicted, by patience; if bereaved, by submission; if persecuted, by firmness; if injured, by forgiveness; or if tempted, by denying ourselves for his sake. Nor can these duties be performed at other times; to put them off, therefore, to another opportunity, is the same thing, in effect, as refusing to comply with them at all.

2. To put off things to another time *implies a lurking dislike to the things themselves*. We do not ordinarily do so, except in things wherein we have no delight. Whatever our hearts are set upon, we are for losing no time till it is accomplished. If the people of Judah had "had a mind to work," as is said of them on another occasion, they would not have pleaded that the time was not come. Sinful delay, therefore, arises from *alienation of heart from God*; than which nothing can be more offensive in his sight.

But, further, it is not only a sin, but a sin of *dangerous tendency*. This is manifest by the effects it produces. Precious time is thereby murdered, and valuable opportunities lost, and lost beyond recall!

That there are opportunities possessed both by saints and sinners, is plain from the Scriptures. The former might do abundantly more for God than they do, and might enjoy much more of God and heaven than they actually enjoy; and no doubt it would be so, were it not for that idle, delaying temper, of which we have spoken. Like the Israelites, we are slothful to go up to possess the good land. Many are the opportunities, both of doing and enjoying good, that have already passed by. Oh what Christians might we have been before now, had we but availed ourselves of all those advantages which the gospel dispensation and the free exercise of our religion afford us!

Sinners also, as long as life lasts, have opportunity of escaping from the wrath to come. Hence they are exhorted to "seek the lord while he may be found," and to "call upon him while he is near." Hence, also, there is

a "door" represented as being, at present, "open;" which "the master of the house will," one day, "rise up and shut." The "fountain" is described as being, at present, "open for sin and for uncleanness;" but there is a period approaching when it shall be said, "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still!" It seems scarcely in the power of language to express the danger of delay in terms more forcible and impressive than those which are used in the above passages. Nor is there any thing in the idea that clashes with the Scripture doctrine of *decrees*. All allow that men have opportunity, in natural things, to do what they do not, and to obtain what they obtain not; and if this can be made to consist with a universal providence, which "performeth the things that are appointed for us," why should not the other be allowed to consist with the purposes of Him who does nothing without a plan, but "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will?" A price is in the hands of those who have no heart to get wisdom.

O thoughtless sinner! trifle no longer with the murder of time, so short and uncertain in its duration; the morning of your existence; the mould in which you receive an impression for eternity; the only period in which the Son of man has power to forgive sins! Should the remaining part of your life pass away in the same careless manner as that which has already elapsed, what bitter reflection must needs follow! How cutting it must be to look back on all the means of salvation as gone for ever; the harvest past, the summer ended, and you not saved!

Suppose a company, at the time of low water, should take an excursion upon the sands near the sea-shore: suppose yourself of the company: suppose that, on a presumption of the tide's not returning at present, you should all fall asleep: suppose all the company, except yourself, to awake out of their sleep, and, finding their danger, endeavour to *awake* you, and to persuade you to flee with them for your life; but you, like the sluggard, are for "a little more sleep, and a little more slumber:" the consequence is, your companions escape, but you are left behind to perish in the waters, which, regardless of all your cries, rise and overwhelm you! What a situation would this be! How would you curse that love of sleep that made you refuse to be awaked—that delaying temper that wanted to indulge a little longer! But what is this situation compared with that of a lost soul? There will come a period when the bottom of the ocean would be deemed a refuge; when, to be crushed under falling rocks and mountains, instead of being viewed with terror as heretofore, will be earnestly desired! Yes, desired, but desired in vain! The sinner who has "neglected the great salvation" will not be able to "escape," nor hide himself "from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne," nor from "the wrath of the Lamb!"

My dear hearers! consider your condition without delay. God says to you, *To-day*, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. *To-day* may be the only day you have to live. Go home, enter the closet, and shut to the door; confess your sins; implore mercy through our Lord Jesus Christ; "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him!"

## IV.

[Preached at Kettering, at the funeral of Mr. Beeby Wallis, April, 1792.]

## THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE DEAD WHO DIE IN THE LORD.

“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”—Rev. xiv. 13.

It is usual with us on the death of our friends, to improve the mournful event by a sermon on the occasion. I feel a difficulty, in the present instance, on account of my near and intimate connexion with the deceased. However, as well as I can, I will endeavour to comply with the general expectation.

Our dear deceased friend made no mention of any particular part of Scripture which he would wish to have improved; I have, therefore, selected the above, as being the most suitable to the present occasion of any that has occurred to my thoughts. The original design of the passage seems to have been to support the afflicted followers of Christ in times of persecution. Nothing could be better adapted to arm the holy martyrs against the terrors of death than the sentiment here exhibited. It does not seem, however, to be applicable to martyrs only; but is rather to be considered as a general truth, which, though applied to a particular case, is not to be confined to that case, but extended to every other particular comprehended within the general design. A few introductory observations may throw some light upon the text, and lead us on to the principal subjects on which I mean to discourse.

First, Let us observe *the character* described—those “who die in the Lord.” The Scriptures make frequent mention of believers, as being united to Christ, or one with him. If we be true believers in Christ, we shall feel a union of heart with him; our principles, affections, and pursuits will, in a measure, be the same as his; his cause will be our cause, his people our people, his service our delight, and the gospel of salvation through his death our daily bread. The union between Christ and his people is frequently compared to the marriage union; as they who were twain become “one flesh, so they who are joined to the Lord are one spirit;” and as in that case there is not only a mental, but a legal union, each becoming interested in the persons and possessions of the other, so in this we, with all we have, are Christ’s, and Christ, with all he has, is ours. Hence the language of the apostle: “Of him are ye *in* Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” Hence, also, arises the desirableness of being “found *in* him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law; but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” A union like this will render us blessed even in death; death itself shall not be able to dissolve it, but shall rather introduce us to the full enjoyment of him whom our soul loveth.

It is further supposed, of those who die in the Lord, that they have abounded in *good works*; for it could not otherwise have been said that they should *follow them*. Those whose only hope and reliance for acceptance with God have been upon Jesus Christ, and who have, therefore, disclaimed all dependence upon their own works, have often been charged with being enemies to morality; or, at least, it has been said that their principles, if pursued to their just consequences, would render them so: but I trust the practice of these persons, in all ages, has not been such as to justify the charge. Perhaps, on the contrary, if we could survey the spirit and man-



ners of mankind with an impartial eye, we might find that they who thus believed in Jesus were the most careful to maintain good works. Yea, and if we would search the Scriptures with an unprejudiced mind, we should find that, without a union with Christ, it were a vain thing to expect good works (truly so called)—as vain as to expect fruit from a branch that should be separate from the vine.

Secondly, The blessedness of the dead who die in the Lord was declared by a voice from heaven. If the apostle had hearkened to the general voice of mankind, he would have heard a very different sound. The world reckons him blessed that liveth—that liveth in prosperity. So natural is this to man, that we all feel a kind of pity for our departed friends; but surely pity is never more unnecessary; the voice from heaven, whatever be the voice from earth, pronounces, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.”

Thirdly, The apostle was commanded to *write* it. A mere voice passeth away, but a writing endureth. In this we see God’s tender regard for his faithful servants, not merely in that age, but for ages to come.

Fourthly, Their blessedness is declared to be *from henceforth*. I do not see how this can be understood as referring to the time of the Spirit’s speaking; for that would imply that, before that time, those who died in the Lord were not blessed. It seems, I think, plainly to refer to *the time of their departure from the body*, and is one of the many passages of Scripture in which we are taught the doctrine of a separate state.

Lastly, The blessedness which awaits those who die in the Lord consists partly in a *rest from their labours*, and partly in a glorious *reward*, expressed by *their works following them*.

It is on this last observation I shall principally enlarge, in this discourse, as the most important ideas of the text seem to be here included. Let us first take a view of the heavenly state under the ideas here given, and then consider the uses that such a prospect is adapted to promote.

I. LET US VIEW THE HEAVENLY STATE UNDER THE IDEAS OF A REST FROM LABOUR AND A REWARD FOR IT. The term *labour* does not convey the idea of simple exercise; for we shall never cease from that, but rather increase it. The inhabitants of heaven are more active than ever they were upon earth. They are represented as “serving God day and night in his temple;” yea, and as though all our services in this world were unworthy of the name, it is said, “There his servants shall serve him.” Nor is the *rest* here spoken of to be understood of a mere cessation from exercise in the grave; for that would afford no *blessedness*. The term labour conveys the idea of *painful exercise, weariness, or fatigue*. The same word is used in 2 Cor. xi. 27, where the apostle speaks of being in *weariness* and *painfulness*.

A great part of the Christian life consists in *an opposition*. He that would gain the heavenly prize must oppose “the course of this world,”—must strive against the stream of false principles and wicked practices, against the evil customs and manners of the age and place in which he lives. It has been observed that mankind go through the world in a body; that they draw one another on, in their principles and manners; that, like the drops of water which compose a tide, they acquire strength and influence by their numbers; and that whatever general direction they take, that is, for the time being, “the course of this world.” Like the tide, it is ever rolling, though not in the same direction. In former ages, it was a course of pagan idolatry; in later ages, of popish superstition and cruelty; and, in the present age, it is a course of infidelity and profaneness. To oppose this current is labour.

It was no small matter for the glorious tribes of martyrs, in every age, to hold fast the faith of the gospel. They had not only to encounter their

adversaries, but their own natural feelings. They were men, and men of like passions with ourselves. They had wives, and children, and friends, and the various endearing ties of human nature; each of which would cry in their ears, *Spare thyself!* Think, brethren, what labour it must have been for them to encounter the hardships and cruelties to which a faithful adherence to God exposed them! Nor is it any small matter to set ourselves against the *temptations* of the world. There is a fashion in every thing, even in religion; and it requires fortitude of mind to withstand its influence, and to adhere to the dictates of Scripture, let them be stigmatized as they may. Nor does it require less fortitude to withstand the current of evil customs, by which we may be certain, in many cases, to expose ourselves to scorn and contempt. These things, I say, are labour; labour from which those who die in the Lord are at rest. The course of this world has no longer any influence on them; they are arrived in the desired haven, where neither tide nor tempest can affect them.

Again, Our services for God, in the present state, may very properly be called labour, on account of the *natural infirmities and afflictions* which here attend us, *especially in the last stages of life.* The most active Christian, whose delight in his Lord's work has been such as to render it its own reward, will soon find the years draw nigh in which he shall say, I have no pleasure in them. It is then that the strength is labour and sorrow. It is then that the spirit is often willing when the flesh is weak. Our dear deceased friend experienced much of this, during the last few years of life. Reading and prayer, and every other religious duty, was a labour; but the tabernacle in which he groaned is now dissolved—he is now at rest from his labours.

Once more, The greatest and most grievous struggle of all is owing to *our own native depravity.* It is this that forms the most dangerous stream against which we have to strive. We may withdraw ourselves from the world, but not from this; this will accompany us in all our retirements, and in all our efforts. He that is contented to serve the Lord with mere bodily exercise may feel no manner of difficulty from this quarter; but he that would worship God in spirit and in truth, that would meditate, pray, praise, preach, or hear, as he ought, will find it the great burden of his life. A mind prone to forget God, and wander in forbidden paths; a heart unaffected with the great things of God, flying off from him, and fixing upon things that do not profit; these are matters which made an apostle exclaim, "O wretched man that I am!" It is these which render our life a labour. To be at rest from these, is heaven indeed!

But another idea afforded us of the heavenly state is that of a *reward.* Those who die in the Lord, not only rest from their labours, but "their works do follow them." It has been a common observation on this passage, and for aught I know a just one, that their works are not said to *go before them* as a ground of justification, but to *follow them* as witnesses in their favour. I apprehend, however, they will not only follow them as witnesses, but will have place among the intermediate causes of their felicity. It is true, they will constitute no part of our *title* to eternal life; that is the "free gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord;" but a title to admission being thus conferred, they will contribute to augment our bliss. The Scriptures every where teach us that the services and sufferings of the faithful shall meet with a Divine *reward*, which though not of debt, but of grace, is nevertheless a reward; which it could not be if what was enjoyed in the life to come had no relation to what was done in the present life.

God will reward his servants, at the last day, with his public approbation before an assembled world. "The King shall 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. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me." Nor shall their works stop here, but shall follow them into the heavenly state itself, and furnish matter of joyful recollection for ever, affording a kind of measure according to which their reward in heaven will be conferred. The whole current of Scripture appears to me to teach us that there will be degrees of happiness, as well as of misery, in the future state; and that those who have served the Lord with the greatest fidelity and zeal in this world will enjoy the greatest portion of mental bliss in the world to come. If the *labours* which we here endure have a tendency to meeten us for the heavenly *rest*—if present bitters will render future sweet the sweeter—and if it is thus that our "light affliction, which is but for a moment, *worketh for us* a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory"—it must then follow that there will be some *proportion* between our present labours and our future enjoyments. I mean, it cannot be supposed that those who have laboured but little for God will enjoy an equal portion of felicity with those who have laboured much.

Upon no other principle, that I can see, can we understand those passages of Scripture which exhort us to "lay up treasure in heaven;" to "lay up in store for ourselves a good foundation against the time to come;" which encourage us under reproaches and persecutions for the name of Christ, saying, "Great is your reward in heaven;" and which warn us, saying, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."—"He that soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly; but he that soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully. For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." We see, here, that laying out ourselves for God is laying up treasure in heaven, and that everlasting life is a harvest that will grow out of the seed sown to the Spirit.

Some serious people have demurred upon this subject, lest it should affect the doctrine of salvation by grace, and encourage boasting. Indeed, if those works which follow us into the heavenly state were to be ascribed to us as their first cause, and were considered as the proper meritorious ground of our reward, there would be weight in the objection; but if it be the Lord who has *wrought all our works in us*, and if the reward with which he is pleased to crown them be a matter of grace and not of debt, where then is boasting? It is only God's graciously rewarding his own work. If ten thousand crowns were placed upon the Christian's head, he would cast them immediately at his Redeemer's feet, saying, "Not unto us, not unto us, but to thy name give glory!"

It is through the intimate union between Christ and believers that they are not only accepted in him, but what they do for Christ is accepted also, and rewarded for his sake. "The Lord had respect unto Abel, *and to his offering.*" We are not only "accepted in the Beloved," but our "sacrifices" become "acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." As there is no sin so great but God, for Christ's sake, can forgive it; no blessing so great but he can bestow it; so there is no service so small, if done from love to him, but he will reward it. "A cup of cold water, given to a disciple," because he belongs to him, will insure "a disciple's reward."

God's graciously connecting blessings with the obedience of his people serves to show, not only his love to his Son, and to them, but also his love

to holiness and righteousness. A father may design to give an inheritance to his child, and various other accommodations; he may design also to fit him, as much as may be, for the enjoyment of what he has to bestow upon him. On this principle, he will connect almost every gift or favour that he confers with some act of filial duty. It is easy to see, in this case, that the father does not consider these things as the child's due upon the footing of merit; for all that he did was simply his duty: but love to his child induced him to give; and love to diligence, obedience, and good order induced him to give it in such a manner. It is thus that God gives grace and glory. It is thus that, in this life, *finding* is connected with *seeking*, *forgiveness* with *confession*, and *salvation* with *believing*; and in the life to come, eternal glory with suffering, warring, and overcoming. It is thus that God displays, at the same time, the freeness of his grace and his love of righteousness and good order. Grace reigns in a way of righteousness through the whole system of salvation. Those that are saved shall be sufficiently convinced that it is all of grace; while, on the other hand, all shall see the equity and fitness of the Divine proceedings, in judging every man according to his works.

But I proceed to consider,

II. THE USES THAT THIS TWOFOLD IDEA OF THE HEAVENLY STATE IS ADAPTED TO PROMOTE. All Divine truth has a tendency to do us good, and the sentiments taught us in this passage are adapted to our present situation.

1. A rest for those who die in the Lord may *reconcile us to the loss of our dearest Christian friends, seeing they are gone to the possession of it, and are henceforth blessed*. When our Lord Jesus was about to leave the world, and his disciples were overmuch dejected at the thought of his going, he told them, "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice because I said I go to the Father, for my Father is greater than I;" which is as if he had said, The glory and happiness which my Father possesses and which I go to possess with him, is greater than any thing I can here enjoy; if, therefore, ye loved me in a proper manner, instead of weeping at my departure, surely ye would rejoice at it. If the love that we bear to our Christian friends were but properly directed, if our minds were but capacious enough to take all things into consideration, we should mingle joy with all our mourning on their account.

2. A rest before us may *reconcile us who are left behind to all the labours and pains and weariness of life*. We need not tire or want to sit down here; there will be time enough to rest us by and by. Nor need we be discouraged with all the trials of the present state. What though it were "in weariness and painfulness, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness," that we had to pass the remainder of our days? What though bonds and afflictions should abide us? The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. The rest that remains will make us, like Joseph, "forget all our toil, and all our father's house;" so forget it, at least, as never to think of it any more but with joy and thankfulness.

3. The glorious reward before us may *stimulate us to work for God with all our might while life continues*. It is affecting to consider what we are doing in this life as the seed of an eternal harvest. Let us keep this thought habitually in view. There is a way of turning the ills of life into good, yea, an everlasting good. Every temptation to evil that accosts us is a price put into our hands; it affords us an opportunity of proving our love to God, by denying ourselves in that instance for his sake. The same may be said of afflictions; they afford us an opportunity for the exercise of patience and acquiescence in the will of God; and what a harvest of joy

such things may issue in it is beyond our capacity to conceive. Perhaps it was under some such views as these that the primitive Christians were used to "rejoice in tribulation," and were exhorted to "count it all joy, when they fell into divers temptations."

4. If our works will follow us, we have reason to *tremble as well as rejoice*. The works of those who die *out of Christ*, as well as the others, will follow them. Their life is a seed-time, and they also will receive a harvest. All men have their opportunities, their temptations, and their afflictions; and they will work in some way, either as a saviour of life unto life, or of death unto death; either as an eternal weight of glory, or of infamy and misery.

But what shall I say in immediate reference to the present melancholy occasion? I wish I could say something that might have a tendency to comfort those that mourn. We have all sustained a heavy loss. The town has lost one that sought its welfare; the poor have lost a benefactor; the church of which he was a member and an officer has lost one the study of whose life it was to promote its prosperity; those who had the pleasure of an intimate acquaintance with him have lost a steady, faithful, and judicious friend; and you, my friend, the partner of his life, you have sustained a heavier loss than any of us. But let us try and consider that the loss is not so great but it might have been greater. We have not to sorrow as those that have no hope. Our grief is confined to ourselves. We have no cause to weep on his account. This is a thought which, though frequently mentioned on such occasions as these, yet can never be sufficiently realized. To bury a Christian friend is nothing in comparison of burying those relations of whose piety we have no well-grounded satisfaction. Add to this, the mercy of God in not taking him away in the prime of life, and health, and usefulness. Had he been removed ten or twelve, or even five or six years ago, the stroke had been much more felt by all his connexions than it is now.

I have often admired the wisdom and mercy of God in these things. We see the threatening hand of God laid upon one of our dearest friends and relatives; at first we think we can never endure the loss; but the affliction continues: meanwhile, the weight which he sustained in society is gradually removed, and falls by degrees upon his friends about him; life becomes a burden to himself; at length, the very same principle that made it appear impossible for us to endure a separation renders us incapable of praying or even wishing for his continuance; and thus the burden, that we could scarcely have known how to bear, becomes tolerable, by being gradually let down as it were upon our shoulders.

Our dear friend has left many relations behind him; most of whom I suppose may at this time be present. My dear friends, I have often heard him express his anxiety for several of you, both as to your temporal and spiritual welfare. Some of you may have been apt to consider him as an enviable character on account of his wealth; but, be assured, he was much more enviable on account of his piety; you need not wish so much to live like him as a gentleman as to live and die like him as a Christian.

But, I suppose, it will be expected that I should say something more particularly of the deceased himself. I have commonly declined saying much on this head; and I still think that, generally speaking, it is right to do so, because the generality of characters, even of good men, have nothing in them very remarkable or worthy of being held up for our imitation. But, for this very reason, I think in some cases it would be wrong to omit it. Perhaps no human writings have had a better effect than the *lives* of eminently holy men. When, therefore, any such characters appear among us, I think

it is right to collect as much information respecting them as we can, that the remembrance of them may be of general use.

So far as education and parental example could influence, our deceased friend might be said to have known the Holy Scriptures from a child. His family, for generations past, have walked in the ways of piety. His great-grandfather, Mr. William Wallis, was the founder and first minister of the church of which you and I are members. He founded it in 1696. His grandfather, Mr. Thomas Wallis, succeeded in the same office. It was in his time that the late Dr. Gill, and the late Mr. Brine, were both called to the ministry. He died in 1726, and his funeral sermon is said, as in the present instance, to have been preached in this place,\* on account of the number of people who attended it. His father, Mr. William Wallis, though not a minister as his predecessors had been, was a very respectable member of the same community. When he died, which was in 1757, his son, our deceased friend, was but twenty-two years of age. From his earliest years he was under strong convictions of the truth and importance of religion; but the most remarkable impression of this sort was made at the death of his father. It was then, as he said, that he went and prayed to God, and thought within himself—Oh that I had but an interest in Christ; and felt all the world, and all its enjoyments, to be mere vanity without it!

At the time of his father's death, he had a brother, Mr. Joseph Wallis, about twelve years of age. The amiable piety of that young man is said to have appeared at an early period; but, to the great grief of his friends, especially of his brother, he was removed by the small-pox, in the nineteenth year of his age.

In the year 1763, at the age of twenty-eight, Mr. Wallis became a member of the same Christian community in which his predecessors had lived and died. About five years after, he was chosen to the office of a *deacon*; an office which he has filled with honour and satisfaction for twenty-four years. It was a great blessing to the church, especially when for the space of five years they were destitute of a minister, that he was invested with this office, and was then in the prime of life and usefulness. It will long be remembered with what meekness of wisdom he presided in the church, during that uncomfortable interval; and how, notwithstanding all the disadvantages of such a situation, they were not only preserved in peace, but gradually increased till a minister was settled among them.

God endued him with a sound understanding and a solid judgment. His knowledge was extensive, and his observations on men and things, ripened by long experience, were just and accurate. He had a quick sense of right and wrong, of propriety and impropriety, which rendered his counsel of great esteem in cases of difficulty.

To this was added a spirit of *activity*. Though, during the greater part of his life, he was out of trade, yet his head and hands were always full with the concerns of others, either those of private individuals, with which he was intrusted, or matters of public utility. He would rise by five in the morning, in summer, and be as diligent all the day as if he had had to obtain his bread by the sweat of the brow.

But, perhaps, one of the most prominent features of his character was *sincerity, or integrity of heart*. This was a temper of mind that ran through all his concerns. In a cause of righteousness, he possessed a severity which rendered it almost impossible for treachery to stand before him. He was prudent, but his prudence never degenerated into low policy, or any thing that deserved the name of subtlety. If motives of mere prudence were pro-

\* The Independent meeting-house, kindly granted on this occasion.—Ed.

posed to him, he would hesitate, nor would he accede till he had thought whether the measure was *right*. If he could but satisfy himself on that head, he would be regardless of consequences, or of popular opinion. Even in his contributions, one might perceive his love of righteousness. Though an economist from principle, he had nothing of the niggard; only convince him that a cause was *right*, (and that was easily done, if it was so,) and he would engage in it with all his heart, nor think much of any expense. "I wish to do what is *right*," he would say, "and leave consequences." He was a standing example of the falsehood of that system which teaches that "flattery is essential to politeness." If to behave in such a manner as to gain the esteem of all descriptions of men be politeness, he was polite; yet he hated flattery. He would neither flatter nor be flattered by others. The true secret by which he obtained esteem was an unaffected modesty, mingled with kindness and goodness.

He possessed a peculiar *decision* of character. His judgment was generally formed with slow deliberation; but having once made up his mind, it was not easily altered. He was decisive in the principles he embraced. He held nothing with a loose hand. He observed to me, a few weeks before he died, when mentioning what he conceived to have been his great defect in religion, that it was not a wavering disposition. "I have not," said he, "been tossed about with every wind of doctrine." He has sometimes ingeniously confessed that he thought himself more in danger of erring by a prejudiced attachment to received principles than by the contrary. He was equally decisive in matters of *practice*. He scarcely ever engaged in any thing with indifference. What his hand found him to do, he did it with his might. Having formed his judgment that such a matter was *right*, he would pursue it with indefatigable industry, patience, and perseverance; he would wade through difficulties that would have discouraged most men; nor was he ever satisfied till he had accomplished his end.

There are few men that have possessed a greater degree of genuine *humility*. It is often seen, where persons of affluence unite with a Christian community, they consider themselves as doing great honour to it, and expect great homage in return. But this every one that knew him can bear witness was not his spirit. It was not natural to him to assume the airs of a Diotrophes, or to avail himself of the influence which his circumstances and situation afforded him to lord it over God's heritage. He was sometimes warm and sanguine; but that was not frequent, and never but when he considered himself as engaged in the cause of truth and righteousness.

To this may be added, there was a vein of *serious godliness* that ran through his life. It is true, he was often dejected in his own mind, lest he should be found wanting at last; so much so as to give considerable pain to his friends. "There is something in religion," he would say, "with which I fear I have been all my life unacquainted." This dejection I attribute, in a great degree, to constitution. There are few characters that have discovered a greater fear of God, a greater acquiescence in the way of salvation through a crucified Saviour, or a greater concern to spend his life in doing good. That which would have hurt the pride of many a rich man, namely, to unite with the poor and the illiterate as his brethren, was no mortification to him; on the contrary, he lately said, "I reckon it the greatest honour of my life to have been employed in promoting the interest of Christ."

There is one circumstance more which I cannot omit. About a week before he died, he requested that a few of his Christian friends might come and see him, and pray with him. Five of us went. When there, he told us he did not wish us to pray for his life; he considered it as the will of God that he should die; and he added, "His will be done! But pray,"

said he, "that if there are any sins of which I have been guilty, and have not yet repented, any sins for which God has any controversy with me, that he would give me a proper sense of them before I die. Or if not, that I might enjoy the light of his countenance in death." We were all exceedingly affected. After praying with him about an hour, he gathered up what little strength he had, and addressed himself to us with a kind of solemn farewell. He reminded us of the difficulties we had been brought through as a church, expressed his satisfaction in leaving us in so comfortable a situation, recommended us to love one another, and solemnly commended us to the blessing of God! Surely I shall never forget this tender parting! But I have done. He would have invited others of his friends, whom he equally loved, but his strength began to fail him; and in a few days, after a long series of afflictions, which he bore with great patience, calmness, and resignation to God, he fell asleep.

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## V.

[Preached before the Baptist Association at St. Albans, June 1, 1796.]

### THE NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF AN INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE OF DIVINE TRUTH.

"For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." —Heb. v. 12—14.

THERE is nothing in which the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of Satan are more opposed than that the one is characterized by light and the other by darkness. The cause of falsehood is itself a dark cause, and requires darkness to cover it; but truth is light, and cometh to the light, that it may be made manifest. Knowledge is every where encouraged in the Bible; our best interests are interwoven with it; and the spirituality of our minds, and the real enjoyment of our lives, depend upon its increase. "Grace and peace are multiplied through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord." Nor is it necessary for our own sakes only, but for the sake of others. It is a great encouragement to Christian ministers when those whom they teach possess a good understanding in the things of God. Indeed, none but those who are engaged in the work of teaching can tell how much the ardour of the mind is damped by the contrary. The truth of this remark is exemplified in the writer of this epistle. In the verses immediately preceding the text, you perceive him highly interested in his subject, and proceeding in a glorious career of reasoning; when, all on a sudden, he is stopped. He had many things to say of his Lord and Master; but which were "hard to be understood," seeing those to whom he wrote were "dull of hearing." It is on this occasion that he introduces the passage now before us, in which his object is to shame and provoke them, by comparing them with those who as to years were men, but as to knowledge children; and who, instead of having made advances in science, needed to be taught the alphabet over again. There are some things supposed and included in the passage which require a little previous attention.

First, It is here supposed that *all Divine knowledge is to be derived from the oracles of God*. It is a proper term by which the sacred Scriptures are here denominated, strongly expressive of their Divine inspiration and infallibility: in them God speaks; and to them it becomes us to hearken. We



may learn other things from other quarters; and things, too, that may subserve the knowledge of God; but the knowledge of God itself must here be sought, for here only it can be found.

Much has been said on faith and reason, and the question has often been agitated whether the one, in any instance, can be contrary to the other. In the solution of this question, it is necessary, in the first place, to determine what is meant by reason. There is a great difference between *reason* and *reasoning*. Nothing which God reveals can contradict the former; but this is more than can be said of the latter. It is impossible for God to reveal any thing repugnant to what is fit and right; but that which is fit and right in one man's estimation is preposterous and absurd in the esteem of another, which clearly proves that reason, as it exists in depraved creatures, is not a proper standard of truth; and hence arises the necessity of another and a better standard, "the oracles of God." By studying these, a good man will gain more understanding than his teachers, if they live in the neglect of them.

Secondly, It is supposed that *the oracles of God include a system of Divine truth*. They contain the *first principles*, or rudiments of religion—the simple truths of the gospel, which require little or no investigation in order to their being understood; these are called "*milk*." They also contain the "*deep things of God*," things beyond the reach of a slight and cursory observation, and which require, if we would properly enter into them, close and repeated attention: this is "*strong meat*." Those doctrines which the apostle enumerates in the following chapter, as things which he should "leave, and go on unto perfection," have been thought to refer to the leading principles of Judaism: and it may be so; for Judaism itself contained the first principles of Christianity: it was introductory to it; or, as it is elsewhere expressed, it was "our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ."

Thirdly, it is intimated that *Christians should not rest satisfied in having attained to a knowledge of the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, but should go on unto perfection*; not only so as to obtain satisfaction for themselves, but that they may be able to *teach others*. It is true *all are not to be teachers by office*; but, in one form or other, all should aspire to communicate the knowledge of Christ. Every christian is required to be ready to give a reason of the hope that is in him, with meekness and fear; and if all the members of our churches did but possess this readiness, besides the advantages that would accrue to themselves and others, there would be less scarcity than there is of able and evangelical ministers.

The leading sentiment which runs through the passage, and comprises the whole, is THE IMPORTANCE OF A DEEP AND INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE OF DIVINE TRUTH. To this subject, brethren, permit me to call your attention. In discoursing upon it, I shall first inquire wherein it consists, and then endeavour to show the importance of it.

I. Let us inquire WHAT A DEEP AND INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE OF DIVINE TRUTH INCLUDES. That the oracles of God contain deep things, requires but little proof. The character of God, our own depravity, and that great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, &c., are deep and interesting subjects. The prophets had to *search* into the meaning of their own prophecies. The riches of Christ, with which the apostles were intrusted, were denominated "unsearchable;" and even the highest orders of created intelligences are described as "looking" into these things for their further improvement.

It may seem presuming for any person, in the present imperfect state, to determine on subjects of such magnitude; or to talk of a deep and intimate knowledge of things which surpass the comprehension of the most exalted

creatures. And if these terms were used either *absolutely*, to express the real conformity of our ideas of Divine things to the full extent of the things themselves, or even *comparatively*, if the comparison respected saints on earth and saints in heaven, it would be presumption. But it is only in reference to one another in the present state that these terms are intended to apply. Compared with heavenly inhabitants, all of us are babes; even an inspired apostle was no more. "When I was a child," said he, "I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known." There are such degrees, however, among good men in this life as that, compared with each other, some may be said to possess only a superficial knowledge of Divine truth, and others a more deep and intimate acquaintance with it.

It is the importance of the latter of these that I wish to have impressed upon your minds. To attain it, the following, among other things, require our attention:—

1. *Though we must not stop at first principles, yet we must be well grounded in them.* No person can drink deeply into any science without being well acquainted with its rudiments; these are the foundation on which the whole structure rests. The first principles of the oracles of God, as specified by our apostle; are "repentance from dead works, faith toward God, the doctrine of baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment." Whatever may be meant by some of these terms, whether they refer to things peculiar to Judaism, or to the early times of Christianity, it is clear, from Scripture and the nature of things, that others of them are expressive of principles which, in every age, are of the first importance. Though the apostle speaks of *leaving* them, yet he does not mean that we should give them up, or treat them with indifference, but *go on unto perfection*; as a builder leaves his foundation when he raises his walls, and advances toward the completion of his building.

*Repentance* was the first lesson inculcated by John the Baptist, and Christ, and the apostles; and that not merely on profligate sinners, but on Scribes and Pharisees. All that they had hitherto learned required, as it were, to be unlearned; and all that they had done to be undone, and utterly relinquished.

The knowledge which carnal men acquire of Divine things puffs them up; and while they think they understand great things, they know nothing as they ought to know it. All the works, too, which have been wrought during a state of unregeneracy are "dead works;" and instead of being, in any degree, pleasing to God, require to be lamented with shame and self-aborrence. Repentance is a kind of self-emptying work; it includes a renunciation, not only of those things for which our own consciences at the time condemned us, but of what we have been in the habit of reckoning wisdom and righteousness. Hence the propriety of the order in which the Scriptures place it with regard to faith—"Repent, and believe the gospel." Renounce your own ways, and embrace his. "He that will be wise must first become a fool, that he may be wise."

"*Faith toward God*," or a believing view of the being and glory of the Divine character, is reckoned almost among the first principles of the doctrines of Christ. If we have just ideas of this very important subject, we have the key to the whole system of gospel truth. He who beholds the glory of the Divine holiness will, in that glass, perceive his own polluted and perishing condition; and, when properly impressed with a sense of these things, he will naturally embrace the doctrine of a Saviour, yea, and of a

*great one.* Salvation by mere grace, through the atonement of Jesus, will appear the very object of his soul's desire. And, with these principles in his heart, other Scripture doctrines will appear true, interesting, and harmonious. There are but few erroneous sentiments in the Christian world which may not be traced to a spirit of self-admiration, (which is the opposite of repentance,) or to false conceptions of the Divine character.

To these the apostle adds, "*the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment;*" or the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments of endless duration. These are principles which, indeed, occupy almost an ultimate place in the sacred system; yet, as every other important truth respecting man proceeds upon the supposition of their reality, they may properly enough be reckoned among the first principles of the oracles of God. If these principles were given up to the infidel, the spirit of whose creed amounts to this, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die;" or if the latter of them were given up to the universalist, who, though he admits of a judgment to come, yet not of an *eternal* one, we should soon find the whole fabric of truth falling to the ground.

2. *We must not content ourselves with knowing what is truth, but must be acquainted with the evidence on which it rests.* Christians are required to be always ready to give a reason for the hope that is in them, with meekness and fear; and this supposes, not only that every part of religion admits of a rational defence, but that it is necessary for Christians to study, that they may be able to defend it; or, at least, to feel the ground on which they rest their hope.

The truths contained in the oracles of God may be distinguished into two kinds: those which approve themselves to our ideas of wisdom or fitness; and those which utterly surpass our understanding, but which require to be believed as matters of pure revelation. The former chiefly respect the counsels and works of God, which are exhibited to our understanding, that God in them may be made manifest: the latter more commonly respect the being and inconceivable glories of the Godhead, the reality of which we are concerned to know, but on their mode or manner are forbidden to gaze.

It is exceedingly desirable to trace the wisdom and harmony of evangelical truth: it is a source of enjoyment, superior perhaps to any thing with which we are acquainted. All the "works of God are honourable and glorious, and sought out by all them that have pleasure therein;" but redemption is his *great* work, wherein appears "glory to himself in the highest, and on earth peace, and good-will to men:" here, therefore, must needs be the highest enjoyment. Prior to the revelation of redemption, the holy angels shouted for joy over the works of *nature*; but having witnessed the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, they "desired to look into (other) things." Nothing tends more to establish the mind, and to interest the heart in any truth, than a perception that it is adapted at once to express the glory of the Divine character and to meet the necessities of guilty creatures. The more we think of truth, therefore, in this way, the more we shall be "rooted and grounded" in it.

But what *reason* have we to give for embracing those doctrines which we consider as above reason, of the fitness of which we consequently pretend to have no ideas? We answer, they are contained in the oracles of God. Nothing is more reasonable than to give implicit credit to Him who cannot lie. On this ground, we believe that "there are three who bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and that these three are one." If God had revealed nothing but what would have come within the limits of our understanding, he must have told us little or nothing at all

of his self-existence, eternity, and infinity; for we have no positive ideas of any of these things. Yet the revelation of such truths may be as necessary as those which approach nearer to our comprehension. The latter afford food for *knowledge*; the former teach us *humility*, and furnish matter for *faith*.

3. *We must learn truth immediately from the oracles of God.* Many religious people appear to be contented with seeing truth in the light in which some great and good man has placed it; but if ever we enter into the gospel for purpose, it must be by reading the word of God for ourselves, and by praying and meditating upon its sacred contents. It is "in God's light that we must see light." By conversing with the sacred writers, we shall gradually imbibe their sentiments, and be insensibly assimilated into the same spirit.

The writings of great and good men are not to be despised, any more than their preaching; only let them not be treated as oracular. The best of men, in this imperfect state, view things *partially*; and therefore are in danger of laying an improper stress upon some parts of Scripture, to the neglect of other parts of equal, and sometimes of superior importance. Now, where this is the case, imitation becomes dangerous. It is rarely known but that an original suffers in the hands of a copyist; if, therefore, the former be imperfect, what may be expected of the latter? We all come far short of truth and righteousness, let our model be ever so perfect; but if this be imperfect, we shall possess not only our own faults, but those of another.

If, as ministers, we go about to depict either the character of a bad man or of a good man, a state of unregeneracy or a work of grace, and, instead of drawing from real life, only copy from some accounts which we have read or heard of these matters, we shall neither convince the sinner nor meet the case of the believer; all, to say the least, will be foreign and uninteresting.

If we adopt the principles of fallible men, without searching the Scriptures for ourselves, and inquiring whether or not these things be so, they will not, even allowing them to be on the side of truth, avail us, as if we had learned them from a higher authority. Our faith, in this case, will stand in the wisdom of man, and not in the power of God. There is a savour in truth, when drawn from the words which the Holy Spirit teaches, which is lost, or at least diminished, if it pass under the conceptions and expressions of men. Nor will it avail us when most needed; for he who receives his creed from men may deliver it up to men again. Truth learned only at second-hand will be to us what Saul's armour was to David; we shall be at a loss how to use it in the day of trial.

4. If we would possess a deep and intimate acquaintance with Divine truth, *we must view it in its various connexions in the great system of redemption.* Systematic divinity, or the studying of truth in a systematic form, has been of late years much decried. It has become almost general to consider it as the mark of a contracted mind, and the grand obstruction to free inquiry. If we imbibe a *false* system, indeed, there is no doubt but it will prove injurious; if it be true in part, but very *defective*, it may impede our progress in Divine knowledge; or if, in order to retain a system, we torture the Scriptures to make them accord with it, we shall pervert the truth instead of preserving it. These are things which make against false, defective, and antisciptural systems of faith; but not in the least against *system itself*. The best criterion of a good system is its agreement with the Holy Scriptures. That view of things, whether we have any of us fully attained it or not, which admits the most natural meaning to be put upon every part of God's word, is the right system of religious truth. And he whose belief

consists of a number of positions arranged in such a connexion as to constitute a consistent whole, but who from a sense of his imperfections, and a remembrance of past errors, holds himself ready to add or retrench, as evidence shall require, is in a far more advantageous track for the attainment of truth, and a real enlargement of mind, than he who thinks without a system.

To be without system is nearly the same thing as to be without principle. Whatever principles we may have, while they continue in this disorganized state, they will answer but little purpose in the religious life. Like a tumultuous assembly in the day of battle, they may exist; but it will be without order, energy, or end.

No man could decry systematic knowledge in any thing but religion, without subjecting himself to the ridicule of thinking men. A *philosopher*, for instance, would expose himself to contempt, who instead of improving facts which had fallen under his observation, that he might discover the general laws by which they are governed—and instead of tracing things to their first principles, and pursuing them to their just consequences—should inveigh against all general laws, all system, all connexion and dependence, and all uniform design in the variety of creation. What should we say of a *husbandman* who refused to arrange his observations under the respective branches of business to which they naturally belonged; who had no general scheme or plan of proceeding, but left the work of every day to the day itself, without forethought, contrivance, or design? Or what opinion should we form of a *merchant* or a *tradesman* who should exclude systematic knowledge from his affairs? He is constantly employed in buying and selling; but he must have no general system whereby to conduct either the one or the other; none for the regulation of his books; none for the assortment of his articles: all must be free, lest he sink into formality, and, by being in the habit of doing things in order, should contract a narrowness of mind!

But is the Bible written upon systematic principles; does it contain a system, or does it encourage us to form one? By the Bible being written on systematic principles, I suppose, is meant a systematic arrangement of its contents; and there is no doubt but the contrary of this is true. But then the same might be said of the *book of nature*. Though the different species of animals, vegetables, minerals, &c. are capable of being arranged under their respective *genera*, and so reduced to a system; yet in their actual position in creation they assume no such appearance. It is wisely contrived, both in nature and Scripture, that the objects of each should be scattered in lovely variety; but amidst all this variety, an observant eye will perceive unity, order, arrangement, and fulness of design.

God, in all his works, has proceeded on system; there is a beautiful connexion and harmony in every thing which he has wrought. We sometimes speak of a system of nature, a system of providence, and a system of redemption; and as smaller systems are often included in greater, the language is not improper: in reality, however, they are all but one system; one grand piece of machinery, each part of which has a dependence on the other, and all together form one glorious whole. Now if God proceeds on system, it may be expected that the Scriptures, being a transcript of his mind, should contain a system; and if we would study them to purpose, it must be so as to discover what that system is.

I never recollect to have heard any objection to systematic divinity with regard to *practice*. Let a Christian, utterly unacquainted with human writings, take his Bible, with a view to learn the mind of God upon any given subject, suppose it be the duty of parents, he will naturally collect all the passages in the sacred writings which relate to that subject, arrange

them in order, and from the whole, thus taken together, regulate his conduct. For this no one will think of blaming him; yet this would be acting systematically.

Let him do the same with respect to every other duty, and he will be in possession of a body, or system, of practical divinity. And why should he stop here? why not collect the mind of God, from the whole of Scripture taken together, upon things to be *believed*, as well as things to be performed?

If the apostles had not considered Divine truth in a systematic form, how came the writer of this Epistle to speak of the "first principles" of the oracles of God? This language supposes, as before observed, a scheme or system of faith; and if such a form of considering truth were disadvantageous to Christians, how came he to censure the Hebrews for their want of progress in it? In his Epistle to the Romans, also we read of the *proportion*, or *analogy*, of faith; which certainly supposes that the gospel is one proportionate or consistent whole.

Could a system of divinity be written, in which every sacred truth or duty should have a place assigned it, and such a place, both as to order and importance, as properly belonged to it, not invading the province of other truths or duties, but, on the contrary, subserving them, and itself appearing to the greatest advantage among them,—such a performance would answer to what the apostle means by "the proportion of faith." But can we expect a work answering to this description from an uninspired pen? Perhaps not. The materials for such a model exist, however, in the Holy Scriptures; and though we cannot collect and arrange them to perfection, let us, as in all other things, "press towards the mark."

Let that system of religion which we embrace be but in the main the right one, and so far from contracting the mind, it is easy to perceive that it will abundantly enlarge it.

For example, let the fact of Joseph's being sold into Egypt be viewed without its connexion with God's designs, and it will appear a melancholy instance of human depravity: we shall see nothing very remarkable in it; and it will seem calculated only to afford a disgusting picture of family jealousies and intrigues, enough to break the heart of an aged parent. But let the same fact be viewed systematically, as a link in a chain, or as a part of a whole, and it will assume a very different appearance. Thus viewed, it is an event pregnant with glory. He must needs go down into Egypt, that much people might be preserved alive; that Jacob's family might follow him; that they might there be preserved for a season, till, in due time, having become a great nation, they should be led forth with a high hand; that they might be placed in Canaan, and might set up the worship of the true God; that the Messiah might be born among them; and that his kingdom might be extended over the whole earth. Without a system, the patriarch reflected, "All these things are against me;" but with a system, or rather with only the discovery of a very small part of it, he exclaimed, "It is enough: Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go down, and see him before I die."

In addition to this event in providence, let us offer a few examples in matters of *doctrine*.

Would you contemplate the great *evil of sin*, you must view it in its connexions, tendencies, and consequences. For a poor finite creature, whose life is but a vapour, to gratify a vicious inclination may appear a trifle; but when its tendencies and mischievous consequences are taken into the account, it wears a different aspect. Jeroboam "said in his heart, If this people go up to sacrifice at Jerusalem, then shall the kingdom return unto David." Hence he set up idolatry; and hence the nation was cor-

rupted more and more, till at length it was given up to utter destruction. Considering ourselves as links in the great chain of moral government, every transgression is of vast importance, because it affects the whole system. If the government of God be once violated, an example is set, which, if followed, would ruin the universe.

Further, If we contemplate *the death of Christ* without any relation to system, we shall only see a suffering person at Jerusalem, and feel that pity and disgust which is ordinarily excited by injustice and cruelty. But let us view it as connected with the moral government of God—as a glorious expedient to secure its honours—“a propitiation” wherein “God declared his righteousness for the remission of sin”—and we shall have a new set of feelings. While the apostles continued to view this event unconnectedly, their minds were contracted, and sorrow filled their hearts; but when their eyes were opened to see it in its connexions and consequences, their sorrow was turned into joy. Those very persons who, but a few weeks before, could not bear to think of their Lord’s departure, after they had witnessed his ascension to glory, “returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and continued daily in the temple, praising and blessing God.”

Once more, If we view the doctrine of *election* as unconnected with other things, it may appear to us to be a kind of fondness without reason or wisdom. A charge of caprice would, hereby, be brought against the Almighty; and professors, like the carnal Jews, on account of the distinguishing favours conferred on their nation, would be fostered in self-conceit. But if it be considered in connexion with the great system of religious truth, it will appear in a very different light. It will represent the Divine Being in his true character; not as acting without design, and subjecting himself to endless disappointment; but as accomplishing all his works in pursuance of an eternal purpose. And as salvation, from first to last, is of mere grace, and every son and daughter of Adam is absolutely at the Divine discretion, it tends powerfully to impress this idea both upon saints and sinners. While it leads the former to acknowledge that by the grace of God they are what they are, it teaches the latter to relinquish their vain hopes, and to fall into the arms of sovereign mercy.

As the righteousness of God’s elect is not the ground of their election, so neither is their felicity its ultimate end. God righteously hides the things of the gospel from the wise and prudent, and reveals them unto babes, because “so it seemeth good in his sight:” it tends most to display the glory of his character, and to promote the general good of creation. These things, if properly considered, are of a humbling tendency.

If the Jews had considered that they were not chosen, or put in possession of the good land, “for their righteousness, or for the uprightness of their hearts;” and that though it was an instance of great love to them, yet it was not ultimately for their sake, or to accomplish their happiness, but that God “might fulfil his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,” in whom, and in whose seed, “all the nations of the earth were to be blessed;” and if they had considered the salvation of the world as the end of their national existence, and themselves as *God’s witnesses* till the times of reformation; instead of valuing themselves and despising others, they would have reckoned themselves “their servants for (Jehovah’s) sake.”

In short, by considering principles in their various connexions, *far greater advances will be made in Divine knowledge than by any other means.* The discovery of one important truth will lead on to a hundred more. Let a Christian but realize, for example, the glory of the Divine character as the moral Governor of the world; and he will at once perceive the equity and goodness of the moral law, which requires us to love him with all the heart.

In this glass he will see his own depravity; and, possessed of these views the grace of the gospel will appear to him to be grace indeed. Every blessing it contains will be endearing, and the medium through which all is conveyed superlatively precious. A train of thought like this has frequently proved more interesting than the labours of those who, having discovered a vein of silver or gold, dig deeply into the bowels of the enriching mine.

Having considered a few of the means necessary for the attainment of a deep and intimate knowledge of truth, I shall,

## II. Attempt to establish THE IMPORTANCE OF SUCH A KNOWLEDGE.

As the powers of created beings are limited, and no one can expect to understand every thing, it is the province of wisdom to select those kinds of knowledge, as the objects of our pursuit, which are most valuable and of the greatest utility. There are some depths, of which it is our honour and felicity to be ignorant; and even in things which are lawful, we may, in numberless instances, very well be excused, if not in wholly neglecting, yet in possessing only a general acquaintance with them. But Divine truth requires not only to be known, but *well* known; it is not only necessary that we have sentiments, and right sentiments, but that we enter *deeply* into them. Every thing pertaining to God is great, and requires all our powers. In whatever we indulge indifference, there is no room for it here; God requires not only all our "heart," but all our "mind and strength."

The importance of a deep and intimate acquaintance with Divine truth will more particularly appear from the following considerations:—

1. A neglect of God's word is represented as a *heinous sin*. But we shall not be able to escape this sin, if we content ourselves with a superficial acquaintance with truth. Revelation, in every stage, demands our serious attention; but the revelation of eternal life through Jesus Christ requires attention in the highest degree. This is that *great salvation* which we are charged not to neglect. The dignity of its author, its sublime and interesting nature, with the accumulated evidence which God has condescended to afford us of its Divine original, combine to require of us the most careful and cordial examination into its contents. A neglect of this is either total or partial: the former would denominate us unbelievers, and expose us to utter destruction; the latter, though it may exist in sincere Christians, is nevertheless a sin, and a sin more than a little offensive to the God of all truth.

To be contented with a superficial acquaintance with Divine things implies *disrespect to Him who has revealed them*. A letter from a distant friend, to whom we are cordially attached, is viewed and reviewed, and every sentence of it carefully inspected, and on many occasions committed to memory. Why should not the word of God be productive of the same effects? Indeed it is; for in proportion as we love God, his word will *dwell richly in us*. It will be our bosom companion, to which we shall have recourse on every occasion; especially in seasons of leisure, when the mind, like a spring from which a pressure is removed, rises to its natural position. Hence the following language: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might: and these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

To be contented with a superficial acquaintance with Divine things implies also *a want of affection to the things themselves*. A will, or testament, in which we were deeply interested, would be procured with eagerness, and read with avidity; and if any difficulty remained as to the meaning of a



particular passage, we should have no rest till, by some means or other, we had obtained a solution of it. I need not apply this remark. Nothing is more evident than that whatever is uppermost in our affections will form the grand current of our thoughts. And where our thoughts are directed to a subject with intenseness and perseverance, it will become familiar to us; and, unless it be owing to the want of natural capacity or any other necessary means, we shall of course enter deeply into it.

I have been much struck with the ardent affection which David discovered to the Holy Scriptures, and every part of their sacred contents. The whole 119th Psalm is a continued encomium upon them. There we have such language as the following: "O how I love thy law! My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times. Thy statutes have been my song in the house of my pilgrimage. The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver." Now, all the Scriptures which were then extant amounted to little more than the writings of Moses. What additions have we since enjoyed! Besides the Book of Psalms, and the prophecies which followed, we have the whole New Testament, "full of grace and truth," wherein the invisible God has, as it were, rendered himself visible. "Him whom no man had seen at any time, the only begotten Son, who dwelt in his bosom, hath declared." How is it that such a price should be in our hands to get wisdom, and yet that we should have so little heart for it?

2. The word of God is represented as *a means of sanctification*. But no effect of this kind can be produced beyond the degree in which we imbibe it. One great object of our Lord's intercession with the Father, on our behalf, was, "that we might be sanctified through the truth, *even* by his word, which is truth." The gospel is continually held up, not only as a "doctrine according to godliness," but as having a powerful influence in producing it. "It teacheth us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." It "worketh effectually in those who believe." It was by the doctrine of the cross that the world became crucified to the apostle, and he unto the world. So universal and so manifest were the effects of Divine truth upon the practice of the primitive Christians, that the sacred writers could appeal to fact, on their behalf, that they, and they only, were successful combatants against the world's temptations: "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

Now, in order that the gospel may be productive of these effects, it is necessary that it be understood. Without this, how should it interest or affect the heart? We must *believe* the truth ere it will work effectually: we must *know* it, or it will not make us free. That we may serve God acceptably, and with godly fear, we must have *grace*; and grace is multiplied "through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord."

Knowledge and affection have a mutual influence on each other. That the love of truth will prompt us to labour after a more perfect acquaintance with its contents has been already observed; and that such an acquaintance will promote an increasing love of truth, in return, is equally evident. We cannot love an unknown gospel, any more than an unknown God. Affection is fed by knowledge, being thereby furnished with grounds, or reasons, for its operations. By the expansion of the mind the heart is supplied with objects which fill it with delight. It is thus that it becomes enlarged, and that we feel ourselves sweetly induced to "run in the way of the Divine commandments."

How was it that the apostle became dead to the world by the cross of Christ? I suppose, on much the same principle that the light of the stars

is eclipsed by that of the sun; or that a man, having drunk old wine, ceases to desire new, for he saith the old is better. It is by drinking deeply into religion that we become disaffected to carnal objects.

3. The word of God is represented as *the great source of Christian enjoyment*. But no effect of this kind can be produced, any further than we imbibe the truth. The same way in which Divine truth operates as a medium of sanctification, it becomes a source of enjoyment; namely, by interesting and affecting the heart. That which, by its superior lustre, eclipses the pleasures of sense, and crucifies us to the world, at the same time kindles a joy in the heart which is unspeakable and full of glory. The habitual joy which was possessed by the apostles and primitive Christians chiefly arose from a knowledge and belief of the gospel. It was "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord" that induced the apostle to "count all things but loss." Those in whom "the word of Christ dwelt richly, in all wisdom," were supposed to be so enlivened by it, that it became natural to them to "teach and admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in their hearts to the Lord." The object for which the apostle "bowed his knees to the Father of glory," in behalf of the Ephesians, was, that, by means of a *comprehensive* knowledge of the "breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the" redeeming "love of Christ, they might be filled with all the fulness of God." The wells of salvation are deep; and he that lacketh knowledge is as one that has nothing to draw with.

The prejudice of many Christians against doctrinal preaching, as being, in their esteem, *dry and uninteresting*,—and the preference given to that which is more descriptive of their feelings, and therefore termed *experimental*,—is worthy of attention. If the doctrine which we preach be not the unadulterated gospel of Christ, it will indeed be dry; or if, instead of entering into the spirit of truth, we are employed in a fruitless discussion of terms, or things on which the Scriptures forbear to decide, it must needs be uninteresting and even disgusting to a holy mind. But if the pure gospel of Jesus, well understood by the preacher, and communicated from the fulness of his heart, do not interest us, there must be some lamentable disorder in the state of our minds. If the manna that comes down from heaven be loathed, it is a sign that things are not with us as they ought to be. The doctrine of Moses, and surely much more that of Jesus, "dropped as the rain, and distilled as the dew upon the tender herb."

Christian *experience* (or what is generally understood by that term, the painful and pleasurable feelings of good men) will be found, if genuine, to arise from the influence of truth upon the mind. If we be strangers to the glory of God's moral character, and the great evil of sin, we shall be strangers to all the feelings of godly sorrow on account of it. And what ground is there for *joy and peace* but *in believing*? Take away the Deity and atonement of Christ, and they are annihilated. To this may be added, Give up the doctrines of the resurrection and a future life, and what becomes of hope? From these instances, out of many others, you will easily perceive that doctrinal and experimental preaching are not so remote from each other as some persons have imagined; and that to extol the latter, at the expense of the former, is to act like him who wishes the fountain to be destroyed, because he prefers the stream.

4. *It is a great object in the Christian life, according to our capacities and opportunities, to diffuse the light of the gospel around us.* But we cannot communicate any thing beyond the degree in which we possess it. The communication of gospel truth is not confined to ministers. Every Christian moves in a sphere of some extent; and is expected so to occupy

it as to embrace every occasion which may offer to make known the way of eternal life to those about him. The primitive churches were schools of heavenly instruction, as the words of the text, to go no further, plainly intimate; and the apostle reproves some of their members for having made no greater proficiency. Though it would be in vain for every one to aspire at being a public teacher of Christianity, yet, as has been already observed, every one should be concerned that he may be able to "give a reason for the hope that is in him," and to teach the good and the right way to those with whom he is immediately connected. The duties of a parent and a master include in them the instruction of those who are committed to their care. Many opportunities arise in which Christians might communicate the knowledge of Christ to their neighbours; those in a state of servitude, to their fellow servants; and provided it were done on proper occasions, and according to the apostolic rule, "in meekness and fear," persons in inferior stations might suggest a useful hint even to their superiors.

When the family of Elimelech went to sojourn in Moab, they carried their religion with them; so recommending the God of Israel to those with whom they formed connexions, that one of them was induced to leave her country, her kindred, and her gods, and to put her trust under the shadow of his wings. And even a "little maid" of the land of Israel, who had been carried captive into Syria, by speaking to her mistress, on a favourable opportunity, was instrumental in her master's being healed of his leprosy, and in his being brought to acknowledge and adore the true God. Such cases are recorded to encourage us to communicate the good knowledge of God on all proper occasions; but, in order to do this, we must first possess it, and that in a greater degree than is sufficient barely to denominate us Christians.

Perhaps one of the most favourable opportunities for Christians to suggest important truth to their neighbours and connexions is when any of them are under a threatening affliction. To visit them at such a time would be kindly taken: even the worst of characters are commonly accessible when they apprehend eternity to be drawing nigh. You may then freely converse and pray with them; and if your circumstances will admit, and theirs require it, a communication of your worldly substance would convince them of your good-will, give weight to your instructions, and correspond with the conduct of him who went about doing good to the bodies and souls of men. But such a practice requires an intimate acquaintance with Divine truth. It is an important matter to converse with men who are just on the borders of an eternal world: it requires not only tenderness, faithfulness, and prudence; but an *ability* to expose those false refuges, and detect those delusive hopes, to which, at such seasons, they are generally disposed to fly; and to direct them to the "only name under heaven, given among men, whereby they must be saved."

5. *In times of apostacy from the truth, Christians are exhorted to be steadfast.* But a steadfast adherence to truth requires that we be rooted and grounded in it. The wisdom of God sees meet, in order to prove mankind, and especially his professing people, to suffer other gospels, besides the true one, to obtain footing among us. I am aware that it is become customary, in these times, to make a jest of heresy, and to deride, as illiberal, narrow-minded bigots, all those who consider any religious sentiments as endangering the salvation of men. But I hope we shall not, on this account, be deterred from such an attachment to truth as the Scriptures encourage. It is granted that the term heresy has been wretchedly abused, and that it becomes Christians to beware of applying it to every departure from even truth itself; yet there is such a thing in being. There were heresies in the apostles'

times; and it was predicted that there should, in after-times, be persons who would bring in even "damnable heresies." Let no one be startled at the use of these terms: I did not coin them, and am not accountable for them; but seeing they occupy a place in the Holy Scriptures, I think myself concerned to understand them. Whatever difficulty there may be in ascertaining their precise object, they, undoubtedly, teach us that men's souls may be destroyed by mental as well as by sensual lusts, even the souls of professing Christians; for the words are not intended to describe open infidels, but such as should bear the Christian name, yea, and who should be teachers of Christianity.

The circulation of doctrines pleasing to corrupt nature will prove men to be what they are. They are the fan in Christ's hand, by which he will thoroughly purge his floor. That light-minded professors of religion should be carried away with them, is no more a matter of surprise than that chaff should be carried away by the wind; but how is it that those of whom we would hope better things are often shaken?

If a minister, in almost any congregation, should relinquish truth, and fall into the grossest errors, unless he had so conducted himself as to have gained little or no esteem among the people, he is seldom known to go off alone: sometimes half a congregation, and sometimes more, have been known to follow him, or, at least, to be greatly unhinged for a considerable time. If a writer start up, in almost any connexion, let his performance be ever so weak or extravagant, yet, if he possess but a sufficient quantity of overbearing assurance, he will have his admirers; and some serious people, too, will be in danger of being turned aside. How are these things to be accounted for? I conceive the principal reason is, that Christians content themselves with a superficial knowledge of Divine things. Great numbers, from a dislike to controversy, will never take any pains to understand the difference between one set of religious principles and another. They have no desire to enable themselves to distinguish between true and false reasonings. They are too apt to take it for granted that what they have imbibed is truth, and that nothing can be advanced, with the least colour of reason, for the contrary: when, therefore, an argument appears with a little plausibility on its face, it has only to obtain a reading or a hearing, and their assent is gained. Brethren, let shame, if nothing else, provoke us, that we "henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine." Let us be concerned, not obstinately to adhere to our present sentiments, be they what they may, but to know the mind of God in his word; and, knowing it, let us steadfastly adhere to it.

The present age seems to be an age of trial. Not only is the gospel corrupted by those who bear the Christian name, but, of late, you well know, it has been openly assailed. The most direct and daring opposition has been made to the very name of Christianity. I am not going to alarm you with any idea that *the church is in danger*; no, my brethren; the church of which we, I trust, are members, and of which Christ, and Christ alone, is the Head, is not in danger; it is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Neither are my apprehensions excited concerning those who are true members of the church: these trying blasts, though they may affect them for a season, will ultimately cause them to take deeper root. Nevertheless, it becomes us to feel for the souls of men, especially for the rising generation; and to warn even good men that they be not unarmed in the evil day.

The human heart has ever been averse from the gospel of Christ, but the turn or temper of the present age is peculiarly in favour of infidelity. In much the same manner as in former ages men were violently attached to a

persecuting superstition, they are now verging to the opposite extreme, and are in danger of throwing off all religion. Our temptations, and those which will attend our posterity after us, are likely, therefore, to be widely different from what they have hitherto been. Hitherto nominal Christianity has been no reproach; but reproach has attached itself to the other side. The case, in this respect, may soon be altered. Men grow bold in avowing their contempt of Christianity; and many among the dissipated part of the youth are following their example. Now if characters of this description should spring up in sufficient numbers, not only to keep each other in countenance, but to turn the tide of reproach against Christians, as a company of wrong-headed enthusiasts, we shall soon see which side the mass of mankind will take. Their characters being loose and profligate, they have long felt themselves condemned by the gospel; and this is a matter that does not sit very easy upon them. Nothing has kept them from rejecting it before but the disgrace that would follow upon their becoming open infidels; whenever, therefore, this disgrace shall be removed, we may expect them to go off in great companies. The slightest observation of human nature must convince us that the greater part of mankind, even in religious matters, are governed by fashion; they go with "the course of this world." So great an influence has the tide of public opinion upon them, that even where it is not altogether agreeable to their own views and inclinations, they are, nevertheless, frequently carried away by it; but if it be thus where public opinion and private inclination are at variance, it must, of course, be much more so in those cases wherein they are agreed. This will be like a union of the wind and tide; and the vessel which is carried along by such a joint influence can scarcely have any thing to impede its progress.

The great influence which a certain popular pamphlet has had upon men's minds, is not so much owing to the work itself (though it possesses all the agreeableness to a depraved heart which wit and malignity can give it), as to the bias of the present generation in favour of the principles which it contains. Of this the author himself seems to have been sufficiently aware, by the title which he has thought proper to give his performance,—*The Age of Reason*.

It is not unlikely that almost all our religious controversies will soon be reduced to one, upon which the great body of men will divide. Is Christianity true or false? Is there a God? Is there a heaven and a hell? or is it all a fiction? Agitated by these important questions, the greater part of the inhabitants of Europe, and perhaps of America, including our own posterity, may rank either as real Christians or as open infidels.

What shall we say to these things? Ought they to depress us? We ought, undoubtedly, to feel for the welfare of men's souls, and cannot but feel for those who are more intimately connected with us; but upon any other principle I know not that they ought to have any such effect upon us. God is upon his throne; his church is upon a rock: whatever "hour of temptation may be coming upon the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth, those who hold fast the word of his patience will be kept through it."—"All things work together for good to them that love God." With these views Christians may rejoice, and rejoice always.

While we rejoice, however, we must rejoice with trembling; and while we confide in God, must be diffident of ourselves. Let us not presume on our own firmness, but "put on the whole armour of God, that we may withstand in the evil day." The first thing required in this Divine accoutrement is, that "our loins be girt about with truth;" but truth will not prove as a girdle to our loins in the day of battle, except we be deeply and intimately acquainted with it.

O ye sons and daughters of carelessness, who are called Christians, but have no root in yourselves, what aspect do these things wear towards you? The time seems drawing nigh that will prove you to be what you are! Hitherto there has been "an outer court" for you, and you have worshipped in it. You have long had a form of godliness, but have been without the power. You have ranked with the friends of truth, but have never received it in love, that you might be saved. You have kept up the profession of something that has been called Christianity, without feeling yourselves under any necessity to proceed further; but now your outer court will, probably, be taken away, and you will feel yourselves impelled, as it were, either to *come in*, and be Christians in reality, or to *go out*, and take your portion with the unbelieving and the abominable.

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## VI.

[Preached at the Circus, Edinburgh, Oct. 13, 1799.]

### THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF REWARDS.

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."—Gal. vi. 7, 8.

COMMON subjects, my brethren, are the most important, and need to be most inculcated. We are apt to think we have heard enough of them, and can expect but little, if any, further improvement from them. But such imaginations are founded in mistake. Though, generally speaking, we assent to the important truth which is here suggested, yet there are but few of us who feel its force, or properly act under its influence.

The solemn warning here given is not unnecessary. Perhaps there is nothing to which depraved creatures are more addicted, though nothing be more dangerous, than *self-deception*. It is from this predilection in favour of something that shall prophesy good concerning them that the truth is disrelished, and those doctrines and systems of religion which flatter their pride and cherish their security are so eagerly imbibed. The human heart loves to be soothed. The pleasing sounds, *Peace, peace*, though there be no peace, will be gratefully received. But let us not be our own enemies. To impose upon ourselves is all that we can do: "God is not mocked." When all is said and done, "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Some men venture to hope that *there is no hereafter*, no harvest to follow; or that, though they persist in sowing to the flesh, yet they shall not of the flesh reap corruption; but this is a most forlorn hope. Unhappy men! Every thing around you proves that there is a God; and something within you, in spite of all your efforts to stifle its remonstrances, tells you that you are accountable to him, and must give an account before him. To you the words that I have read are particularly addressed; "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Others, who admit a future state, yet hope to escape the just reward of their evil deeds, from an idea which they entertain of *the general mercy of God*. It is true, God is merciful; but his mercy is not connivance. He is merciful; but it is only through a Mediator while, therefore, you neglect his salvation, there is no mercy for you. You confess not your

iniquity upon the head of the Substitute; therefore it will be found upon your own head. Your religion is no better than that of Cain, who brought an offering without a sacrifice; the Lord will not accept it. He is merciful; but it is to men of a broken and a contrite spirit. Of others, he says, "He that made them will not have mercy upon them; and he that formed them will show them no favour." O ye formalists! ye heathens under a Christian name! the passage that I have read looks hard at you: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Others have derived a hope from the performance of certain *superstitious rites*, or from the *bestowment of a portion of their wealth on some religious object*. Much of this kind of delusion has been practised in popish countries. Men who have lived a life of injustice, or debauchery, or both, have hoped to balance accounts with the Almighty by performing a journey to the tomb of some departed saint, by building a church, or by endowing an hospital. It were well if this kind of self-deception were confined to popish countries; but, alas! it is natural to unrenewed minds, of all nations and religions, to substitute ceremony in the place of judgment, mercy, and the love of God; and to hope to escape the Divine displeasure by the works of their own hands. Are there any of this description here? We shall have a collection, this evening, for the printing of the New Testament in the Bengalee language. If I only wished for your money, I might say, Give, whatever be your motive! No; I am not so concerned for the salvation of the heathen as to be regardless of that of my own countrymen! I ask not a penny from such a motive: and, moreover, I solemnly warn you, that if you give all your substance in this way, it will avail you nothing. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Finally, Others flatter themselves that their iniquity will not find them out, seeing "Christ has died." And true it is with regard to all who believe in him, and who "sow to the Spirit," that they will not be dealt with according to their deserts, but according to the merits of him in whom they have believed. Of this we shall have occasion to speak more particularly hereafter. At present, let it suffice to observe that unbelievers, who continue to "sow to the flesh," have no interest in his mercy. There might as well have been no Saviour, nay, better, so far as their future happiness is concerned, than a Saviour not believed in, loved, nor obeyed. Iniquity, unlamented, will inevitably be our ruin. It is as true as though Christ had never died, that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

It is a very serious and impressive truth which is here held up, THAT ALL WHICH IS DONE IN THIS LIFE IS PREPARATORY TO ANOTHER; OR THAT THE SORROWS AND JOYS OF A FUTURE WORLD BEAR A RELATION TO WHAT IS WROUGHT IN THIS, SIMILAR TO THAT WHICH THE HARVEST BEARS TO THE SEED SOWN. This is the subject to which I wish to call your serious attention, and surely I may presume that such an attention will not be withheld.

I. Let us begin on the subject of SOWING TO THE FLESH, and observe the relation which the future punishment of the wicked will bear to it.

The fruit which arises from sowing to the flesh is termed "corruption." It does not consist in the destruction of being, but of well-being; in the blasting of peace, joy, and hope; and consequently in the enduring of tribulation, anguish, and everlasting despair.

This dreadful harvest will all originate in the sin which has been committed in the present life. Even here we see enough to convince us of its destructive tendency. We see intemperance followed with disease, idleness with rags, pride with scorn, and indifference to evangelical truth with the *belief of a lie*. We see nations desolated by wars, neighbourhoods and

families rendered miserable by contentions, and the minds of individuals sinking under the various loads of guilt, remorse, and despair. Great is the misery of man upon him. Yet this is but the "blade" proceeding from this deadly seed; or at most the "ear:" the "full corn in the ear" is preserved for another state.

The Scriptural representations of the wrath to come convey the idea, not of torture inflicted by mere power, nor of punishment without respect to desert, but of bitter "weepings and wailings," in reflecting on the deeds done in the body. The punishment of the adulterer is described as a "bed,"—a bed of devouring fire; the deceiver will find himself deceived: he that loved cursing, it shall come upon him, as oil into his bones; and they who continued to say unto God, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," God will say unto them, "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity: I never knew you."

Future misery will greatly consist in *reflection*. Abraham said to the rich man, "Son, remember!" If the memory could be obliterated, there is reason to think hell would be extinguished; but it must remain.

There are four things in particular pertaining to sin which will continue to be the objects of reflection, and which therefore must prove the seeds of future misery.

1. *The character of the Being against whom it has been committed.* If God has been wanting in justice or goodness; if his law had been, what some have profanely said of it,—a taskmaster, requiring brick without straw; if compliance with his will had been inconsistent with real happiness; if his invitations had been insincere; or if his promises had in any instance been broken; if his threatenings had borne no proportion to the evil of the offence; or if in condemning the sinner he had availed himself of being stronger than he; his wrath might possibly have been endured. We can bear an unjust punishment better than a just one. The displeasure of a malignant being, however it may injure us, does not bereave us of inward peace; it is the frown of *goodness* that is intolerable. To have incurred the displeasure of a God whose nature is LOVE, must furnish reflections which cannot be endured.

2. *The folly of it.* There are few things in the present state which sting the mind with keener sensations than the recollection that we have ruined ourselves with our own foolishness.

If we see a man eager in pursuing trifles, while he neglects things of the greatest importance; anxious to shun imaginary evils, and heedlessly plunging himself into real ones; all attention to present indulgences, but regardless of his future interests; averse from what is his duty, and busying himself in things for which he is utterly incompetent, and which, therefore, he should commit to another; in fine studying to displease his best friend, and to gratify his worst enemy; we should without hesitation pronounce him a foolish man, and foretell his ruin. Yet all this is the constant practice of every unconverted sinner: and if he persist in his folly, the recollection of it in a future state must overwhelm him with "shame and everlasting contempt."

3. *The aggravating circumstances which attend it.* The same actions committed in different circumstances possess very different degrees of guilt. The heathens in pursuing their immoralities are without excuse; but those who are guilty of the same things amidst the blaze of gospel light are much more so. The profligate conduct of those young people whose parents have set them the example is heinous; but what is it in comparison of that which is against example, and in spite of all the tears, prayers, and remonstrances of their godly relations? And what is that rejection of the gospel



in the most ignorant part of the community, in comparison of that which is accompanied with much hearing, reading, and reflection?

O my hearers! a large proportion of the sin committed among us is of this description; it is against light, and against love. Wisdom crieth in our streets, and understanding putteth forth her voice. The melting invitations and solemn warnings of God are frequently sounded in our ears. If we should perish, therefore, ours will not be the lot of common sinners; our reflections will be similar to those of Chorazin and Bethsaida, whose inhabitants are represented as more guilty than those of Sodom and Gomorrah. To reject the gospel, whether it be by a preference of gross indulgences, a fondness for refined speculations, or an attachment to our own righteousness, is to incur "the wrath of the Lamb," which is held up to us as the most dreadful of all wrath—as that from which unbelievers would be glad to be hid, though it were by being crushed beneath falling rocks, or buried in oblivion at the bottom of the mountains.

4. That in sin which will furnish matter for still further reflection will be *its effects on others connected with us*. It is a very affecting consideration, that we are so linked together in society that we almost necessarily communicate our dispositions one to another. We draw, and are drawn, in both good and evil. If we go to heaven, we are commonly instrumental in drawing some others along with us; and it is the same if we go to hell. If a sinner, when he has destroyed his own soul, could say, I have injured myself only, his reflections would be very different from what they will be.

The influence of an evil word or action, in a way of example, may surpass all calculation. It may occupy the attention of the sinner only for the moment; but being communicated to another, it may take root in him and bring forth fruit a hundredfold. He also may communicate it to his connexions, and they to theirs; and thus it may go on to increase from generation to generation. In this world no competent idea can be formed of these effects; but they will be manifest in the next, and must needs prove a source of bitter reflection.

What sensations must arise in the minds of those whose lives have been spent in practising the abominable arts of seduction; whose words, looks, and gestures, like a pestilence that walketh in darkness, conveyed the poison of their hearts, and spread wide-wasting ruin among the unguarded youth. There they will be "cast into a bed, and those who have committed adultery with them!"

See there too the ungodly parent, compassed about and loaded with execrations by his ungodly offspring, whom he has led on by his foul example, till both are fallen into perdition!

Nor is this all: there also will be seen the "blind leader of the blind, both fallen into the ditch;" the deluded preacher with his deluded hearers; each of whom, during life, were employed in deceiving the other. The mask is now stripped off. Now it appears to what issue all his soothing flatteries led; and what was his real character at the time, notwithstanding the decency of his outward demeanour. Now it is manifest that he who led not the sheep of Christ into the true pasture "entered not in by the door himself." Ah! now the blood of souls crieth for vengeance! Methinks I see the profligate part of his auditory, who died before him, surprised at his approach. That we, say they, who have lived in pleasure, and in wantonness, should come to this place, is no wonder; but. . . . . "art *thou* also become like one of us?"

I proceed,

II. To offer some remarks on SOWING TO THE SPIRIT; or to point out

the relation that subsists between what is done for Christ in this life and the joys of the life to come.

Before I attempt to establish this part of the subject, it will be proper to form a clear and Scriptural idea of it.

The relation between sowing to the Spirit and everlasting life is as *real* as that between sowing to the flesh and everlasting death: it does not follow, however, that it is in all respects the same. The one is a relation of *due desert*; but the other is not so. The Scriptures, while they represent death as the proper "wages" of sin, have decided that eternal life is "the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The leading principles necessary to a clear understanding of this subject may be stated under the following particulars:—

1. *Nothing performed by a creature, however pure, can properly merit everlasting life.* To merit at the hand of God would be to lay him under an obligation; and this would be the same thing as becoming profitable to him: but we are taught, when we have done all, to acknowledge that we are "unprofitable servants, having done no more than was our duty to do."

2. *God may freely lay himself under an obligation to reward the obedience of a holy creature with everlasting life; and his so doing may be fit and worthy of him.* This fitness, however, arises not from the proportion between the service and the reward, but from such a conduct being adapted to express to creation in general the love which the Creator bears to righteousness, and to give encouragement to the performance of it. Such was the promise made to our first parents; which, had they continued obedient, would have entitled them to the reward.

3. *Man having sinned, the promised good is forfeited; and death becomes the only reward of which he is worthy.* "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." The law is become "weak through the flesh," like a just judge, who is incapable of acquitting a criminal, or of awarding life to a character who deserves to die.

4. *God having designs of mercy, notwithstanding, towards rebellious creatures, sent forth his Son to obey and suffer in their place; resolving to bestow eternal life on all that believe in him, as the reward of his undertaking.* So well pleased was the Father with the obedience and sacrifice of Christ, that he not only set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, and made him Head over all principalities and powers, and every name that is named; but gave him the full desire of his heart, the salvation of his people. Hence all spiritual blessings are said to be given us "in him," "through him," or "for his sake." "By means of his death" we receive the promise of "eternal inheritance;" and our salvation is considered as "the travail of his soul," which it was promised him he should "see, and be satisfied." Mercy shown to a sinner in this way is, in effect, saying, Not for your sakes do I this, be it known unto you! (be ashamed and confounded, O apostate creatures!) but to do honour to the interposition of my Son. Him will I hear!

5. *God not only accepts of all who believe in his Son, for his sake, but their services also become acceptable and rewardable through the same medium.* If our works, while unbelievers, had any thing truly good in them, which they have not, still it were impossible that they should be acceptable to God. "It does not consist with the honour of the majesty of the King of heaven and earth," as a great writer expresses it, "to accept of any thing from a condemned malefactor, condemned by the justice of his own holy law, till that condemnation be removed."\* But being "accepted in the Beloved,"

\* President Edwards's "Sermons on Justification."

our works are accepted likewise. "The Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering."—"He worketh in us that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ."—"Ye are a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

Being "accepted in the Beloved," our services become impregnated, as it were, with his worthiness; our petitions are offered up with the "much incense" of his intercession; and both are treated, in a sort, as though they were his. God, in blessing and rewarding Abraham's posterity, is represented as blessing and rewarding him. "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that in blessing I will bless thee—and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies."—Accordingly, though it be said of Caleb, "because he followed the Lord fully, him will I bring into the land wherinto he went, and his seed shall possess it;" yet it was no less a fulfilment of the promise to Abraham than of that to him. In like manner, in approving the services of believers, God approves of the obedience and sacrifice of his Son, of which they are the fruits; and, in rewarding them, continues to reward him, or to express his well-pleasèdness in his mediation.

This, brethren, I take to be, for substance, the *Christian doctrine of rewards*. I am persuaded it excludes boasting, and at the same time affords the greatest possible encouragement to be "constant, unmovable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord."

On this ground I proceed to establish the position with which I set out, *That the joys of futurity will bear a relation to what is done for Christ in the present life similar to that between the seed and the harvest.*

The same peace and joy in God which primarily arises from the mediation of Christ may arise, in a secondary sense, from the fruits of it in our own souls. We know by experience, as well as by Scripture testimony, that it is thus in the present world; hence that "great peace" which they enjoy who love the Divine law; and that "satisfaction" which a good man is said to possess "from himself;" and what good reason can be given why that which has been a source of peace and satisfaction here should not be the same hereafter? If future rewards interfered with the grace of God, or the merit of Christ, present ones must do the same; for a difference in place or condition makes no difference as to the nature of things. Besides this, the Scriptures expressly teach us that the heavenly inheritance is "treasure laid up on earth," the "crown" of the faithful, and the "reward" of those who have been hated, persecuted, and falsely accused for their Redeemer's sake. The same apostle who teaches that salvation is of "grace," and "not of works," and that we are "accepted in the Beloved," assures us that he "laboured,—that he might be accepted of the Lord;" for, he adds, "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether good or bad." The addresses to the seven Asiatic churches abound with the same sentiments. Eternal life, under various forms of expression, is there promised as the reward of those who should *overcome*.

This doctrine will receive further confirmation if we consider *wherein the nature of heavenly felicity consists*. There can be no doubt but that an essential part of it will consist in the *Divine approbation*; and this not merely on account of what we shall then be, but of what we have been and done in the present world. So far as we have sown to the Spirit, so far we shall reap the approbation of God; and this will be a harvest that will infinitely exceed all our toils. We are assured that for those who fear the Lord, and are concerned for his name in times of general declension, "a

book of remembrance is written;" and, from the account given us by our Lord, it appears that its contents will be published in the presence of an assembled world. "The King will say unto those at his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father."—"I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me."

Another essential part of the heavenly felicity will consist in "ascribing glory to God and the Lamb." It will be a source of joy unspeakable to perceive the abundance of glory which will redound to the best of beings from all the works of his hands. But if we rejoice that God is glorified, we cannot but rejoice in the recollection that we have been instrumental in glorifying him. It belongs to the nature of love to rejoice in an opportunity of expressing itself; and when those opportunities have occurred, to rejoice in recollection of them. We are told that when David was anointed king in Hebron "there was joy in Israel." Undoubtedly it must have afforded pleasure to all who had believed that God had appointed him to that office, and had felt interested for him during his affliction, to see him crowned by the unanimous consent of the tribes, whoever were the instruments of raising him to the throne; but it must give peculiar joy to those worthies who, at that early period, had cast in their lot with him, and fought by his side through all his difficulties. And as they would feel a special interest in his exaltation, so special honours were conferred on them under his government. It is, I apprehend, in allusion to this piece of sacred story, that our Lord speaks in the manner he does to his apostles: "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

The satisfaction of the apostle Paul, in having "fought the good fight, finished his course, and kept the faith," did not consist in a Pharisaical self-complacency; but in a consciousness of having, in some good measure, lived to his glory who died for him, and rose again; and the same consciousness that rendered him happy, while in the prospect of his crown, must render him still more so in the possession of it.

It has been noticed that one great source of future misery to the sinner will be the *effects* which his sin has produced upon others; and much the same may be observed concerning the righteous. We already perceive the tendency which a holy, upright, and benevolent conduct has to work conviction in the minds of men; but in the world to come the seed will have actually produced its fruits; and, God being thereby glorified, the hearts of those who have contributed towards it must be filled with grateful satisfaction.

We can form no competent ideas, at present, of the effects of good, any more than of evil. What we do of either is merely the kindling of a fire; how far it may burn we cannot tell, and, generally speaking, our minds are but little occupied about it. Who can calculate the effects of a modest testimony borne to truth; of an importunate prayer for its success; of a disinterested act of self-denial; of a willing contribution; of a seasonable reproof; of a wholesome counsel; of even a sigh of pity, or a tear of sympathy? Each or any of these exercises may be the means, in the Lord's hand, of producing that in the bosoms of individuals which may be communicated to their connexions, and from them to theirs, to the end of time.

The gospel dispensation also is accompanied with peculiar encouragements for such exercises; it is that period in which the Messiah receives of "the travail of his soul;" and, consequently, that in which his servants may

warrantably hope for the greatest success. Under his reign, we have the promise of the Spirit being "poured upon us from on high," and of various other blessings resulting from it; particularly, that "the wilderness shall become a fruitful field;" that it shall be so fertile, that what has been before reckoned a "fruitful field" shall, in comparison with it, "be counted for a forest;" that "the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness, and assurance for ever;" and, finally, that the labours of the Lord's servants, during these happy times, shall be like that of the husbandman who "sows beside all waters," or who cultivates a rich and well-watered soil. It is also during the Messiah's reign that we are warranted to expect great things to arise from small beginnings. "There shall be a handful of corn in the earth, upon the top of the mountains, the fruit whereof shall shake like Lebanon."

The influence of these effects on our present and future happiness is clearly intimated by our Lord, where he represents the prophets as "sowing," and the apostles as "reaping," or "entering into their labours."—"He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal; that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together." The reapers in Christ's harvest *receive wages* in the enjoyments which accompany their toils in the present life; they "gather fruit unto life eternal" in the effects of them contributing to enhance the blessedness of heaven; and this blessedness is not confined to those who have been the most successful in their day, but extends to others, who have prepared the way before them. According to this representation, Isaiah and Jeremiah, who sowed in tears, will reap in joy; "rejoicing together" with Peter and Paul and John, and all the New Testament ministers; viewing, in their successes, the happy fruits of their own disregarded labours.

In this view, the labours of Paul and his companions must be considered as extending, in their effects, to the very end of time. All the true religion that has blessed the different parts of the earth, within the last seventeen hundred years, has arisen from their labours; and all the souls which have ascended to glory, or shall yet ascend, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, shall bless the Lord of the harvest for sending them. When we see these heroic worthies sowing the seed of life, reproached in one city, imprisoned in another, and stoned in another, we think it discouraging work. All they could accomplish was but little, in comparison of the multitudes of men who inhabited the earth; and that little must be at great expense. It was a handful of corn cast upon the top of a mountain—a most unpromising soil. They, indeed, saw that the hand of the Lord was with them; but, probably, they had no conception of the extent to which the effects of their labours would reach. If Paul and Silas rejoiced and sang praises in the prison at Philippi, what would have been their joy could they have foreseen that myriads of myriads in this European quarter of the world would receive the testimony which they should leave behind them, and follow them to glory?

But all these effects are manifest to them in the heavenly world. There they see the harvest which had arisen from the handful of corn, waving before the wind, like the trees of the vast and conspicuous forest of Mount Libanus. Every hour, if I may so speak, souls are arriving at those happy regions, who hail them as their spiritual father, and who shall be their crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord.

The joy of the apostles will not prevent later labourers from possessing the immediate fruit of their toils, any more than that of the prophets will prevent them from possessing theirs: "both they that sow and they that reap will rejoice together."

Nor is this encouraging truth to be confined to the apostles, or to men of eminence. He who received but two talents had the approbation of his Lord, equally with him who had received five. The reward, as promised in the gospel, will not be so much according to the talents we possess as the use we make of them; nor so much in respect of our success as of our fidelity. Many a servant of Christ has spent the greater part of his life with but little apparent success. His charge, it may be, was small at the beginning, and he has not been able to enlarge it. He has witnessed but few appearances of a Divine change in his congregation; and some of those who, for a time, afforded him hope, have turned back. Under such circumstances, his heart has often sunk within him; often has he sighed in secret, and thought within himself, I am a vessel in which the Lord taketh no pleasure! But if, under all this, he be faithful to his trust, and preserve a single eye to the glory of God, his labours will not be lost. The seed which he has sown may spring up after his decease; or he may have prepared the way for another more successful; and when all shall meet in a future state, he that soweth and he that reapeth shall rejoice together.

Neither is this subject to be confined to ministers. As in Christ's harvest there is employment for every description of labourers, so there is reason to believe that every thing done for him is productive of some good effect; and will, in some way, glorify his name, which cannot but yield a joyful satisfaction to those who love him. How grateful are the recollections of a godly parent, when, upon his dying bed, he is able to say to his children,—I have taught you the good and the right way; the things which you have heard and seen in me do; and the God of peace shall be with you!—And though he may not in this world witness those effects which would have rejoiced his heart, yet his labour will not be lost. He may, at the last, be able to present them, saying, "Here am I, and the children which the Lord hath given me." Or if some should not be gathered, yet his judgment is with the Lord, and his work with his God.

What a satisfaction must be enjoyed by those who have willingly contributed, in any form, to so glorious a cause as that of Christ—a cause which he founded by the shedding of his blood—a cause to which all the tribes of martyrs cheerfully sacrificed their lives—a cause, in fine, by the prevalence of which the name of God is glorified, and the salvation of our fellow sinners accomplished!

I close with a few reflections.

1. We learn, from this subject, *how to estimate the importance of our present conduct.* We are fearfully made, but still more fearfully situated. Every thing we do is a seed of futurity, and is daily ripening into heaven or hell. It is here we receive the stamp or impression for the whole of our existence. Is it possible that, with a proper sense of this truth, we should trifle with time, or lavish its precious moments in idleness or folly?

2. By this also we may *estimate the folly of hypocrisy.* All the labour of a man to appear what he is not is making preparation for his own confusion. What should we think of a husbandman who sows cockle instead of barley; and who having, by early rising and performing his labour in the dark, deceived his neighbours, should congratulate himself on his ingenuity? Foolish man! he should say, of what account is it to his neighbour, in comparison of what it is to himself? It will soon appear what he has been doing!

3. Let us never forget *that, whatever encouragements are afforded us, they are altogether of grace, and through a Mediator.* There is no room for pharisaical pride; and if such a spirit be at the root of our labours, it will prove "as rottenness, and the blossom shall go up as dust."

Do any inquire what they must do, that they may work the works of God? The answer is, "This is the work of God, that ye believe in him whom he hath sent." This is the first and chief concern, without which all others will be of no account. While you either openly reject Christianity, or imbibe another gospel, which is not the gospel of Christ, the curse of the Almighty is upon your head, and all your works are no other than "sowing to the flesh." Come off without further delay; come off from that fatal ground. Renounce thy self-dependences, and submit to the righteousness of God; then every thing will be in its proper place. The curse shall no longer be upon thee, nor upon any thing which thou doest. The Lord will rejoice over thee to do thee good. Thou mayest "eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works."

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## VII.

[Preached at the Annual Meeting of the Bedford Union, May 6, 1801.]

### GOD'S APPROBATION OF OUR LABOURS NECESSARY TO THE HOPE OF SUCCESS.

"If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us."—Numb. xiv. 8.

You recollect, my brethren, that when the children of Israel were going up to possess the land which the Lord their God had promised them, they were directed to send spies before them, who should search out the land, and report whether it was good or bad, and whether the inhabitants were strong or weak, few or many. The greater part of these spies proved unfaithful. They brought an evil report of the good land; depreciating its value, magnifying the difficulties of obtaining it, and thus spreading despondency over the hearts of the people. The effect was, that instead of persevering in the undertaking, they were for returning to Egypt.

There were two out of the number, however, who were of another spirit, and whose report was different from that of their companions. "The land," said they, "which we passed through to search it, is an exceedingly good land, which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them: fear them not." These worthies stood alone in their testimony, and the people had well nigh stoned them for it; but the Lord honoured them; for, of all the generations which came out of Egypt, they only inherited the promise.

Considering the object of the present meeting, you will probably suppose that my thoughts have been employed in drawing a parallel between the undertaking of Israel to subdue the Canaanites and take possession of their land in the name of Jehovah, and our undertakings to subdue to the obedience of Christ the hearts of his enemies, both at home and abroad, and in this manner take possession of the world for our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is true they have; and in discoursing upon the subject, I shall first attempt to justify the application by tracing the analogy between the two cases, and then consider the proviso on which we are given to expect success.

I. I shall attempt to justify the application of the subject, by tracing the ANALOGY BETWEEN THE UNDERTAKING OF ISRAEL AND THE EFFORTS OF CHRISTIANS TO DISSEMINATE THE GOSPEL.

It is allowed that the imagination, unaccompanied with judgment, will often find resemblances which the sacred writers would have disavowed, as beneath them; and far be it from me to imitate so puerile and unwarrantable a method of treating the oracles of God: but it appears to me that the gift of the Holy Land to Abraham and his posterity was really *designed* to prefigure the gift of all nations to the Messiah for his inheritance, and that thus it is represented in the Scriptures. It is said, in the seventy-second Psalm, "He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." This promise, I suppose, had immediate reference to the kingdom of Solomon, and signified that, during his reign, the whole extent of country included in the original promise to Abraham should be actually possessed; but, in a more remote sense, it refers to a greater Son of David than Solomon. This is manifest from several passages in the Psalm, which are inapplicable to any one but the Messiah. It is his kingdom only which shall "continue as long as the sun and the moon endure, throughout all generations;" him shall "all nations serve," and to him shall "all kings bow down; men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed." Now, considering the promise before mentioned in this light, it signifies that, like as Israel, during the reign of Solomon, inherited the utmost extent of country promised to them, so the church, during the reign of the Messiah, should possess the utmost extent of country promised to him, which is the whole world, or "the uttermost parts of the earth." In the joyful prospect of these times, the Psalm concludes: "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things; and blessed be his glorious name for ever, AND LET THE WHOLE EARTH BE FILLED WITH HIS GLORY. AMEN, AND AMEN!"

The taking possession of Canaan, and the setting up of the true worship of God in it, not only prefigured the kingdom of the Messiah, but were preparatory to it—the foundation of the gospel structure. The carnal Jews, at the coming of our Saviour, it is true, did not enter into these views; and even his own disciples were much in the dark; but the ancient Israelites understood and felt them. "God be merciful unto us," said they, "and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us."—Wherefore? That *they* might be a holy and happy people? Doubtless this was a part of their desire; but not the whole. They prayed to be blessed, that they might be blessings to the world; that "God's way might be known," through them, "upon earth, and his saving health among all nations;" that "the people might praise him," yea, that "all the people might praise him, and all the ends of the earth fear before him." Canaan was a country situated in the centre of the world, and therefore adapted to be the spot on which Jehovah should set up his standard for the subjugation of the world to himself. Hence the little leaven should diffuse its influence through the earth, till the whole were leavened. Such appears to have been the design of God in bestowing it upon the posterity of Abraham, and such are the effects which have been actually, though gradually, produced. "Out of Zion" has gone forth "the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

There are several points of dissimilarity, I allow, between the undertaking of the Israelites and that of Christians to disseminate the gospel; but whatever differences there are, they are altogether in our favour. They went forth armed with the temporal sword; we with the sword of the Spirit: their commission was to destroy men's lives; ours to save their souls: cities, and fields, and vineyards, and olive-yards were their reward; our hope, and joy, and crown, are sinners rescued from destruction, standing in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming. Finally, the people whom they encountered were appointed by the Lord of the universe to utter destruction,



as the just demerit of their crimes; and though some submitted and were spared, yet the invaders were not given to hope, or directed to wait, for a change of this kind in the body of the people; but were commanded to drive them out, and take their place. It is not so with us; we live under a dispensation of mercy; go where we will, we have glad tidings of great joy to communicate. They, having no hopes of the people, might have said, We seek not you, but yours; but our hopes terminate on the people; we therefore can say, "We seek not yours, but you."

There are several important points, however, in which the undertakings are similar. The following have occurred to me as the most remarkable:

1. The *ultimate object* of the one was to overturn the kingdom of Satan, and to establish the knowledge and worship of the true God; and the same is true of the other. The world, at that time, not a nation exempted, was under the dominion of Satan, enveloped in idolatry, and the abominations which always accompany it; so that if God had not selected a people for himself, and after having taught them to fear and obey him, given them a possession among the nations, he had had no people, nor name, nor worship, upon the face of the earth. And what is the state of mankind at present? Not altogether so deplorable; but whatever difference there may be, it is owing to that Divine revelation which God communicated to Israel, and by them to the Gentile nations. In heathen countries the god of this world reigns uncontrolled. The children of men, from generation to generation, are led captive by him at his will. Much the same may be said of those countries which are overspread by Mahomedism. Nor is it materially otherwise where the corruptions of popery maintain their sway. And even in our own country, where the Scriptures are read in the native language, there are but few who pay any serious attention to them. Is it not evident, to an impartial spectator, that the great body of the people are practical atheists, living without hope, and without God in the world? The number of worshippers, including even the laxest and most inattentive, in all our cities, and I fear in most of our towns and villages, is few, when compared with those who attend upon no worship at all. In the earlier times of the Reformation, whatever defects might exist with respect to church government and discipline, the doctrine of salvation by the cross of Christ was much more generally preached and believed than at present. Since the great principles of evangelical truth (alike clearly stated in the Articles of the Established Church and in the catechisms and confessions of Dissenters) have been relinquished, and a species of heathen morality substituted in their place, the nation has been almost heathenized. If the Lord had not left us a seed of faithful men, some in the establishment and some out of it, whose object it has been to propagate the common salvation, and to inculcate the holy practice which becomes it, surely we had, ere now, been as Sodom. Or if, like a certain great nation near home, we had revoked the laws in favour of religious liberty, and massacred, silenced, or banished the faithful witnesses of Christ, surely, like them, we had been lost in the gulf of infidelity.

2. In invading the country of the Canaanites, Israel went forth by *Divine authority*; and the same authority attends our invasion of the empire of sin and Satan. Nothing short of an express commandment could have justified a people in destroying or subjugating another people, whatever might be their moral character; but the Creator of the world had an indisputable right to dispose of any part of it, and to punish transgressors in what manner he pleased. And though the gospel is far from being injurious to the temporal interests of mankind, yet the opposition to it has been as fierce and as decided as if it had been aimed to rob them of every thing necessary to

their happiness. The servants of Christ have been taught to expect opposition, and all the evils which a world lying in wickedness, and hating to have their repose disturbed, can inflict upon them. And though, by the kind hand of God, whose influence governs all human counsels, they have had their seasons of peace and rest, yet the enmity has been much the same. The truly zealous and faithful labourers in Christ's harvest have generally, even in the most favourable periods, had to encounter a large portion of reproach and misrepresentation. And what but the *authority of Heaven* should induce us to expose ourselves to such inconveniences? We have our feelings as well as other men; and it would doubtless be agreeable to us to possess the good opinion of all about us. We have no ill-will to those who preach even what we account "another gospel, and not the gospel of Christ," whether in or out of the establishment; and if we had, we have so much good-will to ourselves, that if, consistently with the love of Christ and the souls of men, we could hold our peace, we should probably be inclined to do so, and employ ourselves in something less offensive, and more adapted to promote our temporal interests. But the *command* of Christ is not to be trifled with. He to whom we must shortly give account of the use we have made of every talent committed to us has said, "GO, TEACH ALL NATIONS—PREACH THE GOSPEL TO EVERY CREATURE!" If we have any authority from Christ to preach at all, (which I shall not here inquire,) we are, doubtless, warranted and obliged, by this commission, to embrace any opening, in any part of the earth, within our reach, for the imparting of the word of life to them that are without it. The primitive ministers went every where preaching the gospel, and gave no less offence to its enemies, even among the established teachers of religion, than we give; and were by them reproached as *ignorant* men no less than we are. Yet they persevered in their work, and endured the consequences. If we be ministers of Jesus Christ, we ought to follow their example. It is true, there are some things of an *extraordinary* kind in which we cannot follow them; but the work of spreading the gospel is ordinary, and not confined to a single age. Had not Christ's commission been binding to the latest posterity, it would not have been added, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world!"

3. The Israelites went forth, not only by Divine authority, but *under a Divine promise*; and the same is true of Christian ministers. God spoke unto Abraham, saying, "I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." This, in substance, was often repeated to the patriarchs; so often that the country was thence denominated *the Land of Promise*. This it was that supported the faith of Caleb and Joshua. It was not in a dependence on their numbers, or their prowess, that they said, "We are well able;" but on the arm of Him who had spoken in his holiness. Nor do those who labour in the Lord's service, in the present times, whether at home or abroad, (for I consider the work as one,) go forth with less encouragement. The Father has promised his Son that "he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied;" that he will "divide him a portion with the great;" and that "he shall divide the spoil with the strong." *Travail*, in a figurative sense, commonly signifies grievous affliction issuing in a great and important good. Such was the suffering of our Lord, and such must be the effect arising out of it. *A portion with the great* may refer to the territories of the great ones of this world; such as the Alexanders and the Cæsars, who, in their day, grasped a large extent of empire: but the kingdom of Christ shall be greater than the greatest of them. The *division of the spoil* implies a victory, and denotes, in this place, that Christ shall triumph over all the false religion and irreligion in

the world. And as the Father's word is given to his Son, so the word of the Son is given unto us. He that said, "Go, teach all nations," added, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." These declarations afford equal ground for confidence with those which supported a Caleb and a Joshua.

4. The promise to Israel was *gradually* fulfilled; and the same is observable of that which is made to Christ and his people. It was almost five hundred years, from the time that God entered into covenant with Abraham, before his posterity were permitted to set foot upon the land, as possessors of it; and nearly five hundred years more elapsed before their possession was completed. And, in establishing the kingdom of his Son, God has proceeded in a similar manner. The accession of the Gentiles was promised to Noah, under the form of Japheth being *persuaded to dwell in the tents of Shem*; but more than two thousand years roll on before any thing very considerable is accomplished. At length the Messiah comes; and, like Joshua by Canaan, takes possession of the heathen world. At first, it seems to have bowed before his word; and, as we should have thought, promised fair to be subdued in a little time. But every new generation that was born, being corrupt from their birth, furnished a body of new recruits to Satan's army; and as the Canaanites, after the first onset in the times of Joshua, gathered strength, and struggled successfully against that generation of Israelites which succeeded him and forsook the God of their fathers; so, as the church degenerated, the world despised it. Its doctrine, worship, and spirit being corrupted, from being a formidable enemy, the greater part of it becomes a convenient ally, and is employed in subduing the other part, who hold fast the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. Thus the war is lengthened out; and now, after a lapse of eighteen hundred years, we see not all things yet put under him. On the contrary, when reviewing our labours, it often seems to us that "we have wrought no deliverance in the earth, neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen." But let us not despair; *we see Jesus* upon his throne; and as the Canaanites were ultimately driven out, and the kingdom of Israel extended from sea to sea, so assuredly it shall be with the kingdom of Christ.

The great Disposer of events has, for wise ends, so ordered it that the progress of things shall be gradual. He designs by this, among other things, to try the faith and patience of sincere people, and to manifest the hypocrisy of others. Hereby scope is afforded both for faith and unbelief. If, like Caleb and Joshua, we be for going forward, we shall not want encouragement; but if, like the others, we be weary of waiting, and our hearts turn back again, we shall not want a handle, or plea, by which to excuse ourselves. God loves that both persons and things should appear to be what they are.

5. The promise was not accomplished, at last, but *by means of ardent, deadly, and persevering struggles*; and such must be the efforts of the church of Christ, ere she will gain the victory over the spiritual wickedness with which she has to contend. The Canaanites would not give up any thing but at the point of the sword. Hence the faint-hearted, the indolent, and the weak in faith were for compromising matters with them. The same spirit which magnified difficulties at a distance, which spoke of cities as "great, and walled up to heaven," and of "the sons of Anak being there," was for stopping short when they had gained footing in the land, and for "making leagues" with the residue of the people. Thus it has long been in the Christian church: the gospel having obtained a footing in the western nations, we have acted as though we were willing that Satan should enjoy the other parts without molestation. Every heathen and

Mahomedan country has seemed to be a city walled up to heaven, and the inhabitants terrible to us as the sons of Anak. And even in our native country, an evangelical ministry having obtained a kind of establishment in some places, we have long acted as if we thought the rest were to be given up by consent, and left to perish without any means being used for their salvation! If God means to save any of them, it seems, he must bring them under the gospel, or the gospel, in some miraculous manner, to them; whereas the command of the Saviour is that we *go*, and preach it to every creature. All that Israel gained was by dint of the sword. It was at the expense of many lives, yea, many thousands of lives, that they at last came to the full possession of the land, and that the promises of God were fulfilled towards them. The same may be said of the establishment of Christ's kingdom. It was by ardent and persevering struggles that the gospel was introduced into the various nations, cities, and towns where it now is; and, in many instances, at the expense of life. Thousands of lives were sacrificed to this great object in the times of the apostles, and were I to say millions in succeeding ages, I should probably be within the compass of truth. But we have been so long inured to act under the shadow of civil protection, and without any serious inconvenience to our temporal interests, that we are startled at difficulties which the ancient Christians would have met with fortitude. They put their lives in their hands, "standing in jeopardy every hour;" and though we cannot be sufficiently thankful, both to God and the legislature of our country, for the protection we enjoy, yet we must not make this the condition of our activity for Christ. "He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap." If ever God prosper us in any great degree, it will be in the exercise of that spirit by which the martyrs obtained a good report.

The above particulars may suffice to show the analogy between the two cases: the object aimed at, the authority acted upon, the promise confided in, its gradual accomplishment, and the means by which this accomplishment is effected, are the same in both: I hope, therefore, the application of the one to the other may be considered as justified.

II. Let us consider THE PROVISION ON WHICH WE ARE WARRANTED TO HOPE FOR SUCCESS. "If the Lord *delight in us*, then he will bring us into the land, and give it us."

The term *delight* does not express that Divine love to our souls which is the source of our salvation, but a complacency in our character and labours. Thus it is to be understood in the speech of David, when fleeing from the conspiracy of Absalom: "If he say, I have no delight in thee, here I am: let him do with me as seemeth him good!" He could not mean by this, If God have no love to my soul, I submit to be for ever separated from him; for such submission is not required of any who live under a dispensation of mercy: but, if he approve not of me as the head of his people, here I am; let him take my life away as it pleaseth him. The amount is, that if we would hope to succeed in God's work, our character and undertakings must be such as he approves.

1. The *object* which we pursue must be simply the cause of God, unmixed with worldly policy, or party interest. It has been insinuated that, under the colour of disseminating evangelical doctrine, we seek to gain over the common people, and so to obtain, it should seem, an ascendancy in government.\* If it be so, we may be assured the Lord will take no delight in

\* To this effect were the insinuations of Professor Robison, concerning the efforts of Mr. Robert Haldane and his friends, in a proposed mission to Hindostan. The modest and dignified manner in which that gentleman repelled the accusation, and even forced his accuser to retract it, may be seen in his late excellent pamphlet on that subject. The Bishop of

us. The work, in this case, must be altogether of man, and will come to nothing; yea, and to nothing let it come. The desire and prayer of my heart is, that all such undertakings, if such there be, may perish! The kingdom of Christ will never prosper in those hands which make it only the secondary object of their pursuit, even though the first were lawful; and much less when it is made to subserve that which is itself sinful. But if the Divine glory be the object of our labours, the work is of God; God himself will delight in us, and every attempt to oppose it will be found to be fighting against God.

There is another way in which, I apprehend, we are in much more danger of erring; I mean, by an improper attachment to *party interest*. I am far from thinking it a sin to be of a party. Every good man ought to rank with that denomination which, in his judgment, approaches nearest to the mind of Christ; but this is very different from having our labours directed to the promotion of a party, *as such*. If so, we shall see little or no excellence in whatever is done by others, and feel little or no pleasure in the success which God is pleased to give them; but while this is our spirit, whatever be our zeal, we are serving ourselves rather than Christ, and may

Rochester, in a late address to his clergy, after representing the Socinians as aiming at this object, adds as follows: "Still the operations of the enemy are going on—still going on by stratagem—the stratagem still a pretence of reformation; but the reformation the very reverse of what was before attempted. Instead of divesting religion of its mysteries, and reducing it to a mere philosophy in speculation and to a mere morality in practice, the plan is now to affect great zeal for orthodoxy; to make great pretensions to an extraordinary measure of the Holy Spirit's influence; to alienate the minds of the people from the established clergy, by representing them as sordid worldlings, without any concern about the souls of men, indifferent to the religion which they ought to teach, and to which the laity are attached, and destitute of the Spirit of God. In many parts of the kingdom new conventicles have been opened, in great number; and congregations formed of one knows not what denomination."

If the religion of Jesus must be reproached, it is best that it should be done in some such manner as this. Had the bishop of Rochester preserved any regard to candour or moderation, he might have been believed; as it is, it may be presumed there can be but little danger of it. None, except those who are as deeply prejudiced as himself, can, for a moment, imagine that the late attempts for disseminating evangelical doctrine are the operations of a political scheme, carried on by infidels in disguise. A very small acquaintance with men and things must convince any one, that the *persons concerned in this work are not the same* as those who affected to reform the church by reducing the mysteries of the gospel to "a mere philosophy in speculation, and to a mere morality in practice." Men of that description were never possessed of zeal enough for such kind of work. We might as soon expect to see Bishop Horsley himself turn village-preacher as them.

In repelling such language as the above, it is difficult to keep clear of the acrimony by which it is dictated. Suffice it to say, I am conscious that no such plan or design ever occupied my mind for a moment; nor am I acquainted with any person of whom I have ground to suspect any such thing. I know persons who are, as I believe, sinfully prejudiced against government, and of whose spirit and conversation I seldom fail to express my dislike; but I know not an individual whom I have any reason to think engages in village-preaching with so mean and base an end as that which is suggested by this prelate.

The picture which is drawn of the clergy is, doubtless, unpleasant; and, if applied to the serious part of them, far from just: whence it was taken is best known to the writer. I am inclined to think, however, that though he has represented it as the language of village-preachers, he would be unable to prove such charges against them. There may be violent individuals engaged in village-preaching, who may take pleasure in exposing the immoralities of the clergy; and if they have half the bitterness on the one side which this writer discovers on the other, they are unworthy of being so employed. Whatever grounds there may be for such charges against numbers of the clergy, the body of those who have been employed in preaching or reading printed sermons in the villages have never thought of preferring them, but have confined their attention to the preaching of Jesus Christ.

I have no scruple, however, in saying, if reducing religion to "a mere philosophy in speculation, and a mere morality in practice," be subverting it, it is subverted by great numbers in the Church of England, as well as out of it. And where this is the case, it is the bounden duty of the friends of evangelical truth to labour to introduce it, regardless of the wrath of its adversaries.

The suppression of "conventicles," I doubt not, would be very agreeable to some men; but I have too much confidence in the good sense of the legislature to suppose that it will suffer its councils to be swayed by a few violent churchmen.

be certain the Lord will not delight in us to do us good. The only spirit in which the Lord takes pleasure is that which induces us to labour to promote *his* cause, and to rejoice in the prosperity of all denominations *so far as they promote it*.

2. The *doctrine* we teach must be that of Jesus Christ and him crucified. The person and work of Christ have ever been the corner-stone of the Christian fabric: take away his Divinity and atonement, and all will go to ruins. This is the doctrine taught by the apostles, and which God, in all ages, has delighted to honour. It would be found, I believe, on inquiry, that in those times wherein this doctrine has been most cordially embraced the church has been most prosperous, and that almost every declension has been accompanied by a neglect of it. This was the doctrine by which the Reformation was effected; and to what is the Reformation come in those communities where it is rejected? This was the leading theme of the puritans and nonconformists; and what are their descendants become who have renounced it? Many of them rank with infidels, and many who retain the form of Christianity deny the power thereof.

If it be alleged that the church of Rome retains this doctrine amidst its greatest apostacy, and some protestant churches do the same, which, notwithstanding, have exceedingly degenerated; I answer, it is one thing for a community to retain doctrines in its decrees and articles, and another for ministers to preach them with faith and love in their ordinary labours. Divine truth requires to be written, not merely with ink and paper, but by the Spirit of God, upon the fleshly tables of the heart. If the church of Rome had retained the doctrine of Christ's Divinity to any purpose, its members would have worshipped him, and not have turned aside to the adoration of saints and relics; and if his atoning blood and only mediation between God and man had been properly regarded, we had never heard of mediators, pardons, and penances of another kind.

Christ crucified is the central point, in which all the lines of evangelical truth meet and are united. There is not a doctrine in the Scriptures but what bears an important relation to it. Would we understand the glory of the Divine character and government? It is seen in perfection *in the face of Jesus Christ*. Would we learn the evil of sin, and our perishing condition as sinners? Each is manifested in his sufferings. All the blessings of grace and glory are given us in him, and for his sake. Practical religion finds its most powerful motives in his dying love. That doctrine of which Christ is not the sum and substance is not the gospel; and that morality which has no relation to him, and which is not enforced on evangelical principles, is not Christian, but heathen.

I do not mean to be the apologist for that fastidious disposition apparent in some hearers, who require that every sermon shall have Christ for its immediate theme, and denominate every thing else legal preaching. His sacred name ought not to be unnaturally forced into our discourses, nor the Holy Scriptures turned into allegory for the sake of introducing it; but, in order to preach Christ, there is no need of this. If all Scripture doctrines and duties bear a relation to him, we have only to keep that relation in view, and to urge practical religion upon those principles. If I leave out Christ in a sermon, and allege that the subject did not admit of his being introduced, I fear it will only prove that my thoughts have not been cast in an evangelical mould. I might as well say there is a village which has no road to the metropolis, as that there is a Scripture doctrine or duty which has no relation to the person and work of Christ. Neither can I justly allege that such a way of preaching would cramp the powers of my soul, and confine me to four or five points in divinity: we may give the utmost

scope to our minds, and yet, like the apostle, determine to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified. There is breadth, and length, and depth, and height sufficient in his love to occupy our powers, even though they were ten thousand times larger than they are.

In all our labours, brethren, in the church or in the world, in our native country or among the heathen, be this our principal theme. In this case, and not otherwise, the Lord will delight in us, will bring us into the land, and give it us for a possession.

3. The *motive* of our undertakings must be pure. God cannot possibly take pleasure in the labours of the *sordid* or the *vain*. Indeed, I do not perceive how, in the greater part of our labours, we can suspect ourselves, or be suspected, of acting from a regard to our worldly advantage. In attempting to carry the gospel among the heathen we certainly can have no such motive, as every part of the work requires the sacrifice of interest, and that without the most distant prospect of its being restored. And even in carrying what we believe to be evangelical doctrine into the villages of our native country, it is commonly at the expense of both ease and interest. In those labours, however, that are within the vicinity of our respective congregations, in which success may contribute to our temporal advantage, it becomes us to watch over our own hearts. If such a motive should lie concealed among the springs of action, it may procure a blast upon our undertakings. The Lord will have no delight in such preaching; and without him we can do nothing. Or if avarice have no place in us, yet, should we be stimulated by *the desire of applause*, it will be equally offensive to a holy God. The idea of being a missionary, abroad or at home, may feed the vanity of some minds; and, indeed, there is no man that is proof against such temptations. We have all reason to watch and pray. There is a "woe" hanging over the "idol shepherd; the sword will be upon his arm, and upon his right eye!" I have no suspicion of any one, but merely wish every one to suspect himself. If we secretly wish to appear great among our brethren, to magnify ourselves or our party, or to figure away in the religious world, as persons of extraordinary zeal, all is naked to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do, and, depend upon it, he will have no delight in us. But if our eye be single, our whole body shall be full of light. Those that honour God shall be honoured of him; and however he may prove them for a time, they shall find, in the end, that their labour has not been in vain in the Lord.

4. We must go forth in all our labours as little children, *sensible of our own insufficiency, and depending only upon God*. The first city which Israel besieged, on their passing over Jordan, was won without striking a single blow, but merely walking round it, and sounding their trumpets, according to the command of the Lord. This was doubtless meant to teach them a lesson, at the outset of the war, not to lean upon their strength, or numbers, or valour; but upon the arm of Jehovah. This lesson was ordinarily repeated throughout their generations, whenever led to battle by godly men; instead of filling them with ideas of their own sufficiency, (which is the universal practice of worldly men who have had the command of armies,) they taught them to distrust themselves, and to rely upon their God. This is the spirit by which true religion is distinguished; and in this spirit we must go forth to subdue the hearts of sinners, or the Lord will have no delight in us, but leave us to fight our battles alone. Thus that eminent man of God, from whose pulpit I now address you, represents the four captains, and their ten thousands, after besieging Mansoul without effect, as presenting their petition to Shaddai for assistance. The more self-annihila-

tion we possess, the more likely we are to be useful to the souls of men. God has "respect unto the lowly; but the proud he knoweth afar off."

5. We must *persevere* in the work of the Lord to the end. When Israel came out of Egypt, I suppose, they all intended to go forward, and to possess the land; but when difficulties arose, the great body of them fainted, and were for going back. When an undertaking is new and plausible, many come forward to engage in it; but a time comes when the first flush of spirits subsides, when great and seemingly insurmountable difficulties present themselves, and when success appears to be much further off than at the beginning: this is the time for the trial of faith. A few such seasons will commonly thin the ranks of Christian professors; but blessed are they that endure temptation. Those who "followed the Lord fully" were brought into the land. It is possible that our motives may be pure at the onset, and yet, through the strength of temptation, we may be turned aside. The Lord speaks well of the church of Ephesus, as having, for a time, "borne, and had patience, and for his name's sake had laboured and not fainted;" yet it follows, "Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." This is an example for us to shun. Another follows, namely, the church at Thyatira, for our imitation: "I know thy works, and thy charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works, *and the last to be more than the first.*"

6. We must exercise a *lively faith* in the power and promise of God. I reserve this remark to the last, because it contains the spirit of the passage, and is a matter of the highest importance. It was owing to unbelief that the body of the people drew back, and to faith that Joshua and Caleb were for pressing forward. Nor is there any thing of greater importance to the Christian ministry, especially to those engaged in extraordinary labours. He that endeavours to extend the limits of Christ's kingdom resembles a navigator who engages in a voyage of discovery; he is exposed to ills and dangers which cannot be foreseen nor provided against. Carrying a doctrine to which all his hearers have a natural and deep-rooted aversion, the difficulties he has to encounter are as islands of ice near the poles, or as rocks in unknown seas; but faith in the power and promise of God is sufficient for all his wants.

Confidence is agreeable to a generous character, while suspicion thrusts a sword into his heart. The former is honourable to him, affording him opportunity of carrying his kind intentions into execution; the latter dishonours him, and lays him under a sort of incapacity of doing good to the party. A generous character will feel impelled by a principle of honour to keep pace with the expectations of those who confide in his goodness, and veracity. Nor is this confined to the concerns of men. There is something greatly resembling it in the dealings of God with us. The Lord has magnified his *word* more than all his name; and as faith corresponds with the word, he has bestowed greater honour upon this grace than upon any other. Hence we find such language as the following:—"Oh how great is thy goodness which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!—Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established: believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.—The Lord taketh pleasure in them that hope in his mercy." Under the New Testament still more is said of this important principle. In almost all the miracles of our Saviour, he made a point of answering to the faith of the parties, or of those that brought them; and where this was wanting, he is represented as under a kind of incapacity to help them. "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.—According to your faith be it unto you.—Thy faith



hath saved thee; go in peace.—He could there do no mighty works—because of their unbelief.” Nor was this principle honoured merely in miraculous cases: our Saviour taught his disciples to cherish high expectations from the Divine mercy and faithfulness in their ordinary approaches to a throne of grace: “Whatsoever things ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye shall receive them, and ye shall have them.”

In recommending a strong and lively faith, I do not mean to encourage that species of confidence which has no foundation in the Divine promise. This is not faith but fancy, or the mere workings of the imagination. Those who, many ages since, engaged in what were called the *holy wars*, desirous of driving out the Turks from Jerusalem, were not wanting in confidence; but the promise of God was not the ground on which it rested. It was not faith, therefore, but presumption. It was not thus with Israel in going up against the Canaanites; nor is it thus with those who labour to extend the spiritual kingdom of Christ. The promise of God is here fully engaged. “He hath sworn by himself, the word is gone out of his mouth in righteousness, and shall not return.” Many passages might be produced in proof that, before the end of time, the kingdom of the Messiah shall be universal. I shall select a few:—“The stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. 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 the 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.—Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like a little leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the *whole* was leavened.—The seventh angel sounded, 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.” These are the true sayings of God. Surely they afford ground for a strong and lively faith in every effort to disseminate the gospel.

God has not only dealt largely in promises, but has given us abundance of examples of their fulfilment. A large part of Scripture prophecy has already been converted into history. “Unto us a child *is* actually born; unto us a son *is* given; the government *is* upon his shoulder; his name *is* called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace.” But the same authority which foretold this has added, “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.” There is also a peculiar pledge given for its fulfilment: “The zeal of the Lord of hosts,” it is declared, “shall perform this!” Zeal is a fervid affection of the mind, that prompts us to pursue an object with earnestness and perseverance, and to encounter every difficulty that may stand in the way of its accomplishment. From such a spirit, even in men, much is to be expected. Yet what is the zeal of creatures? Always feeble, often misguided, disproportionate, or declining. But conceive of it as possessing the heart of the omnipotent God. What an overwhelming thought! The establishment of Christ’s kingdom deeply interests him: his thoughts are upon it; all his plans include it; and all that is going on in the world, from generation to generation, is made to subserve it. We draw some encouragement from the zeal of creatures in God’s cause. When his servants take pleasure in the stones of Zion, and favour the dust thereof, we consider it as a hopeful symptom that the Lord is about to arise and have mercy

upon it. The importunity and liberality of Christians, the diligence of ministers, and the cries of the souls from under the altar for the fall of Babylon, may, severally, have their influence; but the zeal of the Lord of hosts surpasses all. Here is solid rock for faith to rest upon.

Unbelievers may deride every attempt to turn sinners from the errors of their way; and even believers, while viewing things through sensible mediums, may discover insurmountable difficulties.—The people will not believe us, nor hearken to our voice: the prejudices of men are almost insuperable in our native country; and if we go abroad, they are worse: these *castes*, this *voluptuousness*, this *savage ferocity*, this *treachery* of character . . . . How can we hope to overcome such obstacles as these? But all this is only a repetition of the objections of the unbelieving Israelites: “The people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are great, and walled up to heaven: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there!” If we can believe . . . “all things are possible to him that believeth.”

Past instances of mercy furnished the church with matter of prayer: “Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord! Awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old! Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon?” And why should we not apply the past operations of grace to a similar purpose? That arm is not grown weary which subdued Jewish malignity in the days of Pentecost, and overturned heathen idolatry by the doctrine of the cross.

I think I may add, there is reason to hope that the time when these things shall be accomplished cannot be far off. I have no desire to deal in uncertain conjectures. The prophecies were not designed to make us prophets, nor to gratify an idle curiosity. They contain enough, however, to strengthen our faith, and invigorate our zeal. If we carefully examine the Scriptures, though we may not be able to fix times with any certainty, yet we may obtain satisfaction that the day is not *very distant* when the kingdom of Christ shall be universal. The New Testament writers, in their times, made use of language which strongly indicates that time itself was far advanced. “The coming of the Lord draweth nigh.—Behold, the Judge standeth at the door.—The end of all things is at hand.—He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly!” These, and such-like passages, I should think, cannot mean less than that in those days they had passed the meridian of time, and entered, as it were, into the afternoon of the world. And now, after a lapse of eighteen hundred years, what else can be expected but that things are fast approaching to their final issue? But it is not merely on general grounds that the conclusion rests. The prophet Daniel, in his seventh chapter, describes the successive establishment and overthrow of four great governments, which should each, in its day, rule the greater part of the world. He also speaks of the last of these governments as issuing in ten branches, and describes another, which he calls “a little horn,” as arising from among them. The dominion of this last government was to continue “until a time, times, and the dividing of time.” After this “the judgment should set, and they should take away its dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end.” And then it immediately follows, “And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High.” There are many things in the prophecies which are hard to be understood; but this seems to be very clear. There can be no doubt of the four great governments being the Babylonian, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman. Now these have successively appeared upon the stage, and are gone into perdition. The division of the Roman empire into a number of smaller governments, such as continue in Europe to this day,

and, among them, exercise a dominion over the rest of the world equal to what was formerly exercised by the Romans, is doubtless signified by the "ten horns" of the fourth beast. Nor can we be at a loss to know what that government is which is signified by a "little horn," which rose up from among the ten horns, which speaketh "great words against the Most High, and weareth out the saints of the Most High." We have seen its rise, felt its reign, and in part rejoiced in its overthrow. The period alluded to, as the term of its existence, is manifestly the same as that which John, in the Revelation, calls "forty and two months, or one thousand two hundred and sixty days," during which "the holy city should be trodden under foot, the witnesses prophesy in sackcloth," and the true church have her abode "in the wilderness," in a manner resembling the state of things in Jerusalem in the times of Antiochus. More than a thousand of these prophetic days, or years, must have already elapsed. The period itself must be drawing towards a close; and when this is closed, there is an end to every species of Satanic government. That which follows is given to the Son of man, and to the people of the saints of the Most High. The amount is, We are under the last form of the reign of darkness, and that form is fast dissolving. Surely, the day of the church's redemption draweth nigh!

And while these views afford a joyful prospect to the church of Christ, there is nothing in them which can furnish any just ground of alarm to civil government. There is no reason to imagine that the church of Christ will ever become a political community, exercising dominion over others; but that Christian principles will pervade and rule the governments of the earth. However God may overrule the tumultuous revolutions of these times, to the making way for his kingdom, his kingdom itself will be entirely different; the wind, the earthquake, and the fire may go before it, but the thing itself will be as a still small voice. It will not come with *observation*, or outward show. The banners that will be displayed will not be those of sedition and tumult, but of truth and peace. It will be a renovation in the hearts of men; a revolution in both rulers and subjects, from the slavery of sin to the love of both God and man; and this, as it must produce the establishment of peace and good order, cannot be an object of dread to any who are well disposed. It is not impossible that we may live to see things of which at present we have scarcely any conception; but whether we do or not, Jesus lives, and his kingdom must increase. And what if, while we are scaling the walls of the enemy, we should a few of us lose our lives? We must die in some way; and can we desire to die in a better cause? Probably many of the Israelites who went up to possess the land with Joshua perished in the attempt; yet this was no objection to a perseverance in the cause. In carrying the glad tidings of eternal life to Jews and Gentiles, Stephen and James, with many others, fell sacrifices at an early period; yet no one was discouraged on this account, but rather stimulated to follow their example.

I close with a few words by way of reflection. It becomes us to inquire, each one seriously for himself, whether the little success which we have already experienced may not be owing to this cause—There may be something about us on account of which God does not delight in us. I mean no reflection upon any; but let each one examine himself.—What is the secret spring of my zeal? Is the doctrine I preach truly evangelical? Let me not take this matter for granted; but examine whether it quadrates with the Scriptures. If half my time be taken up in beating off the rough edges of certain passages, to make them square with my principles, I am not in the gospel scheme. If one part of the scripture requires to be passed over, lest I should appear inconsistent, I am not sound in the faith, in God's

account, but have imbibed some false system instead of the gospel; and while this is the case, I have no reason to expect that he will delight in me, so as to make me a blessing.

Finally, Whether we possess the land or not, *it will be possessed*. Though some of the Israelites perished in the wilderness, that did not overturn the counsels of God; the next generation entered into his rest. And though there should be so much selfishness, false doctrine, unbelief, or inactivity about us, as that God should take no delight in us, and refuse to give us the land, yet our children may possess it. God's word will be accomplished. Deliverance will arise to the church of God, whether we do ourselves the honour of serving it or not. But why do I thus speak? Surely it is the desire of many in this country, and of many in this assembly, to be active, and so to act as to be approved of God.

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### VIII.

[To the Baptist Church at Cannon Street, Birmingham, at the ordination of Rev. Thomas Morgan to the Pastoral Office. June 23, 1802.]

#### THE OBEDIENCE OF CHURCHES TO THEIR PASTORS EXPLAINED AND ENFORCED.

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”—Heb. xiii. 17.

IT is not usual, I believe, for ministers in their ordinary labours to dwell upon the obligations of the people of their charge towards them. They feel, probably, that on such a subject they might be suspected of partiality to themselves; and if such a suspicion were indulged, however just and proper their admonitions might be, they would be but of little use, and might operate to their disadvantage. Nor is it a subject that a humble and holy man would ordinarily choose, even though there were no danger of misconstruction; he had rather inspire in his people the love of Christ and of one another, hoping that if this prevailed, it would constrain them to whatever was proper towards himself. It does not follow, however, that this species of Christian duty ought *never* to be insisted on; the glory of God, the success of the church, and the spiritual advantage of individuals will be found to be involved in it. No man could more strenuously renounce an undue assumption of power than the apostle Paul; in many instances, he forbore to insist upon the authority that Christ had given him; yet, when addressing the churches in the behalf of others, he uniformly insists upon the treatment which private members owe to their pastors, as well as upon other relative duties. To this I may add, if there be any one time in which an exhortation on this subject is peculiarly seasonable, it is when the relation between pastor and people is publicly solemnized. I shall therefore proceed to *explain* and *enforce* the exhortation which I have read to you.

I. Let us endeavour to ascertain WHEREIN CONSISTS THAT OBEDIENCE AND SUBMISSION WHICH IS REQUIRED OF A PEOPLE TOWARDS THEIR PASTOR. The very terms *rule*, *obey*, and *submit* may be grating in the ears of some; and true it is that there have been great abuses of these things; a great deal of priestly domination has been exercised in the name of Christ. Yet there must be *rule* in the church of Christ as well as in other societies.

Without this, it would not be a body, growing up unto him in all things which is the Head, even Christ; but a number of scattered bones. Or, if all aspired to rule and guidance, the question of the apostle would here be applicable—"If the whole were an eye, where were the hearing? But now hath God set the members, every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." Christian ministers are called *overseers*, as having the oversight of the flock, and the principal direction of its concerns.

The church of Christ, however, is not subject to a despotic government. Ministers are forbidden to "lord it over God's heritage." The power that was given them, and all other officers, ordinary or extraordinary, was for edification, and not for destruction. There are three things which are necessary in order that the authority of a pastor be legitimate and unobjectionable; namely, that he be freely chosen by the church; that the standard by which he rules be not his own will, but the will of Christ; and that the things which he urges on others be equally binding on himself.

First, It is necessary that your pastor be *freely chosen by you* to his sacred office. If he had been imposed upon you by any human authority, against or without your own consent, I should not be able to prove, from the Scriptures, that you were bound to *obey* or *submit* to him. Should it be alleged that pastors are represented as the "gifts of God," and such as the "Holy Spirit hath made overseers;" I should answer, True; but the Holy Spirit performs this work, not immediately, but mediately, by inclining the hearts of his people to choose them. No one, indeed, pretends that it is done immediately. Human choice is, in all cases, concerned; and the only question is, whether it be by that of the people, or of some one, or more, that shall choose on their behalf. The primitive churches elected their own officers. The apostles ordained them; but it was by the suffrage of the people. The power of *election* was with them; and with them it continued during the purest ages of the church. If the primitive pastors had been chosen by the apostles, it had also been their province to have rejected or silenced them, as occasion should require; but when false teachers arose among the Corinthians and the Galatians, we do not find these churches, not even the purest part of them, applying to the apostle, but the apostle to them, for their removal. The false teachers of the primitive times ingratiated themselves with the people, and despised the apostles; an incontestable proof this, to every one acquainted with human nature, where the powers of election and rejection lay. If your pastor, I say again, had been imposed upon you by any human authority, against or without your own consent, I should not be able to prove, from the Scriptures, that you were bound to obey, or submit to him. But it is not so. You have heard him and known him; and from an observation of his spirit and conduct, and an experience of the advantages of his ministry, you have chosen him to watch over you in the Lord.

Secondly, *The rule* to which you are required to yield obedience and subjection is *not his will, but the will of Christ*. Pastors are that to a church which the executive powers, or magistrates, of a free country are to the state—the organs of the law. Submission to them is submission to the law. If your pastor teach any other doctrine, or inculcate any other duties, than what Christ has left on record, obey him not; but while urging these, it is at your peril to resist him; for, resisting him, you resist him that sent him. It is in this view, as teaching *Divine* truth and enforcing *Divine* commands, that the servants of God, in all ages, have been invested with *Divine* authority. Of the sons of Levi, it was said, they shall teach Jacob "thy judgments," and Israel "thy law;" and, upon this ground, it was added, "Bless, Lord, his substance, and accept the work of his hands;

smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again." Here lay the sin of Korah and his company, of Elymas the sorcerer, and of Alexander the coppersmith: they each, by resisting the servants of God in the proper execution of their work, resisted God, and brought upon themselves the sorest of judgments.

Thirdly, The things which he urges upon you *are equally binding upon himself*. When he exhibits to you the only name given under heaven, among men, by which you can be saved, and charges you, on pain of eternal damnation, not to neglect it, remember his own soul also is at stake. And, when he exhorts and warns you, if he himself should privately pursue a contrary course, he seals his own destruction.

There are, it is true, those who lade men with heavy burdens, grievous to be borne, to which they themselves will not put one of their fingers; these, however, are not the commands of Christ. Instead of being the commands of Christ, which are not grievous, except to unholy men, these are merely human traditions; but though they were allowed to be otherwise, the inconsistent conduct of ministers would not exempt either them or you from obligation. Should we enforce the will of Christ upon you, while living in the neglect of it ourselves, woe be unto us! Yet this will fall upon our own heads. If we be wicked, depose us from our office; but while we are in it, let not the word of the Lord be disregarded on our account.

Let me point out *a few particulars*, brethren, in which it is your duty and interest to *obey* him whom you have chosen to have the rule over you, and to submit yourselves.

1. With respect to *his public ministry*. Do not fly in the face of plain-dealing from the pulpit. Good sense, as well as the fear of God, will, I trust, preserve your pastor from dealing in personal reflections, or any thing designed to offend; but do not be unwilling that he should come close to cases and consciences. You may as well have no minister, as one that never makes you feel. I hope the house of God will continue to be to you what it has been—a rest in times of trouble, a house of consolation; but do not go with a desire merely to be comforted. Go, as well, to learn your failings and defects, and in the hope of having them corrected. It is not the mere hearer, but the *doer* of the word, that is blessed in his work. I hope you will always exercise your judgments as to what you hear, and compare it with the oracles of God; but if you attend preaching *merely as judges of its orthodoxy*, you will derive no advantage to yourselves, and may do much harm to others. It is the humble Christian, who hears that he may be instructed, corrected, and quickened in the ways of God, who will obtain that consolation which the gospel affords.

2. With respect to *his private visits*. You do not expect him to visit you in the character of a saunterer, but of a pastor, and if so, it becomes you to be open to a free exchange of sentiments on your best interests. No minister is always alike prepared for profitable conversation, and some much less so than others; but if he perceive in you a desire after it, it will be much more easily introduced. Be free to communicate your cases to him. It will assist him in his preaching more than a library of expositors; and if, while you are conversing with him, he should be directed to impart to you the mind of Christ, as suited to your particular case, do not treat it lightly, but submit yourselves to it.

3. In *presiding in your occasional assemblies*. When you meet together as a Christian church, for the adjustment of your concerns, he is entitled to your respect. Every society places so much authority in its president as shall be necessary to check disorderly individuals, and to preserve a proper decorum. It will doubtless become him, especially while he is a young man

to be gentle and temperate in the exercise of authority; and it will no less become you to submit to it. When churches enter into disputes with heat and bitterness—when all are speakers, and respect is paid to no one more than to another—they debase themselves below the character even of civilized societies.

4. In *the private reproofs* which he may have occasion to administer. You do not wish that your pastor should deal in personal reflections from the pulpit; yet there are cases in which reproof requires to be personal; he must, therefore, if he discharge his duty, be free and faithful in telling you of what he sees amiss in you. It has long appeared to me there are some species of faults in individual members which are not proper objects of church censure, but of pastoral admonition; such as spiritual declensions, hesitating on important truths, neglect of religious duties, worldly anxiety, and the early approaches to any evil course. A faithful pastor, with an eye of watchful tenderness, will perceive the first symptoms of spiritual disorder, and, by a timely hint, will counteract its operations; whereas if nothing be said or done till the case requires the censure of the church, the party may be excluded, but is seldom recovered. You may easily suppose this to be a self-denying work for your pastor; he had much rather visit you with a smile of affectionate congratulation; yet it may be of the first importance to you and to the church. Do not render this disagreeable part of his work more disagreeable by an irritable and resentful disposition; but receive reproofs with candour. "Correction may be grievous to him that forsaketh the way; but he that hateth reproof shall die."

II. Let us observe THE IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS BY WHICH THIS OBEEDIENCE AND SUBMISSION ARE ENFORCED. These you will perceive are partly taken from the regard you bear to yourselves—"they watch for your souls;" partly from your sympathy with them—"that they may do it with joy, and not with grief;" and even that part which seems to respect their comfort ultimately concerns your own; for if they discharge their work with grief, "that will be unprofitable for you." Give us your serious and candid attention, brethren, while we review these important motives.

1. Your pastor "watches for your souls." Your salvation, let me presume, will be his great concern; and, while pursuing this, you may well be expected to concur with him, and submit yourselves to him in the Lord. You would submit to a surgeon who was performing an operation to save your life; or to a counsellor who should offer you his advice for the security of your property; or to a commander who should lead you forth to save your country: but these are inferior objects, when compared with your soul. Observe the force of every term.

They "watch." The word literally signifies to *keep awake*. Here it denotes vigilance. Ministers are as watchmen on the walls or in the streets of a city, by whose care and fidelity the inhabitants enjoy security. Their work is to rise early, to sit up late, and to eat the bread of care; for so it is that God giveth his beloved sleep. Aware of your temptations and dangers, he must be continually on the watch, that he may be ready to give the alarm. He may be thinking, and caring, and praying for you, when you think but little of him, and perhaps, in some instances, when you think but little of yourselves. Do not hinder him, but help him in his work.

They watch *for* you. Recollect that you are watched on all sides, but not in this manner. Satan watches you; but it is that he may seize his opportunity to destroy you. He watches you as a wolf does a sheep-fold; but your pastor, as a faithful shepherd, to protect and save you. The world also will watch you, and that with the eye of an enemy, waiting for your

halting; but he with the tender solicitude of a father, to do you good. Do not oppose him in this his important work.

They watch for your *souls*. If your pastor were stationed to watch over your health, property, or life, and should discharge his trust with skill and fidelity, you would think him worthy of your esteem; but it is not for these things that he is principally concerned. He would doubtless be happy to do you good in any way; but neither of these employments is his peculiar province. You employ other persons to watch for you in such matters. Nothing less than your immortal interests must engage his attention. He watches for that, compared with which kingdoms and empires are but trifles; for that which if gained, all is gained; and which if lost, all is lost, and lost for ever. Do not resist him in his work, but concur with him.

They watch *as those that must give account*. How important a station! There is an account for every one to give of himself; but a pastor has not only to do this in common with his people, but must also give account of them. At his hands the chief Shepherd will require it. And what will be the account of your pastor? Will he be able to say, concerning you, "Here I am, and the children whom the Lord hath given me?" Oh that he might! But it is much to be feared that some of you who are this day committed to his charge will in that day be missing! And what account will he then have to give? Will he not have to say, Lord, some of them have neglected thy word; some have resisted it; some have reproached me for preaching it; some have deserted it and turned aside after lying vanities; some, who have continued, have not received the love of the truth, that they might be saved: hearing, they have heard, and not understood; seeing, they have seen, and not perceived; their heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed? And what if, when interrogated, he should not be able to acquit himself? What if it should prove that he did not warn you, nor seek after you, nor care for you? Ah, then you will perish, and your blood will be required at his hand! Who, alas! who is sufficient for these things? At all events, for your own sake, and for his sake, do not hinder him in his work. Woe unto him if he preach not the gospel! and woe unto you if you oppose him in it! Do not object to his dealing faithfully, both in and out of the pulpit, so that it be aimed for your good. Do not hinder him in the work of reproof, by siding with transgressors. In short, if you have any regard to your own souls, or the souls of others, obey the counsels of Heaven, which are communicated to you through his ministry, and submit yourselves.

2. The discharge of this his work will be either *joy or grief*, according to the spirit of the people among whom he labours. You do not wish, I dare say, to grieve and distress a servant of Christ. Better would it be never to have chosen him than to break his heart; yet such things are!

If, *in his public preaching*, he have a zealous, modest, attentive, wise, and affectionate people, constant and early in attending, candid and tender-hearted in hearing, and desirous of obtaining some spiritual advantage from all they hear, you cannot conceive what *joy* it will afford him. He will pray for you, and preach to you, with abundantly the more interest. And this being the case, it may contribute not a little to the success of his labours; for God works not only by the word preached, but by the effects of it in the spirit of believers. The apostle supposes that some, on whom the word itself had no influence, might yet be won by the chaste conversation of the godly females. But if he have a slothful, selfish, cold-hearted, cavilling, conceited, and contentious audience, what a source of *grief* must it be to him! The meekest of men was overcome by such a people, and



tempted to wish that God would *kill him out of hand*, rather than continue to cause him thus to *see his wretchedness*.

If, *in adjusting the concerns of the church*, every individual consider that others have understanding as well as himself, and have the same right to be heard and regarded; if all strive to act in concert, and never oppose a measure from humour, but merely from conscience, or a persuasion that it is wrong; such things to a pastor must needs be a source of *joy*. But if pride and self-will prevail, they will produce confusion and every evil work; and this, if he have any regard to religion or to you, will be the *grief* of his soul.

If the *deacons* whom you have chosen to be helpers in the truth be wise, faithful, active, and tender-hearted, ready to stand by their pastor in every right cause, willing to impart the counsel of maturer years, and careful to preserve the purity and peace of the church, his duties will be discharged with *joy*. But if they mind earthly things, and leave all to him, or though they should be active, yet if it be with the spirit of a Diotrephes, instead of diminishing his load, they will increase it, and render his work a daily *grief*.

If, *in the exercise of discipline*, there be a unity of heart, a willingness to follow God's word, whoever may be affected by it—if, like the tribe of Levi, you in such matters “know not your father, nor your mother, nor acknowledge your brethren, nor know your own children; but observe God's word, and keep his covenant”—this, to an upright man, will be a source of *joy* and solid satisfaction. But if, whenever a censure requires to be inflicted, no unanimity can be obtained—if regard be had to friends and family connexions, to the setting aside of Christ's revealed will—nothing will be done with effect. The zeal of a few will be attributed to prejudice; and the person concerned, instead of being convinced and humbled, will be hardened in his sin. Thus the work of the ministry will be a burden of *grief*.

Finally, if you be a spiritual, affectionate, and peaceable *people*, your pastor will perform his work with *joy*; but if you be carnal and contentious—if there be whisperings, swellings, tumults, party attachments, jealousies, antipathies, scandals—alas! he may sow, but it will be among thorns; he may preach, but it will be with a *heavy heart*.

3. You cannot cause the work of your pastor to be grievous but *at your own expense*: it will be “unprofitable for you.” It is to no purpose that you have a pastor ordained over you in the Lord, unless his ministry be *profitable* to you. Every thing, therefore, which promotes this end should be carefully cherished; and every thing that hinders it, as carefully avoided. But profit under a ministry greatly depends, under God, upon *mutual attachment*. I do not mean to commend that fondness and partiality that would render you the devotees of a man, or incapacitate you for hearing any other preaching than his. They that cannot edify save under one minister, give sufficient proof that they do not truly edify under him. But there is an attachment between a pastor and a people that is highly necessary; as, without it, attendance on public worship would, in a great measure, cease to be an enjoyment. This attachment, my brethren, should begin with you, and be cherished by a course of kind and faithful treatment: delicately meeting his wants, gradually inspiring his confidence, tenderly participating in his afflictions, and I may add, if occasion require it, affectionately suggesting to him his faults and defects. By these means, he will insensibly be attached to you, in return; and will prefer preaching at home to all his occasional labours in other places. By an acquaintance with your cases, his preaching will be seasonable and savoury, proceeding from the fullness of his heart. Of such words it may well be said, *How good they*

*are!* But I need not enlarge upon these things to *you*. Never, perhaps, were they more fully exemplified, than in the person of your late affectionate and beloved pastor. You loved him for the truth's sake that dwelt in him; and he, on the other hand, was not only willing to impart unto you the gospel of God, but his own soul also, because ye were dear unto him. May the same spirit be cherished between you and your present pastor!

Love is the grand secret to make you all happy. Love, however, is a tender plant; a slight blast of unkindness will greatly injure it. If you grieve him through inadvertency, come to an early explanation. If unkindness be repeated, his attachment to you will be weakened, and then yours to him will be the same. This will be followed by various misunderstandings, slights, distances, and offences, the issue of which may be a rooted antipathy; and when this enters, all profit under a ministry is at an end. If he could preach like an angel, all were in vain, so far as relates to your advantage.

From these remarks, you see and feel, my brethren, that if your pastor perform his work with *grief*, it will be at your expense; or that every kind of treatment that wounds his spirit undermines your own welfare. Study, therefore, by all means, to render it his *joy*, which will turn to your account: study, by a constant discharge of kind offices, to endear yourselves and your families to him; by an inviting intimacy in spiritual things, to know and be known by him; and by a holy, humble, and uniform conduct in the world and in the church, to enable him to look the enemies of religion in the face, while he proclaims its holy efficacy.

The reward of a true pastor is in the people of his charge, in their sanctification and salvation. What else is his hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Do not withhold from the labourer his hire! You may be his hope, without being his joy; and his hope and joy for a season, without being his crown of rejoicing in the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming: but need I say that this will be unprofitable for you? If he have a full reward of his labour, you must be his hope, and joy, and crown. Brethren, consider what I have said, and the Lord give you understanding in all things.

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## IX.

[Delivered at Kettering, in 1803, at a time of threatened invasion.]

### CHRISTIAN PATRIOTISM.

“And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.”—Jer. xxix. 7.

IN the course of human events, cases may be expected to occur in which a serious mind may be at a loss with respect to the path of duty. Presuming, my brethren, that such may be the situation of some of you, at this momentous crisis—a crisis in which your country, menaced by an unprincipled, powerful, and malignant foe, calls upon you to arm in its defence—I take the liberty of freely imparting to you my sentiments on the subject.

When a part of the Jewish people were carried captives to Babylon, ten years, or thereabouts, before the entire ruin of the city and temple, they must have felt much at a loss in determining upon what was duty. Though Jeconiah, their king, was carried captive with them, yet the government was

still continued under Zedekiah; and there were not wanting prophets, such as they were, who encouraged in them the hopes of a speedy return. To settle their minds on this subject, Jeremiah, the prophet, addressed the following letter to them, in the name of the Lord:—"Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon; Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished: and seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace."

I do not suppose that the case of these people corresponds exactly with ours; but the difference is of such a nature as to heighten our obligations. They were in a foreign land; a land where there was nothing to excite their attachment, but every thing to provoke their dislike. They had enjoyed all the advantages of freedom and independence, but were now reduced to a state of slavery. Nor were they enslaved only: to injury was added insult. They that led them captive required of them mirth, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" Revenge, in such circumstances, must have seemed natural; and if a foreign invader, like Cyrus, had placed an army before their walls, it had been excusable, one would have thought, not only to have wished him success, but if an opportunity had offered, to have joined an insurrection in aid of him: yet nothing like this is allowed. When Cyrus actually took this great city, it does not appear that the Jews did any thing to assist him. Their duty was to seek the welfare of the city, and to pray to the Lord for it, leaving it to the great Disposer of all events to deliver them in his own time; and this not merely as being right, but wise: "In their peace ye shall have peace."

Now if such was the duty of men in their circumstances, can there be any doubt with respect to ours? Ought we not to seek the good of our native land; the land of our fathers' sepulchres; a land where we are protected by mild and wholesome laws, administered under a paternal prince; a land where civil and religious freedom are enjoyed in a higher degree than in any other country in Europe; a land where God has been known for many centuries as a refuge; a land, in fine, where there are greater opportunities for propagating the gospel, both at home and abroad, than in any other nation under heaven? Need I add to this, that the invader was to them a deliverer; but to us, beyond all doubt, would be a destroyer?

Our object, this evening, will be, partly to inquire into the duty of religious people towards their country, and partly to consider the motive by which it is enforced.

I. Inquire into the DUTY OF RELIGIOUS PEOPLE TOWARDS THEIR COUNTRY. Though, as Christians, we are not of the world, and ought not to be conformed to it; yet, being in it, we are under various obligations to those about us. As husbands, wives, parents, children, masters, servants, &c., we cannot be insensible that others have a claim upon us, as well as we upon them; and it is the same as members of a community united under one civil government. If we were rulers, our country would have a serious claim upon us as rulers; and, as we are subjects, it has a serious claim upon us as subjects. The manner in which we discharge these relative duties contributes not a little to the formation of our character, both in the sight of God and man.

The directions given to the Jewish captives were comprised in two things; "seeking the peace of the city," and "praying to the Lord for it."

These directions are very comprehensive ; and apply to us, as we have seen, much more forcibly than they did to the people to whom they were immediately addressed. Let us inquire, more particularly, what is included in them.

*Seek the peace of the city.* The term here rendered *peace* (שלום) signifies not merely an exemption from wars and insurrections, but prosperity in general. It amounts, therefore, to saying, Seek the *good* or *welfare* of the city. Such, brethren, is the conduct required of us, as men and as Christians. We ought to be patriots, or lovers of our country.

To prevent mistakes, however, it is proper to observe that the patriotism required of us is not that love of our country which clashes with universal benevolence, or which seeks its prosperity at the expense of the general happiness of mankind. Such was the patriotism of Greece and Rome; and such is that of all others where Christian principle is not allowed to direct it. Such, I am ashamed to say, is that with which some have advocated the cause of *negro slavery*. It is necessary, forsooth, to the wealth of this country! No; if my country cannot prosper but at the expense of justice, humanity, and the happiness of mankind, let it be unprosperous! But this is not the case. Righteousness will be found to exalt a nation, and so to be true wisdom. The prosperity which we are directed to seek in behalf of our country involves no ill to any one, except to those who shall attempt its overthrow. Let those who fear not God, nor regard man, engage in schemes of aggrandizement, and let sordid parasites pray for their success. Our concern is to cultivate that patriotism which harmonizes with good-will to men. O my country, I will lament thy faults! Yet, with all thy faults, I will seek thy good; not only as a Briton, but as a Christian: "for my brethren and companions' sakes, I will say, Peace be within thee: because of the house of the Lord my God, I will seek thy good!"

If we seek the good of our country, we shall certainly *do nothing, and join in nothing, that tends to disturb its peace, or hinder its welfare*. Whoever engages in plots and conspiracies to overturn its constitution, we shall not. Whoever deals in inflammatory speeches, or in any manner sows the seeds of discontent and disaffection, we shall not. Whoever labours to depreciate its governors, supreme or subordinate, in a manner tending to bring government itself into contempt, we shall not. Even in cases wherein we may be compelled to disapprove of measures, we shall either be silent, or express our disapprobation with respect and with regret. A dutiful son may see a fault in a father; but he will not take pleasure in exposing him. He that can employ his wit in degrading magistrates is not their friend, but their enemy; and he that is an enemy to magistrates is not far from being an enemy to magistracy, and, of course, to his country. A good man may be aggrieved; and, being so, may complain. Paul did so at Philippi. But the character of a *complainer* belongs only to those who *walk after their own lusts*.

If we seek the good of our country, we shall *do every thing in our power to promote its welfare*. We shall not think it sufficient that we do it no harm, or that we stand still as neutrals, in its difficulties. If, indeed, our spirits be tainted with disaffection, we shall be apt to think we do great things by standing aloof from conspiracies, and refraining from inflammatory speeches; but this is no more than may be accomplished by the greatest traitor in the land, merely as a matter of prudence. It becomes Christians to bear positive good-will to their country, and to its government, considered *as government*, irrespective of the political party which may have the ascendancy. We may have our preferences, and that without blame; but they ought never to prevent a cheerful obedience to the laws, a respectful de-

meanour towards those who frame and those who execute them; or a ready co-operation in every measure which the being or well-being of the nation may require. The civil power, whatever political party is uppermost, while it maintains the great ends of government, ought, at all times, to be able to reckon upon religious people as its cordial friends; and if such we be, we shall be willing, in times of difficulty, to sacrifice private interest to public good; shall contribute of our substance without murmuring; and, in cases of imminent danger, shall be willing to expose *even our lives* in its defence.

As the last of these particulars is a subject which deeply interests us at the present juncture, I shall be excused if I endeavour to establish the grounds on which I conceive its obligation to rest.

We know that the *father* of the *faithful*, who was only a sojourner in the land of Canaan, when his kinsman Lot with his family were taken captives by a body of plunderers, armed his trained servants, pursued the victors, and bravely recovered the spoil. It was on this occasion that Melchizedek blessed him, saying, "Blessed be Abraham of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be the most high God, who hath delivered thine enemies into thine hand!"

Perhaps it will be said, This was antecedent to the times of the New Testament; Jesus taught his disciples not to resist evil; and when Peter drew his sword, he ordered him to put it up again; saying, "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."

You know, my brethren, I have always deprecated war, as one of the greatest calamities; but it does not follow, hence, that I must consider it *in all cases* unlawful.

Christianity, I allow, is a religion of peace; and whenever it universally prevails, in the spirit and power of it, wars will be unknown. But so will every other species of injustice; yet, while the world is as it is, some kind of resistance to injustice is necessary, though it may at some future time become unnecessary. If our Saviour's command that we resist not evil be taken literally and universally, it must have been wrong for Paul to have remonstrated against the magistrates at Philippi; and he himself would not have reproved the person who smote him at the judgment-seat.

I allow that the sword is the last weapon to which we should have recourse. As *individuals*, it may be lawful, by this instrument, to defend ourselves or our families against the attacks of an assassin; but, perhaps, this is the only case in which it is so; and even there, if it were possible to disarm and confine the party, it were much rather to be chosen than in that manner to take away his life. Christianity does not allow us, in any case, to retaliate from a principle of revenge. In ordinary injuries it teaches patience and forbearance. If an adversary "smite us on one cheek," we had better "turn to him the other also," than go about to avenge our own wrongs. The laws of honour, as acted upon in high life, are certainly in direct opposition to the laws of Christ; and various retaliating maxims, ordinarily practised among men, will no doubt be found among the works of the flesh.

And if, *as nations*, we were to act on Christian principles, we should never engage in war but for our own defence; nor for that, till every method of avoiding it had been tried in vain.

Once more, It is allowed that Christians, *as such*, are not permitted to have recourse to the sword, for the purpose of defending themselves against persecution for the gospel's sake. No weapon is admissible in this warfare but *truth*, whatever be the consequence. We may remonstrate, as Paul did at Philippi, and our Lord himself, when unjustly smitten; but it appears to me that this is all. When Peter drew his sword, it was with a desire to

rescue his Master from the persecuting hands of his enemies, in the same spirit as when he opposed his going up to Jerusalem; in both which instances he was in the wrong: and the saying of our Saviour, that "all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword," has commonly been verified, in this sense of it.

I believe it will be found, that when Christians have resorted to the sword in order to resist persecution for the gospel's sake, as did the Albigenses, the Bohemians, the French protestants, and some others, within the last six hundred years, the issue has commonly been, that they have *perished* by it; that is, they have been overcome by their enemies, and exterminated: whereas, in cases where their only weapons have been "the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony, loving not their lives unto death," they have overcome. Like Israel in Egypt, the more they have been afflicted, the more they have increased.

But none of these things prove it unlawful to take up arms *as members of civil society, when called upon to do so for the defence of our country.* The ground on which our Saviour refused to let his servants *fight* for him, that he should not be delivered into the hands of the Jews, was, that his was a kingdom "not of this world;" plainly intimating that if his kingdom had been of this world, a contrary line of conduct had been proper. Now this is what every other kingdom is: it is right, therefore, according to our Lord's reasoning, that the subjects of all civil states should, *as such*, when required, fight in defence of them.

Has not Christianity, I ask, in the most decided manner recognized civil government, by requiring Christians to be subject to it? Has it not expressly authorized the legal use of the sword? Christians are warned that the magistrate "beareth not the sword in vain;" and that he is "the minister of God, a revenger, to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." But if it be right for the magistrate to bear the sword, and to use it upon evil-doers within the realm, it cannot be wrong to use it in repelling invaders from without; and if it be right on the part of the magistrate, it is right that the subject should assist him in it; for otherwise, his power would be merely nominal, and he would indeed "bear the sword in vain."

We have not been used, in things of a civil and moral nature, to consider one law as made for the religious part of a nation, and another for the irreligious. Whatever is the duty of one, allowing for different talents and situations in life, is the duty of all. If, therefore, it be not binding upon the former to unite in every necessary measure for the support of civil government, neither is it upon the latter; and if it be binding upon neither, it must follow that civil government itself ought not to be supported, and that the whole world should be left to become a prey to anarchy or despotism.

Further, If the use of arms were, of itself, and in all cases, inconsistent with Christianity, *it were a sin to be a soldier*: but nothing like this is held out to us in the New Testament. On the contrary, we there read of two believing *centurions*; and neither of them was reproved on account of his office, or required to relinquish it. We also read of publicans and *soldiers* who came to John to be baptized, each asking, "What shall we do?" The answer to both proceeds on the same principle: they are warned against the *abuses* of their respective employments; but the employments themselves are tacitly allowed to be lawful. To the one he said, "Exact no more than that which is appointed you:" to the other, "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages." If either of these occupations had been in itself sinful, or inconsistent with that kingdom which it was John's grand object to announce, and into the faith of

which his disciples were baptized, he ought, on this occasion, to have said so, or, at least, not to have said that which implies the contrary.

If it be objected that the sinfulness of war would not lie so much at the door of the centurions and soldiers as of the government by whose authority it was proclaimed and executed, I allow there is considerable force in this; but yet, if the thing itself were necessarily, and in all cases, sinful, every party voluntarily concerned in it must have been a partaker of the guilt, though it were in different degrees.

But granting, it may be said, that war is not, in itself, necessarily sinful; yet it becomes so by the injustice with which it is commonly undertaken and conducted. It is no part of my design to become the apologist of injustice, on whatever scale it might be practised. But if wars be allowed to be *generally* undertaken and conducted without a regard to justice, it does not follow that they are *always* so; and still less that war itself is sinful. In ascertaining the justice or injustice of war, we have nothing to do with the *motives* of those who engage in it. The question is, Whether it be *in itself* unjust? If it appeared so to me, I should think it my duty to stand aloof from it as far as possible.

There is one thing, however, that requires to be noticed. Before we condemn any measure as unjust, we ought to be in possession of the means of forming a just judgment concerning it.

If a difference arise only between two families, or two individuals, though every person in the neighbourhood may be talking and giving his opinion upon it; yet it is easy to perceive that no one of them is competent to pronounce upon the justice or injustice of either side, till he has acquainted himself with all the circumstances of the case, by patiently hearing it on both sides. How much less, then, are we able to judge of the differences of nations, which are generally not a little complex, both in their origin and bearings; and of which we know but little, but through the channel of newspapers and vague reports! It is disgusting to hear people, whom no one would think of employing to decide upon a common difference between two neighbours, take upon them to pronounce, with the utmost freedom, upon the justice or injustice of national differences. Where those who are constitutionally appointed to judge in such matters have decided in favour of war, however painful it may be to my feelings, as a friend of mankind, I consider it my duty to submit, and to think well of their decision, till, by a careful and impartial examination of the grounds of the contest, I am compelled to think otherwise.

After all, there may be cases in which injustice may wear so prominent a feature, that every thinking and impartial mind shall be capable of perceiving it; and where it does so, the public sense of it will and ought to be expressed. In the *present instance*, however, there seems to be no ground of hesitation. In arming to resist a threatened invasion, we merely act on the defensive; and not to resist an enemy, whose ambition, under the pretence of *liberating mankind*, has carried desolation wherever he has gone, were to prove ourselves unworthy of the blessings we enjoy. Without taking upon me to decide on the original grounds of the difference, the question at issue with us is, *Is it right that any one nation should seek absolutely to ruin another, and that other not be warranted, and even obliged, to resist it?* That such is the object of the enemy, at this time, cannot be reasonably doubted. If my country were engaged in an attempt to ruin France, as a nation, it would be a wicked undertaking; and if I were fully convinced of it, I should both hope and pray that they might be disappointed. Surely, then, I may be equally interested in behalf of my native land!

But there is *another* duty which we owe to our country; which is, That

we *pray to the Lord for it*. It is supposed that religious people are a praying people. The godly Israelites, when carried into Babylon, were banished from temple-worship; but they still had access to their God. The devotional practice of Daniel was well known among the great men of that city, and proved the occasion of a conspiracy against his life. King Darius knew so much of the character of the Jews as to request an interest in their prayers, in behalf of himself and his sons. My brethren, your country claims an interest in yours; and I trust that, if no such claim were preferred, you would, of your own accord, remember it.

You are aware that *all our dependence, as a nation, is upon God*; and, therefore, should importune his assistance. After all the struggles for power, you know that in his sight all the inhabitants of the world are reputed as nothing; he doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? Indeed this has been acknowledged, and at times sensibly felt, by irreligious characters; but in general the great body of a nation, it is to be feared, think but little about it. Their dependence is upon an arm of flesh. It may be said, without uncharitableness, of many of our commanders, both by sea and land, as was said of Cyrus, *God hath girded them, though they have not known him*. But by how much you perceive a want of prayer and dependence on God in your countrymen, by so much more should you be concerned, as much as in you lies, to supply the defect. "The prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

You are also aware, in some measure, of *the load of guilt that lies upon your country*; and should therefore supplicate mercy on its behalf. I acknowledge myself to have much greater fear from this quarter than from the boasting menaces of a vain man. If our iniquities provoke not the Lord to deliver us into his hand, his schemes and devices will come to nothing. When I think, among other things, of the detestable traffic before alluded to, in which we have taken so conspicuous a part, and have shed so much innocent blood, I tremble! When we have fasted and prayed, I have seemed to hear the voice of God, saying unto us, "Loose the bands of wickedness, undo the heavy burdens, let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke!" Yet, peradventure, for his own name's sake, or from a regard to his own cause, which is here singularly protected, the Lord may hearken to our prayers, and save us from deserved ruin. We know that Sodom itself would have been spared if *ten* righteous men could have been found in her. I proceed to consider,

II. THE MOTIVE BY WHICH THESE DUTIES ARE ENFORCED: "In the peace thereof shall ye have peace."

The Lord hath so wisely and mercifully interwoven the interests of mankind as to furnish motives to innumerable acts of justice and kindness. We cannot injure others, nor even refrain from doing them good, without injuring ourselves.

The interests of individuals and families are closely connected with those of a country. If the latter prosper, generally speaking, so do the former; and if the one be ruined, so must the other. It is impossible to describe, or to conceive beforehand, with any degree of accuracy, the miseries which the success of a foreign enemy, such as we have to deal with, must occasion to private families. To say nothing of the loss of property among the higher and middle classes of people, (which must be severely felt, as plunder will, undoubtedly, be the grand stimulus of an invading army,) who can calculate the loss of lives? Who can contemplate, without horror, the indecent excesses of a victorious, unprincipled, and brutal soldiery? Let not the poorest man say, I have nothing to lose. Yes, if men of opulence



lose their property, you will lose your employment. You have also a cottage, and perhaps a wife and family, with whom, amidst all your hardships, you live in love; and would it be nothing to you to see your wife and daughters abused, and you yourself unable to protect them, or even to remonstrate, but at the hazard of being thrust through with the bayonet? If no other considerations will induce us to protect our country, and pray to the Lord for it, our own individual and domestic comfort might suffice.

To this may be added, our interests as *Christians*, no less than as men and as families, are interwoven with the well-being of our country. If Christians, while they are in the world, are, as has been already noticed, under various relative obligations, it is not without their receiving, in return, various relative advantages. What those advantages are we should know to our grief, were we once to lose them. So long have we enjoyed religious liberty in this country, that I fear we are become too insensible of its value. At present we worship God without interruption. What we might be permitted to do under a government which manifestly hates Christianity, and tolerates it even at home only as a matter of policy, we know not. This, however, is well known, that a large proportion of those unprincipled men, in our own country, who have been labouring to overturn its constitution, have a deep-rooted enmity to the religion of Jesus. May the Lord preserve us, and every part of the united kingdom, from their machinations!

Some among us, to whatever extremities we may be reduced, will be incapable of bearing arms; but they may assist by their property, and in various other ways: even the hands of the aged poor, like those of Moses, may be lifted up in *prayer*; while their countrymen, and it may be their own children, are occupying the post of danger. I know it is the intention of several whom I now address freely to offer their services at this important period. Should you, dear young people, be called forth in the arduous contest, you will expect an interest in our prayers. Yes, and you will have it. Every one of us, every parent, wife, or Christian friend, if they can pray for any thing, will importune the Lord of hosts to cover your heads in the day of battle!

Finally, It affords satisfaction to my mind to be persuaded that you will avail yourselves of the liberty granted to you of *declining to learn your exercise on the Lord's day*. Were you called to resist *the landing of the enemy* on that day, or any other work of *necessity*, you would not object to it; but, in other cases, I trust, you will. "*Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's.*"

## X.

[Delivered in the Jews' Chapel, Church Street, Spitalfields, Nov. 19, 1809.]\*

## JESUS THE TRUE MESSIAH.

“Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.”—Psal. xl. 6—8.

THOUGH I have preached the gospel between thirty and forty years, yet I do not recollect to have ever entered a pulpit with such feelings as at present. In respect of the *subject*, I feel it an honour to plead the cause of my Lord and Saviour; but I am not without apprehensions lest it should suffer through my manner of pleading it. I must therefore entreat, that if any thing which may be delivered should be found to be improper, you would impute it, not to the cause, but to the imperfection of the advocate. I have also some peculiar feelings on account of the *audience*, part of which, I am given to understand, are of the house of Israel. I cannot help recalling to mind the debt we owe to that distinguished people. They have been treated with both cruelty and contempt by men professing Christianity; but surely not by Christians! To them, under God, we are indebted for a Bible, for a Saviour, and for all that we know of the one living and true God. Who, then, will not join me in the language of the apostle—“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they may be saved?”

The passage on which I shall found what I have to offer is in the 40th Psalm, the 6th, 7th, and 8th verses:

“Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.”

No Christian can doubt whether the passage relates to the Messiah, seeing it is expressly applied to him in the New Testament; and if a Jew should raise an objection, he will find it difficult, if not impossible, to give a fair exposition of it on any other principle. Who else, with propriety, could use the language here used? Certainly David could not. Whether the Messiah, therefore, be already come, as we believe, or be yet to come, as the body of the Jewish nation believes, it must be of his coming that the prophet speaks. The question at issue between them and us is, not whether the Scriptures predict and characterize the Messiah, but whether these predictions and characters be fulfilled in Jesus.

That we may be able to judge of this question, let it be observed, that there are three characters held up in the passage I have read, as distinguishing the Messiah’s coming: viz. That the sacrifices and ceremonies of the Mosaic law would thence be superseded; that the great body of Scripture prophecy would be accomplished; and that the will of God would be perfectly fulfilled.

Let us calmly and candidly try the question at issue by these characters

\* In the early part of the present century, a society, composed of evangelical churchmen and dissenters, was formed, called “The London Society for promoting the conversion of the Jews.” Among other means employed for that object was the one of delivering sermons by the most eminent Christian ministers, not a few of which were printed. This was delivered in the chapel appropriated to such exercises. The society, after a few years, became considerably embarrassed, and the dissenters resigned it into the hands of the Episcopalians, who have pursued their great design with distinguished liberality and zeal.—B.

I. It is intimated, that whenever the Messiah should come, THE SACRIFICES AND CEREMONIES OF THE MOSAIC LAW WERE TO BE SUPERSEDED BY HIM. "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire:—then said I, Lo, I come." I am aware that modern Jewish writers contend for the perpetuity of the ceremonial as well as of the moral law; but in this they are opposed both by Scripture and by fact.

As to *Scripture*, it is not confined to the passage I have read, nor to a few others; it is common for the sacred writers of the Old Testament to speak of sacrifices and ceremonies in a depreciating strain, such as would not, I presume, have been used had they been regarded for their own sake, or designed to continue always. Such is the language of the following passages: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.—Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt-offerings: they have been continually before me. I will take no bullock out of my house, nor he-goats out of thy folds; for every beast of the field is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains; and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, and drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High: and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.—Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.—To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord; I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?—Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Ye heap up your burnt-offerings with your sacrifices, and eat the flesh. But when I brought your fathers out of Egypt, I spake not unto them of burnt-offerings and sacrifices; but this I commanded them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people.—And in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease."

Such, O ye children of Israel, is the language of your own Scriptures. The covenant that was made with your fathers at Mount Sinai was never designed to be perpetual, but to be abolished at the coming of Messiah, as is manifest from the words of the prophet: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a *new* covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; (which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord;) but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquities, and will remember their sins no more."

From this passage, a New Testament writer argues, (and do you answer it if you can,) "In that he saith a *new* covenant, he hath made the first *old*."

Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." And, respecting their sins and iniquities being "remembered no more," "Where remission of these is, *there is no more offering for sin.*"

Is it not then in perfect harmony with the tenor of your Scriptures that Messiah, when described as coming into the world, should say, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire: mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required: then said I, Lo, I come:" plainly intimating that he would come to accomplish that which could not be accomplished by sacrifice and offerings; and that, as these were but the scaffolding of his temple, when that should be reared, these should of course be taken down.

But I have asserted that, in maintaining the perpetuity of the sacrifices and ceremonies of the Mosaic law, your writers are not only opposed by Scripture, but by *fact*. Whether Messiah the Prince be come or not, sacrifice and oblation have ceased. We believe they *virtually* ceased when Jesus offered himself a sacrifice, and in a few years after they *actually* ceased. Those of your nation who believed in Jesus voluntarily, though gradually, ceased to offer them; and those who did not believe in him were compelled to desist, by the destruction of their city and temple. You may adhere to a few of your ancient ceremonies; but it can only be like gathering round the ashes of the system; the substance of it is consumed. "The sacrifices of the holy temple," as one of your writers acknowledges, "have ceased."

The amount is, Whether Jesus be the Messiah, or not, his appearance in the world had this character pertaining to it, that it was the period in which the sacrifice and the oblation actually ceased. And it is worthy of your serious inquiry whether these things *can* be accomplished in any other than Jesus. Should Messiah the Prince come at some future period, as your nation expects, how are the sacrifice and the oblation to cease on his appearance, when they have already ceased nearly eighteen hundred years? If therefore he be not come, he can never come so as to answer this part of the Scripture account of him.

II. It is suggested that, whenever Messiah should come, THE GREAT BODY OF SCRIPTURE PROPHECY SHOULD BE ACCOMPLISHED IN HIM: "In the volume of the book it is written of me." That the prophetic writings abound in predictions of the Messiah, no Jew will deny: the only question is, Are they fulfilled in Jesus? You know (I speak to them who read the Bible) that "the seed of the woman was to bruise the head of the serpent." You know that God promised Abraham, saying, In *thy seed* shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. You know that Jacob, when blessing the tribe of Judah, predicted the coming of *Shiloh*, unto whom the gathering of the people should be. You know that Moses spoke of a *Prophet* whom the Lord your God should raise up from the midst of you, like unto him, to whom you were to hearken, on pain of incurring the Divine displeasure. You know that the Messiah is prophetically described in the Psalms, and the prophets, under a great variety of forms; particularly as the *Anointed* of the Lord—the King—the Lord of David, to whom Jehovah spoke—the "child born," whose name should be called "the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace"—the "Rod out of the stem of Jesse"—"God's servant, whom he upholds; his *elect*, in whom his soul delighteth"—"him whom *man despiseth*, and whom the nation abhorreth"—"a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief"—"the Lord our righteousness"—"Messiah the Prince"—"the Branch"—"the Messenger of the covenant," &c. Thus it was that in the volume of the book it was written of him. Whoever proves to be the Messiah, your fathers rejoiced in the faith of him.

In trying the question, whether the prophecies be fulfilled in Jesus, it will be necessary, for the sake of perspicuity, to class them under different heads, such as time, place, family, &c.

1. The *time* when Messiah should come is clearly marked out in prophecy. It was said by Jacob, when blessing the tribes, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, *until Shiloh come*; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." And this was true in respect of Jesus. Till he came, though the ten tribes were scattered, Judah continued a people, and retained the government; but, soon after his death, they were dispersed among the nations, and have been so ever since. "Kings and princes," says one of your own writers, "we have none." If, therefore, Shiloh be not come, he can never come within the limits of time marked out by this prophecy.

Again, It is clearly intimated, in the prophecy of Haggai, for the encouragement of the builders of the second temple, that the Messiah should come *during the standing of that temple*, and that the honour that should be done it by his presence would more than balance its inferiority, in other respects, to the first. "For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations; and the desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts." All this was literally fulfilled in Jesus. But soon after his death the second temple was reduced to ashes; if, therefore, Jesus was not the Messiah, it is impossible that this prophecy should ever be accomplished.

Again, The prophet Daniel was informed by the angel Gabriel as follows: "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. Know, therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst (or half part) of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate."

That there should be some difficulty in fixing the dates and other minute particulars, in this prophecy, is no more than may be said of many others, which yet, upon the whole, are clear and decisive. The prediction of the seventy years' captivity was not understood by Daniel till he had studied the subject with attention; and, though he made out the number of the years, and concluded that they were *about* fulfilled, yet he does not appear to have discovered the exact time of their being so. Nevertheless, the prophecy of seventy years was undoubtedly fulfilled in the Babylonish captivity; and this of seventy weeks of years is as certainly fulfilled in the appearance and death of Jesus. Whether or not Christian writers agree as to the exact time when these seventy sabbatical weeks, or four hundred and ninety years, began, thus much is certain, that they must have been fulfilled *about* the

time that Jesus appeared and suffered, or they never can be fulfilled. Such was the effect of this and other prophecies upon the minds of the Jewish nation, that about that time there was a general expectation of the Messiah's appearance. Hence, though your fathers rejected Jesus, yet they soon after believed in *Barchocab*, and crowned him as their Messiah; which involved them in a war with the Romans, wherein they are said to have had a thousand cities and fortresses destroyed, and to have lost more than *five hundred and eighty thousand men!* The predicted events which were to be accomplished at the close of these weeks, namely, "finishing transgression, making an end of sins, making reconciliation for iniquity, bringing in everlasting righteousness, sealing up the vision and prophecy, and anointing the Most Holy," are in perfect harmony with the New Testament history of Jesus; and though unbelief may blind the minds of your nation to some of them, yet the sealing up of the vision and prophecy is a matter so notorious that one would think it were impossible to deny it. Jesus foretold the destruction of your city and temple by the Romans; and his apostles foretold things relating to the Christian church; but from that time your nation has been, not only "without a king, without a prince, and without a sacrifice," but *without a prophet.*

Moreover, it is predicted by Daniel, that, shortly after the Messiah should be cut off, the people of the prince that should come would destroy the city and the sanctuary, and that the end thereof should be desolation. And is it not fact, that, about forty years after the death of Jesus, both your city and sanctuary were destroyed by the Romans; and that such a flood of desolation and misery attended it as was unexampled in your history, or that of any other nation.

Taking the whole together, it behoves you to consider whether, if this prophecy be not fulfilled in Jesus, it can ever be fulfilled; and whether it be possible to ascertain the fulfilment of any prophecy.

2. The *place* where Messiah should be born, and where he should principally impart his doctrine, is determined. "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Speaking of Galilee of the nations, in connexion with the birth of the child whose name should be called "the mighty God," it is said, "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." These prophecies were literally and manifestly fulfilled in Jesus; and it is scarcely credible that they can be fulfilled in any other.

3. The *house, or family*, from whom Messiah should descend, is clearly ascertained. So much is said of his descending from David that I need not refer to particular proofs; and the rather as no Jew will deny it. The genealogies of Matthew and Luke, whatever varieties there are between them, agree in tracing his pedigree to David. And though in both it is traced in the name of Joseph, yet this appears to be only in conformity to the Jewish custom of tracing no pedigree in the name of a female. The father of Joseph, as mentioned by Luke, seems to have been his father by marriage only; so that it was, in reality, Mary's pedigree that is traced by Luke, though under her husband's name; and this being the *natural* line of descent, and that of Matthew the *legal* one, by which as a king he would have inherited the crown, there is no inconsistency between them.

But, whatever supposed difficulties may at this distance of time attend the genealogies, it is remarkable that no objection appears to have been made to them in the early ages of Christianity; when, had they been incorrect,

they might easily have been disproved by the public registries which were then in being. Could the Jews in the time of Jesus have disproved his being of the seed of David, his Messiahship would at once have fallen to the ground; and for this they could not be wanting in inclination. Had there, moreover, been any doubt on this subject, the emperor Domitian, in searching after those who were of the seed of David, would not have ordered the relations of Jesus before him, who, when interrogated, did not deny but that they were descended from him.\*

Finally, if the genealogy of Jesus be called in question by the modern Jews, how are they to prove the Messiah, whenever he shall come, to have descended from David; since, if I am not mistaken, they have now no certain genealogies left among them?

4. The *kind of miracles* that Messiah should perform is specified. Isaiah, speaking of the coming of God to save his people, says, "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert." That such miracles were performed by Jesus, his enemies themselves bore witness, in that they ascribed them to his connexion with Beelzebub. When his Messiahship was questioned, he could say in the presence of many witnesses, "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them." The miracles of Jesus were distinguished by their benevolence. They were all works of mercy, as well as of power; and this accorded with the character given of the Messiah in the seventy-second Psalm, that he "should deliver the needy when he cried; the poor also, and him that had no helper." Hence, the blind cried out, "Son of David, have MERCY on us."

5. It was predicted of the Messiah that he should, as a king, be distinguished by his *LOWLINESS*, entering into Jerusalem, not in a chariot of state, but upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass." To fulfil this prophecy, it was necessary that the Messiah should descend from parents in low circumstances, and that the leading people of the land should not accompany him. Had they believed in him, and introduced him as a king, it must have been in another fashion. But it was reserved for the common people and the children to fulfil the prophet's words, by shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed be he that cometh in the name of the the Lord!"

6. It is predicted of the Messiah that he should suffer and die by the hands of wicked men. "Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom *man despiseth*, to him whom *the nation abhorreth*.—As many were astonished at thee, (his *face was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men,*) so shall he sprinkle many nations.—He is despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and *we hid as it were our faces from him*: he was despised, and *we esteemed him not*. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was *wounded* for our transgressions, he was *bruised* for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his *stripes* we are healed.—The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he

\* Euseb. Hist. b. 3, ch. 20.

is brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison, and from judgment, and who shall declare his generation? for he was *cut off out of the laud of the living*; for the transgression of my people was he stricken. It pleased the Lord to bruise him: he hath put him to grief; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.—The Messiah shall be cut off; but not for himself."

The attempts that have been made to explain away these prophecies, especially the fifty-third of Isaiah, and to make it apply to Israel as a nation, are marks of a desperate cause.\*

Is it not marvellous that the enemies of Jesus should so exactly fulfil the Scriptures in reproaching and crucifying him; using the very speeches, and inflicting the very cruelties, which it was foretold they would? "He trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.—They parted my garments, and for my vesture they did cast lots.—They gave me gall to eat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.—They pierced my hands and my feet." These things were not true of the writers; but they were true of Jesus: in him, therefore, they were fulfilled.

7. It was foretold that the Messiah, after being cut off out of the land of the living and laid in the grave, *should rise from the dead*. Nothing less can be implied by all the promises made to him as the reward of his sufferings; for if he had continued under the power of death, how should he have seen his seed, or prolonged his days? If his kingdom had been that of a mortal man, how could it continue as long as the sun and moon? How was he to see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied, unless he survived that travail? But more than this, it is foretold that he should rise from the dead at so early a period as not to "see corruption." The argument of Peter from this passage has never been answered. David said, "Thou wilt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption;" but David did see corruption; he refers to him, therefore, of whom it is witnessed that he saw no corruption.

Lastly, It was foretold that *the great body of the Jewish nation would not believe in him; and that he would set up his kingdom among the Gentiles*. Such is evidently the meaning of the prophet's complaint, "Who hath believed our report?" and of the Messiah's words, in another part of the same prophecies—"Then I said, I have laboured in vain; I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God. And now, saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him; Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength. And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth."

Your writers complain of ours for interpreting the promises to Israel *spiritually*, and the threatenings *literally*; and tell us that they are not greatly obliged to us for it. But this is misrepresentation. Our writers

\* If, as Mr. D. Levi would have it, the sufferer be Israel personified, and this nation, on account of its injuries, may be said to have borne the iniquities of the whole world, how comes it to be said—"for the transgression of MY PEOPLE was he stricken?" Does the character of *my people* belong to the world, as distinguished from Israel? or is the sufferer and the people for whom he suffered the same?



neither interpret *all* the promises to Israel spiritually, nor *all* the threatenings literally. They expect your return, and that at no very distant period, to your own land; for besides many Old Testament prophecies to this effect, he that said concerning the inhabitants of Judea and Jerusalem, "They shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles," added, "*until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*" And in regard of the *threatenings*, the heaviest of them all is that which is expressed by Isaiah, (chap. vi. 9—12,) "Go, tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate."

This awful judgment was indeed to issue in *temporal* calamities; but the judgment itself is *spiritual*; a judgment, the nature of which prevents your feeling it, but which is a greater evil than all your other punishments put together.

Such are some of the evidences from which we conclude that Jesus is the true Messiah. Time, place, family, miracles, character, sufferings, resurrection, and rejection by his own countrymen—all are fulfilled in him. Never was such a body of prophecy given and accomplished in any other case. If you will shut your eyes upon the light, you must abide the consequence; for our parts, we feel the ground upon which we stand, when we say, "We know that the Son of God is come."

III. It is declared, that when the Messiah should come, THE WILL OF GOD WOULD BE PERFECTLY FULFILLED BY HIM—"I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart." Agreeably to this, the Messiah is denominated *God's servant, whom he would uphold—in whom he would be glorified—and who should bring Jacob again to him.*

The will of God sometimes denotes what he approves, and sometimes what he appoints. The former is the rule of our conduct, the latter of his own; and both we affirm to have been fulfilled by Jesus.

In respect of the Divine *precepts*, his whole life was in perfect conformity to them. All his actions were governed by love. Your fathers were challenged to convince him of sin; and you are challenged to do the same. Yet your nation reckons him an impostor! Was there ever *such* an impostor? Nay, was there ever such a character seen among men? Should the account given of him by the evangelists be objected to, we might answer from ROUSSEAU,—"*The Jewish authors were incapable of the diction, and strangers to the morality, contained in the Gospels, the marks of whose truth are so striking and invincible, that the inventor would be a more astonishing character than the hero.*"\*

When a sinful creature is said to have the law of God in his heart, it is said to be *written* there, or *put* in him by the Spirit of God; but of the Messiah it is said to be *within* him. His heart never existed without the impression, and therefore needed not to have it *put* in him. Such was Jesus, and such the spirit that he manifested throughout his life. Let the character, besides him, be named, who dares to rest the truth of his pretensions on his being found to be "*holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.*"

But it was not merely to fulfil the Divine precepts that the Messiah was

\* Works, Vol. V. pp. 215—218.

to come, but to execute his *purpose* in saving lost sinners. Even his obedience to the law was subservient to this, or he could not have been "the Lord our righteousness." He was God's servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, to give light to the Gentiles, and to be his salvation to the ends of the earth. In accomplishing this, it behoved him to endure the penalty, as well as obey the precepts, of the law. His soul must be "made an offering for sin;" he must be "cut off out of the land of the living—cut off, but not for himself;" and this that he might "make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness."

Such was the doctrine of the ancient Israelites, and such is that of the New Testament. If it be true, let me entreat you to consider the consequences. While you hold fast the traditions of later ages, you have renounced the religion and the God of your *ancient* fathers; and, in doing this, have rejected the only way of salvation. If the things which I have attempted to establish be true, your fathers crucified the Lord of glory; and you, by approving the deed, make it your own. Moreover, if they be true, Jesus Christ will one day come in the clouds of heaven, and every eye shall see him; and they also who pierced him shall wail because of him! Consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds.

We doubt not but the time will come when your nation shall look on him whom their fathers pierced, and shall mourn as one that mourneth for an only son; but if it be not so with you, it is the more affecting. To see, at the last judgment, not only Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, but millions of your own unborn posterity, sitting down in the kingdom of God, and ye yourselves cast out, is inexpressibly affecting!

I have lately looked into some of the modern Jewish writings. It would be going beyond my limits to attempt an answer to many of their objections to the gospel; but I will touch upon a few, which struck me in the course of reading.

They find many things spoken in prophecy of the reign of the Messiah, which are not as yet fulfilled in Jesus; such as the cessation of wars, the restoration of the Jewish nation, &c., &c., and argue hence that Jesus is not the Messiah. But it is not said that these effects should *immediately* follow on his appearing. On the contrary, there was to be an *increase* of his government; yea, a *continued* increase. Jesus may be the Messiah, and his reign may be begun; while yet, seeing it is not yet ended, there may be many things at present unfulfilled. The kingdom of the Messiah was to continue as long as the sun and the moon. It was to be *set up* during the reign of the fourth monarchy; but was itself to survive it, and to stand for ever.

But they object that the doctrine taught by Jesus *was not of a pacific tendency*—that, on the contrary, it was, by his own confession, adapted to produce division and discord—"Think not that I am come to send peace on earth, but a sword; for I am come to set a man at variance with his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's foes shall be they of his own household." These words, however, (as a child in just reasoning would perceive,) do not express what the gospel is in its own nature; but what it would *occasion*, through the hatred of his enemies. They describe not the bitterness of believers against unbelievers, but of unbelievers against believers, for the gospel's sake. The good works of Abel excited the hatred of Cain; but ought Abel to be reproached on this account? The message of peace sent by Hezekiah to the remnant of the ten tribes, inviting them to come up to the passover at Jerusalem, occasioned the same bitter contempt among the idolaters as the gospel does among the unbelievers of

your nation; yet surely it was a pacific message notwithstanding, and ought to have been differently received. We might as well reproach the God of Israel for his messages to Pharaoh having hardened his heart; yea, for his laws given at Sinai having been the occasion of all the wickedness of your fathers; for if he had given them no laws, they had not been guilty of transgressing them!

They further object, with their fathers, that Jesus pretended to be *the Son of God*, and so was guilty of blasphemy. But if he were the Messiah, he *was* the Son of God. Did not God, in the second Psalm, address him as his Son? and are not the kings and judges of the earth admonished to submit to him under that character?

Much has been said of your believing in *one* God; and who requires you to believe in more than one? If you infer hence that there can be no plurality of persons in the Godhead, you contradict your own Scriptures as well as ours. Who made the heavens and the earth? Did not *Elohim*? And did he not say, "Let us make man," &c.? Who wrestled with Jacob? And who appeared to Moses in the bush? Was it not *Jehovah*? Yet he is represented in both cases as the Angel or "Messenger of Jehovah."

Some of the *precepts* of Jesus are objected to as being impracticable, and Christians accused of hypocrisy for pretending to respect them, while none of them act up to them; that is, "when they are smitten on one cheek, they do not offer the other."\* But this is perverseness. Jesus did not mean it literally; nor did he so exemplify it when smitten before Pilate. Nor do the Jews so understand their own commandments. If they do, however, it will follow that they break the sixth commandment in every malefactor whose execution they promote, and even in the killing of animals for food. The manifest design of the precept is to prohibit all private retaliation and revenge; and to teach us that we ought rather to suffer insult than to render evil for evil. This may be a hard lesson for a proud spirit; but it is a true exposition of that law which requires us to *love our neighbour as ourselves*; which is inconsistent with every feeling of *malice*, whatever provocations may have been received.

But this is not all; the very agony of Jesus in the garden provokes the malignity of these writers. The anguish of his soul on that occasion is ascribed to *pusillanimity*! Have they a right then, when judging of his conduct, to take it for granted that he was not the Messiah, and that his death was like that of another man? Certainly they have not. The objection, if it has any force, is this—His want of fortitude is inconsistent with his being the Messiah. To this we answer, supposing him to be the Messiah, there was nothing inconsistent in any of those fears and sorrows which he expressed. For if he were the Messiah, he must, according to prophecy, have suffered immediately from the hand of God, as well as from man. "The chastisement of our peace was upon him—It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." But if the agony in the garden was of this description, there was no want of fortitude in it. So far as the wrath of man was concerned, Jesus feared it not. He endured the cross, and even despised the shame; but, under the hand of God, he both feared and felt: and I never understood before that it was *pusillanimous* to fear or feel under the hand of the Almighty! But we need not marvel; for he who, in the language of prophecy, complained of having *gall given him for meat, and vinegar for drink*, added, "*They persecute him whom thou hast smitten.*"

All these objections prove the truth of what was said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, (or, to speak in Jewish language, except he

\* R. Tobias Goodman's Address to the Committee of the London Society, p. 25.

be *circumcised in heart*.) he cannot see the kingdom of God." The gospel is a system that cannot be received by a mind blinded by prejudice, or a heart hardened in sin. He that receives it must repent, as well as believe. It is in hope that God, peradventure, may give some of you repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, that these addresses are made to you. And though some may make light of them, and even mock, as the idolaters did at Hezekiah's messengers, yet we will deliver our messages, that if you perish, your blood may not be required at our hands.

O ye children of Israel, our hearts' desire, and prayer to God for you, is, that you may be saved! Consider, we entreat you, whether you have not forsaken the religion of your forefathers; whether the Psalms of David express the feelings of your hearts; whether, if you really loved the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, you would not believe in Jesus; whether, if you had just views of your own law, you would not despair of being accepted of God by the works of it; whether your rejection of Jesus be not owing to your insensibility as to your need of a Saviour; whether, if you really believed the Old Testament, you would not believe the New; finally, whether the bitter malignity, which is so frequently discovered against Jesus and his followers, be consistent with true religion.

But I shall conclude with a few words to professing *Christians*. I can perceive, by what I have seen of the Jewish writings, how much they avail themselves of our disorders and divisions, to justify their unbelief. Let those who name the name of Christ depart from iniquity. Let us beware of valuing ourselves on the name, while we are destitute of the thing. We may yield a sort of assent to the doctrine just delivered, while yet it brings forth no good fruit in us. These are the things that rivet Jews in their unbelief. They have no right, indeed, to intrench themselves in prejudice against the Lord Jesus on account of our disorders: he is not more accountable for them than the God of Israel was for the disorders of their forefathers. But though it be wrong in them, it is more so in those who furnish them with occasion of offence. There is a woe upon the world because of offences, seeing they stumble and fall over them; but there is a heavier woe on them through whom they come.

"He that *winneth* souls is wise." I hope all the measures that are taken for the conversion of the Jews will be of a winning nature. If they be malignant and abusive, they must not be opposed by the same weapons. "The servants of the Lord must not strive, as for mastery; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." Whatever is done, for children or adults, I trust it will be in an open, candid way, like that of our Saviour, who did good to the bodies of men, as a means of attracting their attention, and conciliating their affection to the word of everlasting life.

## XI.

[Delivered on a Lord's-day Evening, in a Country Village.]

## SOLITARY REFLECTION.

“Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.”—Psal. iv. 4.

You are assembled together, my dear hearers, that you may learn something concerning your everlasting welfare. I am glad to meet you; and shall be happy to communicate any thing that I understand on this important subject. I pray God to bless it for your good! You have heard many sermons preached, and yet, perhaps, have been but little profited; and you may hear many more to as little purpose. Religion consists not merely in hearing sermons; nor in going away, and talking how you like or dislike the preacher. Religion is not found among noise, and clamour, and dispute. It does not consist in either applauding or censuring men. If ever you hear to any purpose, it will make you forget the preacher, and think only of yourselves. You will be like a smitten deer, which, unable to keep pace with the herd, retires to the thicket and bleeds alone. This is the effect that I long to see produced in you. It is for the purpose of impressing this upon your minds that I have read the above passage, and wish to discourse to you upon it. In doing this, all I shall attempt will be to *explain* and *enforce* the admonition. Let us attempt,

1. TO EXPLAIN THE MEANING OF IT. The persons admonished in this Psalm were men who set themselves against David, and persecuted him without a cause; accusing him, perhaps, to king Saul: and, what greatly aggravates their guilt, they are said to have *turned his glory into shame*; that is, they reproached him on account of his religion, which was his highest honour. There are such scoffers in the world now; and as these wicked men opposed David, so they oppose our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of David according to the flesh. And by how much Christ is superior to David, by so much greater is the wickedness of those who mock at his gospel and people than the other. They were, many of them, men of property; *their corn and their wine*, it seems, *increased*; and it is likely that some of them were people in high life, who had access even to the king. But all this would not screen them from the displeasure of God. Even kings and judges themselves must submit to the Son, or perish from the way.

And if riches will not profit in the day of wrath, neither will poverty. It is true, the Scriptures wear a favourable aspect towards the poor. Jesus preached the gospel to them; and God is often represented as threatening and punishing those that oppress them: but if a man be wicked as well as poor, (as it is well known great numbers are,) his poverty will excite no pity; he must bear his iniquity.

Presumptuous and thoughtless sinners are admonished to “stand in awe, and sin not; to commune with their own hearts upon their bed, and be still.” Bold as any of you may be in sin, there is one above you, who will call you to an account: pause, therefore, and think what you are about. To commune with our hearts means much the same as to ponder the matter over with ourselves. It is said of the adulteress, that, “lest thou shouldst ponder the path of life, her ways are movable, that thou canst not know them.” She leads on her thoughtless admirers, from one degree of sin to another, in quick succession; just as a person who should wish to lose you in a wood, and there murder you, would lead you on, under some fair pre-

tence, from path to path, through one winding direction after another, never suffering you to stand still and pause, lest you should turn back and effect your escape. Thus it is with sinners; they are hurried on, by delusion, from sin to sin, from company to company, and from one course of evil to another, while the enemy of their souls is doing every thing in his power to secure his dominion over them.

That which the adulteress most dreaded was *thought*, close and serious thought; and this it is which the enemy of your souls most dreads. It is by pondering the path of life, if at all, that you must escape the snare. If sinners are saved, it is *from their sins*. Their souls must be converted to the love of Christ; and the ordinary way that God takes to convert them is, by convincing them of sin, which is never effected but by their being brought to close and serious thought. It was by "thinking of his ways" that David "turned his feet to God's testimonies."

The *place* and *time* particularly recommended for this exercise is, *upon your bed, at night*. If there be any time more favourable to reflection than others, it must be that in which you are free from all intruding company, and interruptions from without. Then, when you have retired from the world, and the world from you; when the hurry of business is withdrawn; when the tumult of the soul subsides, and is succeeded by a solemn stillness; when the darkness which surrounds you prevents the interference of sensible objects, and invites the mental eye to look inward; then commune with your own heart; take a reckoning with your soul; inquire what course you are in, and whither it will lead you!

It might be well to examine the *actions* of your life; but as the heart is the spring-head of action, the state of your *heart* must be the chief object of your inquiry. As to actions, they are neither good nor evil, but as they are the expressions of the heart. Were you to kill a fellow creature, you know, there would be no evil in it provided it was by mere accident, and not from any malicious design, criminal passion, or careless neglect; and if you did ever so much good to your neighbour, yet if it were by accident, and not from design, there would be no goodness in it. It is the disposition of our hearts that denominates our characters in the sight of God. In all your communings, therefore, commune with your *hearts*.

Perhaps you will say, I find great difficulty in collecting my thoughts, and fixing them upon those things which are of the greatest importance; when I would think, I scarcely know what to think about. Well; give me leave, then, to suggest a few plain questions, which I would earnestly recommend you to put home to your own soul.

First, *Does my heart choose and follow after those things which my conscience tells me are right?* I can assure you that with many this is not the case. Their consciences tell them that they ought to fear God, to keep holy the sabbath day, to read and hear the word of God, and to perform various other duties; but their hearts are at variance with all these things. Their consciences tell them that they ought not to swear, lie, steal, get intoxicated, cheat their creditors, and ruin their families; but their hearts, nevertheless, are set upon these and many other such wicked courses; and they will pursue them, at all events. Is this the case with any of you? It is a miserable life to have the heart and conscience at variance. You are sensible it is so; and therefore, if any of you are of this description, you labour, I dare say, to lull conscience asleep, that you may enjoy the desires of your heart without interruption from its remonstrances. But this is a desperate way of going on. Conscience will not always sleep; and when it does awake, which perhaps may be upon a death-bed, its voice will be more terrible than thunder, and its accusations more painful than the sting

of a scorpion. Did you never see a wicked man upon a dying bed? Perhaps not: possibly you cannot bear such sights, and therefore shun them. There are persons, however, who have; and, witnessing his agony, have longed to alleviate it. The guilt, the fear, and the horror which have appeared in his eyes; the bitter regret that has preyed upon his dying heart; and the forebodings of everlasting misery that seemed to have seized his soul; have wrung their hearts with anguish: but all they could do was to drop an unavailing tear. Given up to the hardness of his heart, even the doctrine of salvation by the blood of the Lamb has had no effect upon him, and he has died in all the misery of despair. Oh that this may not be your end! Yet if such be your life, and you persist in it, there is no reason to expect but that it will.

But it is possible that you may not sustain this character. Your heart and conscience may not be at such variance as to give you any considerable pain. If so, let me recommend a second question: *Is my conscience instructed and formed by the word of God?* Though you may be certain that you are in a wrong course if you live in the violation of conscience, yet you cannot always conclude that you are in a right one when you do not violate it, because conscience itself may err. Saul was conscientious in persecuting the followers of Christ; yet he was one of *the chief of sinners* for so doing. You may ask, What can a man do but follow that which he thinks to be right? True; but it becomes him to compare his thoughts with the word of God; for we are easily persuaded to think favourably of that conduct which suits our inclinations; and where this is the case, the error of the conscience, instead of excusing the evil conduct, becomes itself an evil.

The consciences of many people tell them, that if they take care of their families, pay every man his due, and attend public worship once or twice a week, this is all that can reasonably be expected at their hands. And I have heard this Scripture passage brought in proof of it, "What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" But (to say nothing of the love of mercy towards our fellow creatures) to walk humbly with God is a very different thing from the above exercises.

A man's conscience may be easy, and he may persuade himself that he is in the way to life, while, in fact, he is as far from it as the old Pharisees, against whom the heaviest woes of damnation were denounced. The case of such people seems to be worse, on some accounts, than that of the openly profane: these acting in opposition to their own consciences, as well as to God, a faithful warning sometimes takes hold of their fears; but those, deluded by vain hope, consider all such warnings as inapplicable to them. Both are steering the same course; but the one is impeded by wind and tide, while the other is aided by the current of a perverted conscience. Do not forget to inquire, *Is my conscience instructed and formed by the word of God?* Perhaps you have not been in the habit of reading that sacred book, or of having it read to you. The neglect of it may occasion your eternal overthrow.

But let me recommend a third question: *Have any or all my pursuits, whether after natural or sinful enjoyments, ever yet afforded me satisfaction?* The answer to this question is of importance; because if they never have, there is no reason to conclude they ever will; and if so, what have you been pursuing all this time? You have spent thirty, forty, fifty, or more years in the world, and, by a thousand different methods, have been seeking satisfaction; yet you have not found it. You thought, when you were

young, to have found it in forbidden pleasures, and perhaps you gave a loose to appetite and desire; but you were disappointed. Guilt, infamy, and misery were the fruits of those excesses. Your own heart will tell you this, if you ask it. Since that time, having felt the effects of your former folly, it may be, you have turned your attention to other things: you have settled; and now your object has been to raise yourself in the world. Saving money has seemed the one thing needful to render you happy. Perhaps you have saved a little of this article; and are you happy? Ask your own heart, and it will tell you. No, you want to save *a little more*. Poor man! you are unhappy; and unhappy in this course you will be. Can you tell the reason? You have been trying to satisfy yourself with *that which is not bread*. Do you not know that God has created you with desires which it is not in the power of the whole creation to satisfy? Alexander and Cæsar, those mighty monarchs, who each in his day conquered the world, were as far off from happiness as you are. The one is said to have wept because there was not another world to conquer; and the other to have exclaimed, when in the full possession of empire, "Is this all?"

If you inquire wherefore has God planted desires in your natures that it is not in the power of creation to satisfy, I answer, that you might be led to seek satisfaction where it is to be found. There is much meaning, and merciful meaning too, in those Divine expostulations: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto *me*, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto *me*: hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Again, "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto *me* and drink!" And again, "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel thee to buy of *me* gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see."

A fourth question I would recommend is this: *Will the course I am in do to die with?* If it will, pursue it with all your might; but first be well satisfied that it will. There is no way of answering this question but by comparing your character with the word of God. There you will find our Lord declaring to his disciples, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.—Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." And again, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Do you understand these things by experience? Did you ever seriously think about them? They are subjects of no little importance. Some men, and even some preachers, may tell you that all this signifies nothing more than your being baptized, or, at most, living a sober, regular life; but it is at your peril to believe them against the solemn declarations of Christ. Nicodemus, a master in Israel, was ignorant of these things. Other teachers now may be the same; and if blind themselves, no wonder that they lead others equally blind till both fall into the ditch. But as you value your souls, remember who it is that has said, "Ye must be born again."

If you have never experienced this change, you are at present strangers



to yourselves, to God, to Christ, and to the way of life; exposed to the curse of Almighty God; and, dying in your present state, must perish for ever.

One question more let me recommend, and I will conclude this part of the subject: *If I should die in an unconverted state, and perish for ever, can I endure the wrath of an offended God?* If you can, why then let every man help his neighbour, and every one say to his brother, Be of good courage, laugh at death, set judgment at defiance, and make a jest of an hereafter . . . . but if not, pause and think. . . .

Who can forbear remarking the cowardice of wicked men? how, even in this world, these bold spirits are cut down with a little affliction! Those who trifle most with hell, and whose lips are so full of damnation that it becomes in their mouths a mere matter of bravado, how do they sink under the first touch of God's indignation! Gaal and his company could eat and drink and curse Abimelech at a distance; but when Abimelech draws near, lo! they are covered with dismay.

O profane character! can thine hands be strong, and thine heart endure, in the day that he shall deal with thee? If you cannot tell how to endure the sufferings of life, what will you do in the hour of death? How, especially, will you grapple with the bitter pains of eternal death? "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, how wilt thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace wherein thou trustedst they wearied thee, how wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan?" Such, or nearly such, my hearers, will be your own reflections, if upon your bed you commune with your own hearts to any good purpose.

But I proceed,

II. TO ENFORCE THE SUBJECT BY CONSIDERING THE GREAT IMPORTANCE OF A SERIOUS COMPLIANCE WITH IT. There is nothing more dreaded by unconverted sinners than solitary reflection, and, therefore, nothing more necessary. They are like a person whose affairs are going to ruin, and who feels a strong reluctance to enter into a thorough examination of his accounts. And wherefore? Because such an examination would destroy his present peace, and he would be under the necessity of making a full stop. To avoid this, he puts far from him the evil day, and cherishes a vain hope that things are not so bad as they appear. But as in this case the longer a thorough examination is deferred, the deeper he sinks, so it is in the other. Let me request your attention to a few observations on this part of the subject.

1. There are things that you have *doubted*, or acted as if you doubted, which, if you would but retire and converse with your own heart, you would find to be true. You have acted but in too many instances as though you doubted whether you were accountable and immortal creatures, and as though an agreeable subsistence in the present world were the only thing that should concern you. But if you be not accountable to Him that made you, how is it that sin, which is unknown to every creature but yourself, should nevertheless be accompanied with remorse? Is there not a tribunal erected within your own bosom that forebodes a judgment to come? If there were no hereafter, why that dread of death, and that fearful looking-for of judgment, in the hour of threatening affliction? O sinner! you shall not be able to plead ignorance at the bar of heaven: your own heart, depraved as it is, will bear witness against you.

2. There are things to which you are apt to *object* in God's dealings with you, which, were you to commune with your own hearts, would be found to be unobjectionable. If you are told of the strictness of God's holy law, and that nothing short of "truth in the inward parts" can answer to its

requirements, you think it hard, and feel disposed to complain of the grievousness of his yoke: but ask your own hearts, would *you* be contented with any thing less from a fellow creature?

Perhaps you are a parent or a master; and what if your children or servants were, through fear, ever so assiduous, if you knew they had no love for you, would you be satisfied? Or perhaps you are a husband. If the partner of your life were alienated from you, and attached to another, though through fear of your displeasure she were studious to the utmost to oblige you in her outward deportment, would this satisfy you? Would you not disdain to accept of her services unless you could have her heart with them? You must know that this is the truth. Out of your own mouth, therefore, will the Lord judge you.

Again, if you are told of God's awful threatenings against sin, your spirit rises against him, and you are ready to accuse him of cruelty; but ask your own heart if you would spare one that had treated you as you have treated him. If you had a son, and, with all the tenderness of a father, nursed him, fed him, clothed him, and instructed him; and if, when he arrived at years of maturity, instead of behaving towards you with filial obedience and gratitude, he should prove undutiful, malignant, false, and do all he could to ruin you and your family, would you not give him up to his evil course, and let him take the consequences of his behaviour? Or should you from paternal pity be disposed to pass over his transgressions; and should a common friend, with your approbation, intercede on his behalf, entreating him to beg your pardon, assuring him of your readiness to forgive the past; if, in addition to his former crimes, he continued to despise the overtures of mercy, what would you do with him? Or should he, when overwhelmed with troubles of his own procuring, affect to be sorry for what he had done, and write to you in the strain of humble confession, praying you to deliver him this once, and vowing how different his conduct should be towards you in future; if, as soon as his troubles had subsided, he were to return again to his former courses, what would you do with him? Alas, all this, and a thousand times more, have you done against the best of fathers, the God "in whose hands your breath is, and whose are all your ways!" "Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel, Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?"

3. One reason of your *knowing so little of your heart sins* is your communing so little with your hearts. You go on in a hurry of business, and the state and temper of your heart is overlooked; and being naturally disposed to flatter yourself, you imagine it to be much better than it is. You may be governed by the love of this world, yea, and be very covetous; so much so, that all who know you may perceive it; and yet you do not perceive it yourself, but are ready to be offended with any person who tells you of it. You think yourself as good as your neighbours, and flatter yourself that your sin is not so very great. It is true, say you, I have my failings, as all men have, but, thank God, I never was guilty of such things as many are. So said the Pharisee in the parable, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men;" and so said the wicked priests, in the days of Malachi, "What have we spoken *so much* against thee!" O my hearers, commune with your hearts, and you will find them to be very different from your present thoughts of them.

There is one thing in particular which perhaps never struck your attention—your *total want of love to God*. This is the sin of your nature, and the fruitful parent of all other sins. God requires the whole heart; as indeed he justly may, for he is worthy of it; but you have no heart to give him. It is preoccupied, and that with such things as are contrary to God.

All your actual sins are but little, compared with this. They have been committed only at different times; but this is a tide, deep and large, that flows without cessation or interruption. Those are the fruits; but this is the poisonous root from which they spring. If you loved God, you could not love the world, and the things of the world, as you do. You could not blaspheme his name, neglect his worship, or trample on his laws; and all with unconcern. Neither could you feel toward your neighbour as you do in many instances. All bitterness, and wrath, and malice, and evil speaking; all envy towards them that are above you, and pride, oppression, and unfeeling treatment toward them that are beneath you; all arise from a want of the love of God: for he that loveth God will love his brother also.

All unconverted sinners, I believe, retain a good opinion of their hearts, however they may differ in expressing it, which is evidently owing to their ignorance of its deceitfulness and desperate wickedness. Some make no secret of it. It is true, say they, I now and then swear, when in a passion, and get too much liquor once in a while; but I *mean* no evil: my *heart* is good. Others, who have been brought up under evangelical preaching, are ashamed of this language, and would despise the ignorance of the person who should use it. They will not deny in words that their hearts are bad; howbeit they mean not so. By *heart* they understand they know not what, something distinct from *intention, disposition; or desire*. Therefore they are sometimes heard to say, It is true, I am not converted; but I *desire* to be so. I cannot say, I love Christ; but I *wish* I did. This is the same thing as saying, My heart is good. If I be not a converted man, it is not my fault. I am willing at any time, if God would but convert me.—But all this is false and delusive. If you were willing to return to God, by Jesus Christ, there is nothing in heaven or earth that stands in your way. The truth is, you love your sins too well to part with them for Christ or heaven; and have no desire after conversion *for its own sake*, but merely as a something which, at times, you think you could *submit* to, rather than suffer eternal damnation. Whoever neglects to commune with his own heart, it is necessary for *you* that you may know your true character; of which, with all your advantages, you are hitherto totally ignorant.

Even in the concerns of men with men, there is much blindness to their own motives, and deception in forming a judgment of their own conduct, which is owing to a want of looking into themselves. A thousand things are defended by persons in company, which, were they to retire alone and commune with their own hearts, they would be obliged to condemn. In how many instances have contentions been cherished, and half a neighbourhood either brought in as witnesses, or in some way implicated in the contest, which might all have been decided in a quarter of an hour, if the party had only retired alone, and asked himself this question: Have I done to my neighbour what I should have wished him, in like circumstances, to have done to me?

4. There are things on account of which you may *value yourselves*, and of which you may *make a righteousness*, that, if you were to retire alone, would be found of a very opposite nature. It is possible, you may have been in the habit of reading a chapter in the Bible once a week, or oftener, in your family; of frequenting public worship; of giving away something to people who are poorer than yourself; and of shunning public houses and riotous assemblies. It is possible, likewise, that you may consider this as the way to heaven, and hence lay your account with being happy in the world to come. But if you look into your heart, you may find that the motives which have influenced you have been such as God can never approve; and if so, instead of justifying, they will serve only to condemn you.

If you have read the Scriptures, or gone to a place of worship, merely from custom, and not from any love you had to these things; if you have relieved the poor out of pride, rather than pure compassion; and if that which has preserved you from the grossest vices has been rather a regard to your interest, health, or character, than any concern for the honour of God; can such things be acceptable in his sight?

But if your motives were ever so pure, and your good deeds ever so many, yet having broken the holy, just, and good law of God, you cannot be justified by any thing which you can do. If you commune with your heart to any good purpose, you will never think of being saved by the works of your own hands; but feel the necessity of a Saviour, and of a great one. The doctrine of salvation by the death of Jesus will be glad tidings to your soul. Finally, you will, as you are exhorted in the verse following the text, "offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord." In other words, with a broken and a contrite spirit, you will approach the God against whom you have sinned; mourn over your unprovoked offences, as one mourneth for an only son; and be in bitterness as one that is in bitterness for his first-born; and this without thinking of either your prayers or tears as being any thing, or of any account; but placing all your hope and help in him who, "when we were without strength, in due time died for the ungodly." To him be glory for ever! Amen.

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## XII.

### ADVICE TO THE DEJECTED.

"How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?"—Psal. xiii. 2.

WE have, in a former discourse, considered the importance of looking into our own hearts; but that counsel is not applicable in all cases. There is such a thing as to pore on our guilt and wretchedness, to the overlooking of our highest mercies. Though it be proper to know our own hearts, for the purpose of conviction, yet if we expect consolation from this quarter, we shall find ourselves sadly disappointed.

Such, for a time, appears to have been the case of David. He seems to have been in great distress; and, as is common in such cases, his thoughts turned inward, casting in his mind what he should do, and what would be the end of things. While thus exercised, he had "sorrow in his heart daily;" but, betaking himself to God for relief, he succeeded; trusting in his mercy, his heart rejoiced in his salvation."

There are many persons who, when in trouble, imitate David in the former part of this experience: I wish we may imitate him in the latter. In discoursing on the subject, I shall first notice the disconsolate situation of the psalmist, with the remedy to which he repaired under it; and then inquire to what cases it is applicable among us, and whether the same remedy be not equally adapted to our relief as to his.

I. Let us notice the DISCONSOLATE SITUATION OF THE PSALMIST, WITH THE REMEDY TO WHICH HE REPAIRED UNDER IT. The Psalm is probably one of those mournful songs which he composed during his persecution by Saul; but, like most others, though it begins in complaint, it ends in triumph. We may be certain he was pressed with great *difficulties*; for we do not take counsel with ourselves or others, but in such cases. The par-

ticulars of his situation may be collected from the different parts of the Psalm.

1. *He was sorely persecuted.* This was a mysterious providence. God had anointed him to the throne, and brought him into public life; it might have been expected, therefore, that he would have made his way plain before him: yet, in following what must to him manifestly appear the leading of the Divine guide, he brings upon himself a flood of evils. Though nothing was further from his intention than to use any means to dethrone his sovereign; yet Saul is jealous, and his dependants are stirred up, by envy and malice, to compass the ruin of the innocent. Let not those who are candidates for an immortal crown be surprised, if their path to glory be covered with snares and pits: it is through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom.

2. *The Lord seemed to prosper his persecutors, and not him: his enemy was exalted over him.* This seems more mysterious still. Is the God of Israel then a man, that he should lie; or the son of man, that he should repent? Does he use lightness? Or the things which he purposes, does he purpose according to the flesh; that with him there should be yea, yea, and nay, nay? Far be it from him. Yet if we were to judge by appearances, we might, at times, be tempted to draw such conclusions.

3. *His most intimate acquaintance seem to have forsaken him.* In cases of difficulty, we usually advise with our friends, if we have any. If we are driven to *take counsel with ourselves*, therefore, it may be presumed that we are bereft of that consolation. A sympathizing, wise, and faithful friend, in a time of difficulty, is a great blessing. In times of prosperity, many will profess a regard to us; but if persecution for Christ's sake should overtake us, we may expect some to stand aloof, who now court our acquaintance. This has been the lot of men of whom the world was not worthy; and it was no small part of their affliction that they had to suffer *by themselves*. Let us not complain of such things, however. Our Lord himself was forsaken by lover and friend. He took three of his most beloved disciples to accompany him in the hour of his sufferings; but they fell asleep, and left him to agonize alone.

4. *To these temporal distresses were added others of a spiritual nature; the Lord hid his face from him; and, to him, it appeared as though he had forgotten him.* If under his outward troubles he could have enjoyed inward peace; if he could have poured out his heart with freedom in secret; if, though banished from the sanctuary, yet looking towards that house, and calling upon the Lord, he had heard him from heaven his dwelling-place, his load had been supportable; but to have to say with Job, "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him!" this gives a double weight to the affliction. But here also we have no reason to complain. David has been before us; and, what is more, David's Lord. Jesus was persecuted; his enemies were exalted over him; his friends were scattered from him; and, to fill up the bitter cup, his God forsook him. This was the sorrow of sorrows. He speaks as one that could have borne any thing else: "My God, my God, . . . why hast thou forsaken me?"

5. *All this was not for a few days only; but for a long time.* "How long wilt thou forget me? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul?" The intenseness of the affliction renders it trying to our fortitude; but it is by the continuance of it that patience is put to the test. It is not under the sharpest, but the longest trials, that we are most in danger of fainting. In the former case, the soul

collects all its strength, and feels in earnest to call in help from above; but in the latter, the mind relaxes and sinks into despondency. When Job was accosted with evil tidings, in quick succession, he bore it with becoming fortitude; but when he could see no end to his troubles, he sunk under them.

These were some of the particulars which made up the load of David; and under which he is said to have *taken counsel in his soul*. The phrase seems to be expressive of great restlessness of spirit, a poring over his misery, a casting in his mind what he should do, and what would be the end of these things. Perhaps, if we had been secreted near him, we should have seen him walking by himself, now looking upwards, then downwards, weeping as he went, or sighing under a load that would not suffer him to weep; sometimes sinking into torpid silence, and sometimes interrogating himself on his future conduct:—What shall I do? Which way shall I take? Shall I go backward, or forward; or shall I stand still? Shall I try any other means; or shall I despair?

From this tumult of the mind, we are certain he obtained relief; for, towards the close of the Psalm, he deals in the language of triumph: “I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.” Nor are we left to guess in what manner his soul was delivered from this state of dejection: “I have trusted,” says he, “in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.” Hence we may gather that the way in which he obtained relief was by *ceasing to take counsel in his soul, and by looking out of himself, and trusting in the mercy of God*.

This remedy was competent to the removal of all his complaints. What is it that mercy, Divine mercy, mercy through a Mediator, mercy connected with omnipotence and veracity, cannot effect? Was he *persecuted*? By trusting in this, he would cease to fear what man could do unto him. Was the hand of *Providence* apparently against him? That might be, and yet all in the end work together for good. Did his *friends* forsake him? The compassion of his best Friend would more than make up this loss. But did *he* also hide his face from him? Still he could do no better than apply to the mercy-seat, and supplicate his return. Finally, was all this complicated load of trials of *long continuance*? After waiting patiently for the Lord, he would hear him, would bring him out of the horrible pit, set his feet upon a rock, establish his goings, and put a new song into his mouth. Such, indeed, was the issue of his present trials, which is recorded for the encouragement of others, who shall be in like circumstances.

II. Let us inquire TO WHAT CASES THE SUBJECT IS APPLICABLE AMONG US, AND WHETHER THE SAME REMEDY BE NOT EQUALLY ADAPTED TO OUR RELIEF AS TO THAT OF DAVID. The Holy Spirit has drawn the likeness of man in all situations, that we might find our case, and learn instruction. If we barely read the Scriptures as a description of the concerns of persons who lived a long time ago, and make no application of them to ourselves, we shall miss the great end for which they were given us. The case of the psalmist appears to me to correspond with that of three descriptions of people.

I. *Persons who sink into despondency under the adverse providences of God*. God has poured a portion of sorrow into the cup of human life. Property, connections, friends, children, and every other avenue of natural enjoyment, become, at one time or other, inlets to grief; and if, in these seasons of adversity, the attention be turned inward, rather than directed to the Father of mercies, we shall be in danger of sinking under them.

We have seen men who, under the smiles of providence, have been cheerful and amiable, when disappointments and losses have overtaken them,

sink into sullen dejection, and never more lift up their heads. In some instances, it has issued in suicide. It is a dangerous thing to take counsel in our souls, to the neglect of the counsel of God. We have seen others wretched beyond expression, owing to unhappy connexions. In the formation of them, religion has been overlooked, and even genuine affection, for the sake of advantages of a worldly nature. The consequence has been, on the one side, neglect, dislike, strife, cruelty, and infidelity; on the other, disappointment, jealousy, unavailing reflection, a broken spirit, a fixed melancholy, and every thing but absolute despair. Oh with what desire could I draw off the attention of such broken hearts from things below to things above; from taking counsel in their souls, to trusting in the mercy of God, in Christ Jesus! Many a wounded spirit has, by this means, been healed, and rendered happy for life; besides being prevented from plunging, in the agony of desperation, into the gulf of eternal ruin.

We have seen even religious characters inordinately depressed with troubles. The loss of some darling object, the confounding of some favourite scheme, or the rising of some apparently insurmountable difficulty, has overwhelmed the heart. In such circumstances the mind is apt to nurse its melancholy, trying to live, as it were, on dying elements; but it is not thus that we shall either glorify God or gain relief. Jesus hath said, "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me." From troubles of some kind there is no exemption in the present state; but it does not become the followers of Christ to indulge in *heart* troubles for little things; and such are all our worldly sorrows, "*light* afflictions which are but for a moment." The true Christian life is, to be inordinately "careful for nothing; but in every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let our requests be made known unto God." It is thus that "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." It is by ceasing to take counsel in our souls, and trusting in God's mercy, that our sorrow, like that of David, will be turned into joy and triumph. Our way may be covered with darkness, so much so that we cannot see where the next step will place us; but we have a Leader who sees through all, and who has promised to *guide us with his eye*. Things may so work as to confound our calculations; but if all work together for good, this is sufficient. What are our afflictions, too, in comparison of the glory that awaits us? Paul had his afflictions, as well as we, far greater indeed than ours have been; and he also *took counsel* under them; but not *with himself*: he took into his account the hope that was set before him: "I reckon," says he, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." It is while we thus "look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen," that our "afflictions" appear "*light*" and "*momentary*," and "work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

2. The case of the psalmist corresponds with that of *persons who, at the outset of their religious concern, are encompassed with darkness and long-continued dejection*. There are some who are no sooner brought to entertain a just sense of the nature and demerits of sin than they are led to embrace the gospel way of salvation, and find rest to their souls; but it is not so with all. Some are known to continue, for a long time, in a state of dark suspense. They have too deep a sense of sin to be able to enjoy the pleasures of this world; and are too much in the dark concerning its forgiveness to be able to imbibe the joys of another. Hence their days are spent in solitude and dejection: they search for peace, but it is far from them: they *take counsel in their soul, and have sorrow in their hearts daily*.

Various things contribute to promote this state of mind. In some it may

be owing to circumstances *without* them. Perhaps, like David, they had no friend to whom they could open their minds; or if they had, it might have been to persons who were either total strangers to these things, or who were unskilful in the word of righteousness. Such also may have been the kind of preaching they have heard that nothing suitable to their case has been ordinarily, if ever, delivered. If the preacher be of such a description as to content himself with moral harangues; if, instead of exhibiting the Saviour of sinners, he have nothing to say to a wounded spirit, unless it be to advise him to forsake his vices, and be better; or if his object be rather to improve the manners of men, and render them decent members of society, than to renew their hearts; the tendency of his preaching will be either to establish the hearer in Pharisaical presumption, or sink him into despondency.

Or should the preacher be of another description—should he hold forth a kind of Mahometan predestination, be averse from the free invitations of the gospel to sinners as sinners, and employ himself in persuading his hearers that no one has any warrant to come to Jesus for eternal life but the regenerate—the effects will be much the same. The awakened sinner will either take up with some enthusiastic impression, imagine himself a favourite of Heaven, *trusting that he is righteous, and despising others*; or, having no consciousness that he is regenerate, be deterred from approaching the Saviour, and so sink into despondency.

Could I gain access to such a character, I would proclaim in his ear the *MERCY of God to sinners*, the all-sufficiency and willingness of Jesus to save all that are willing to be saved by him, and the free invitations of the gospel, as a sufficient warrant for him, or any other sinner, to trust his immortal interests in his hands. O ye that labour and are heavy laden, come to Jesus, “and ye shall find rest unto your souls!” Do not dream of first ascertaining your election, or regeneration, and of approaching the Saviour as a favourite of Heaven; it is only by believing in him, as a perishing sinner, that you can obtain an evidence of these things. It is by the gospel coming to us, not in word only, but in power, that our election of God is known, and our regeneration ascertained.

In others, such dejection may be owing to something *within* them. It may arise from a kind of propensity to think on things which are against them, rather than on those which are in their favour; viewing only the dark side of the cloud; dwelling on the magnitude of their guilt, their unworthiness of mercy, and the little success they have had in praying and striving to enter in. This propensity is often fed by an idea that it would be presumption, in such sinners as they are, to admit the consolation of the gospel; and that it is abundantly more becoming them to stand aloof in darkness and misery. But this is not Christian humility. It is a spurious kind of modesty, the principle of which is nearly akin to that voluntary humility and self-denial that induces men to abstain from that which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving. Notwithstanding the modest and humble appearance which these objections assume, they will be found to be no better than a *species of self-righteous pride*, opposed to the humiliating gospel of Christ. When you object, for instance, that you are *unworthy* of such great and unspeakable blessings as the gospel reveals, and, therefore, that it would be presumption in you to accept of them; what is this but saying that, before you can have any warrant to receive these blessings, you must be *worthy* of them, at least somewhat more so than you are at present? And, probably, you hope in time to become so. But this is the very essence of self-righteousness, and directly opposite to the gospel of Christ. Christ came into the world to seek and save them that are *lost*.



He came into the world to save *sinner*s, even the chief of sinners. He has no mercy to bestow on sinners, but as undeserving. If any man think himself deserving of his grace, his answer is, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." The very meaning of the word *grace*, of which the Scriptures speak so largely, is FREE FAVOUR TO THE UNWORTHY: unworthiness, therefore, can be no ground of objection. If there be any bar in your way, it is your conceit of some kind of worthiness being necessary to recommend you to the grace of the Saviour; and take heed lest you perish under this delusion, after the example of apostate Israel, "who followed after the law of righteousness, but never attained it: and wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law: for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone."

If such should not be the end of things with you, yet, to say the least, so long as this self-righteous spirit possesses you, you will be a miserable creature, and never be able to find rest unto your soul; and it certainly behoves you to take heed lest this should not be the worst. The question is not whether the blessings of pardon, justification, and eternal life be too great for our deserts. Are they beyond our wants? Can we do with less? If they are not too great for our necessities, nor too great for the ever-blessed God, through the mediation of his Son, to bestow, who are we that we should hesitate to accept of them? If he present to us the cup of salvation, shall we not drink it? True humility, instead of making objections, would answer, "Be it unto thy servant according to thy word."

We are assured, by him that cannot lie, that if we "inquire for the good old way," the way in which all the faithful have gone from age to age, "and walk in it, we shall find rest unto our souls." We know, also, who it was that applied the walking in this *good old way* to faith in his name, obedience to his authority, and conformity to his example; saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Hence we may certainly conclude, that if we do not find rest unto our souls, it must be owing to our not coming to him as a Saviour, or not yielding to his authority as a King, or not learning to copy after his example; and if we comply not with the first, in vain do we flatter ourselves with conformity to the last. We shall never "work the works of God," till we "believe in him whom he hath sent."

An unwillingness to be saved, ruled, and modelled according to the mind of Christ, is generally the last thing of which sinners are apt to suspect themselves. They think they are willing and even desirous to be saved in his way, and to become his people; and that the only question is, whether Christ be willing to save them; whereas all such thoughts are founded in error. "We are not straitened in him, but in our own bowels." If we can so believe in him as to relinquish every false system of religion, and every false ground of hope, falling into the arms of free *mercy*, as the chief of sinners; and if we can so yield ourselves up to him as to be willing to have our ear bored as it were to the door-posts of his house, and to serve him for ever; there is no obstruction in heaven or in earth to our salvation.

O disconsolate and desponding sinner! thou hast been reading, thinking, hearing, praying, striving, and yet thou art never the nearer; no peace, no rest to thy soul, nor ascendancy over thy sins. Like the beast in the mire, all thy striving serves but to sink thee deeper. Let me ask thee a few questions: Understandest thou what thou readest? The disciples were as dark and as sorrowful as thou art till they *understood the Scriptures*. Do thy thoughts accord with God's thoughts as they are revealed in the Scrip-

tures? God's thoughts are as much above those of man as the heavens are higher than the earth. Let me entreat thee particularly to consider whether thy prayers have been offered up *in the name of Jesus*, or with an eye to his mediation? Perhaps hitherto thou hast "asked nothing in his name; ask, and thou shalt receive, that thy joy may be full." Remember this, too, it is he himself who invites thee to do so. "The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit;" follow his example. Here, in the gospel of free grace, in exchange for thy horrible situation, is a *rock* for thy feet, and a *new song* for thy mouth. It is vain for thee to think of overcoming thy sins, any more than of obtaining forgiveness in any other way. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" Cease then from taking counsel in thy soul, trust in the mercy of God through a Mediator, and thy heart shall rejoice in his salvation.

3. The case of the psalmist is applicable to *persons who during the greater part of their religious profession live under habitual fear lest they should not at last prove real Christians*. This description of professing Christians, of which there is a considerable number among us, seems to have been scarcely known in the primitive ages. In those times they appear to have been generally conscious of being what they professed to be—believers in the Son of God; and knowing that such had the promise of eternal life, they did not ordinarily doubt upon the subject. It was possible, however, at that time as well as this, for the mind to be in doubt of its own sincerity. They had hypocrites and self-deceivers as well as we; hence, in describing the graces of the Spirit, the sacred writer speaks of "faith unfeigned," and of "love without dissimulation." And as the denouncing of a hypocrite among the apostles caused each one to inquire, "Lord, is it I?" so, doubtless, the most upright character would be subject to occasional fears, lest he should be found deceiving his soul. This seems to be the kind of *fear* which the apostle describes as cast out by *perfect love*; and as the love of the primitive Christians greatly abounded, their fears and doubts with regard to their own sincerity were consequently but few.

One great cause, I apprehend, of the prevalence of such fears in sincere people of the present age, is the great degree in which the attention is turned inward, and the small degree in which it is directed to the things of God as revealed in the Scriptures; or, to use the language of the text, *the taking counsel in their souls*.

I do not mean to discourage all remembrance of past experiences. The members of the church of Sardis are admonished to remember "how they had received and heard;" and David, under great dejection of mind, resolved to "remember the Lord from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites from the hill Mizar." Much less do I mean to countenance the notions of such writers and preachers as cry down all evidences of grace, all marks and signs of internal Christianity, taken from the work of sanctification in the soul. Far be this from me. I am persuaded that, for any man to reject evidences of personal religion drawn from this quarter, he must fall very little short of rejecting his Bible.\* But though sanctification is the evidence of an interest in spiritual blessings, yet it is not so much by remembering our past religious experience that we shall obtain satisfaction as by renewed exercises of grace. The apostle in the forecited passages, when describing the means by which we are to come to the knowledge of our personal religion, makes no mention of things past, but of things present, of which the mind is supposed to be conscious at the time. "Hereby,"

\* See especially 1 John ii. 3, 5; iii. 14, 18—21, 24.

saith he, "we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments."—"Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him."—"We know that we have passed from death unto life," not because *we have loved*, but "because we *love* the brethren." And if satisfaction be attainable only by the renewed exercises of grace, our object is to ascertain the method best adapted to promote such exercises, which I am persuaded will be found to be a looking out of ourselves to the truths and consolations revealed in the Scriptures.

To attempt to ascertain the reality of our religion by a remembrance of past experiences of grace, is attempting what in most cases must needs be, to say the least, extremely difficult, and, if accomplished, would be of no use. The mind is not formed for such a remembrance of its own ideas and sensations as this would require. It is true those impressions which are singularly striking will often be remembered at a distant period, but not in that clear and lively manner in which they are felt at the time. It is only a *general* recollection of things that is ordinarily retained; to be employed, therefore, in raking over our past feelings, in order to discover whether we be real Christians, is almost a hopeless undertaking. If it were otherwise, and we could clearly gain the object of our research, still it has no tendency to glorify God. The way to glorify him is to "bring forth much fruit," and not merely to remember that we did bring forth fruit some twenty or thirty years ago. Those examples which the Scriptures afford of persons recurring to past experiences were not for the purpose of ascertaining their own sincerity, but for the regaining of those sensations which at former periods they had possessed. The reason why the churches of Ephesus and Sardis were admonished to remember their first love was that they might recover it; and the object of David, in his recollection of past times, was not so much that he might determine what was the nature of his experiences at those times, as that he might regain his confidence in God. "I will remember thee," saith he, "from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites from the hill Mizar." God was the object he sought; and the remembrance of what he had formerly experienced of his goodness and faithfulness was the *means* he used to find him. Allowing, therefore, that the remembrance of past sensations may afford us satisfaction as to the reality of our personal religion, yet it is no otherwise than as *reviving* those sensations, by which they become renewed exercises of grace. If we can recollect those things which at a former period endeared the Lord Jesus Christ and his religion to us, and so recover our affection towards them, such a recollection will be profitable, and will serve to strengthen our evidences of interest in them. But if we think of gaining satisfaction on this subject by a mere remembrance of past affections, without any consciousness of present ones, we shall be disappointed, or, which is worse, if we imagine that we have gained our object, it will prove in the end that "a deceived heart hath turned us aside."

If we would wish to discover whether there were any particles of steel in a large quantity of rubbish, it would not be the wisest way to search for them, and especially in the dark, but to hold a large and efficacious magnet over it. And this, if it be there, is the way to discover true religion in our souls. The truths and promises of God are to a principle of religion in the mind that which the magnet is to the steel; if there be any in us, the proper exhibition of the gospel will ordinarily draw it forth.

If it be a matter of doubt with you whether you be truly converted, far be it from me to endeavour to persuade you that you are so. Your doubts may be well-founded, for aught I can tell; and, supposing they should be so, the door of mercy is still open. If you have obtained mercy, the same way

is open for your obtaining it again; and if not, there is no reason why you should not obtain it now. The consolations I have to recommend are addressed to you, not as converted, nor as unconverted; not as elect, nor as non-elect; but as *sinner*s: and this character, I suppose, you have no doubt of sustaining. All the blessings of the gospel are freely presented for acceptance to sinners. Sinners, whatever may have been their character, have a complete warrant to receive them; yea, it is their duty to do so, and their great sin if they do not. Nothing but ignorance, unbelief, self-righteous pride, or some such evil state of mind, prevents it. The gospel supper is provided; all things are ready; and the king's servants are commissioned to persuade, and, as it were, compel them to come in. If you accept this invitation, all are yours. I ask not whether you be willing to be saved in God's way, in order to determine your right to accept spiritual blessings—the message sent you in the gospel determines this—but in order to ascertain your interest in them. If you cordially believe the gospel, you have the promise of eternal life. If its blessings suit your desires, they are all your own. If, for example, it does not offend you, but accords with your very heart, to sue for mercy as the chief of sinners; if you be willing to occupy that place which the gospel assigns you, which is *the dust*; and to ascribe to Jesus that which God has assigned to him, “power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing;” if you can unreluctantly give up all claim to life on the footing of your own worthiness, and desire nothing so much as to be found in Christ, not having your own righteousness; if the salvation you seek be a deliverance from the dominion of sin, as well as from its damning power; finally, if the heaven you desire be that which the Scriptures reveal, a state of pure and holy enjoyment; there can be no just cause to doubt of your interest in these things. To imagine that you believe all that God has revealed concerning his Son, and that “with all your heart, receiving the love of the truth that you may be saved,” and yet that something else is wanting to denominate you believers, is to imagine that believing is not believing.

Read the Holy Scriptures, pray to the Fountain of light for understanding, attend the preaching of the word; and all this not with the immediate view of determining what you are, but what Christ is; and if you find in him that in which your whole soul acquiesces, this, without your searching after it, will determine the question as to your personal interest in him.

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### XIII.

#### THE PRAYER OF FAITH, EXEMPLIFIED IN THE WOMAN OF CANAAN.

“Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And behold a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me! But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman! great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.”—Matt. xv. 21—28.

WHEN John the Baptist sent a message to Jesus, saying, “Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another,” Jesus gave an indirect answer,

an answer containing a reproof. Whether John himself retaining, like the apostles, the notion of a temporal kingdom, and therefore expecting on his being put in prison that a great revolution would follow in favour of the Messiah, and hearing of nothing but companies of poor people repairing to him to be healed of their infirmities, began to hesitate whether he might not have been mistaken; or whether he only personated some of his disciples; somebody appears to have been stumbled at the simplicity of Christ's appearance. Hence the indirect answer of Jesus: "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.—And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." To be encompassed by crowds of afflicted people supplicating for mercy, and employed in relieving them, was sustaining a character, though far from what the world calls splendid, yet truly great, and worthy of the Messiah. The short account of this poor woman is more profitable to be read than a long and minute history of military exploits.

In endeavouring to improve this brief story, we will notice who the petitioner was—what was her errand—and the repeated applications which were made, with the repeated repulses, but ultimate success, that she met with.

I. Let us observe WHO THE PETITIONER WAS. She is said to be "a woman of Canaan." Mark says she was "a Greek;" but the term, in this and some other connexions, seems to denote only that she was a Gentile, and not that she came from the country called Greece; for, in the same passage, she is said to have been "a Syrophenician by nation."

She was a Gentile; one of the first-fruits of that harvest of Gentiles that was shortly to be gathered in. Our Lord, though he was sent, as he said, "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," yet extended his mercy to individuals of other nations; and it is worthy of notice, that those few who were gathered at this early period are highly commended for the eminence of their faith. Like the first-fruits of the earth, they were the best. It might still be said, on a review of things among us, that such faith as that of the woman of Canaan and the Roman centurion is rarely to be found in Israel.

Further, she was not only a Gentile, but one of those Gentiles who were under a *peculiar curse*. She appears to have been one of the descendants of the ancient Canaanites; many of whom, when driven from their own country, settled on the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. We know the curse to which that people were devoted, even from the days of their ancestor, Canaan, the son of Ham. We know also that Joshua was commanded not to spare them, and that Israel was forbidden to make leagues with them. This curse, however, came upon them for their being an exceedingly wicked people. The abominations of which they were guilty, and which were nursed by their idolatry as by a parent sin, are given as the reason why the land vomited out its inhabitants, and why Israel must form no alliances with them, lest they should learn their ways. There was no time in which the God of Israel refused even a Canaanite who repented and embraced his word. Of this, Rahab the harlot, Uriah the Hittite, Ornan the Jebusite, and others, were examples. The door of mercy has ever been open to faith; and though it seemed, in this instance, to be shut, it was only to prove the party, and to induce her to plead with greater importunity.

II. Let us notice HER ERRAND. It was not her own case, but a case which she had made her own; that of her young daughter. She pleaded it, how-

ever, as if it were her own—"Have mercy on me!—Lord, help me!" From this part of the subject we may learn,

1. *That in our approaches to Christ, it becomes us to go not for ourselves only, but for others around us, and to make their cases ours.* He to whom the application was made, could not but approve of this principle; for it was that on which he himself was acting at the time. He took the cause of perishing sinners, and made it his own. "He bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows." A spirit of sympathy is the very spirit of Christ, which they that are joined in him must needs possess.

2. *That it behoves us, more especially, to carry the cases of our children to the Lord, and to make them our own.* It may be, they are too young to understand or feel their own malady, or to know where help is to be had; in this case, surely, it is our proper business to personate them before the Lord: or, it may be, their minds are blinded, and their hearts hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, so as to have no desire to pray for themselves; and then we can do no less than carry their case to him who alone is able to help. What less, and in many instances what more, can an afflicted parent do for an ungodly child? It is true, we have no ground to expect the salvation of our children, while they continue hardened; but Jesus is "exalted to give repentance and remission of sins;" and while we present our supplication in a way of submission to his will, he will not be offended with us. It was the practice of holy Job to offer sacrifices for his children; and it seems to be a part of God's plan frequently to bless the children at the intercession of the parent, and thus to express his approbation of something which they have done for him. "The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus," said Paul, "for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain."

III. Let us remark THE REPEATED APPLICATIONS, THE REPEATED REPULSES, AND THE ULTIMATE SUCCESS WHICH CROWNED THE WHOLE. Here were no fewer than four applications; three of which were made by the woman herself, and one by the disciples, on her behalf. Three out of the four failed; but the fourth succeeded. Let us examine them, and the success they met with, distinctly.

The *first* was made by the woman, and is described as follows:—"She cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." We might remark the brevity, the fulness, and the earnestness of this petition; but there is one thing which our Lord himself afterwards noticed, and which therefore is particularly deserving of our attention: it was *the prayer of faith*. She *believed*, and confessed him to be the Messiah. Her addressing him under the character of "Lord," and as "the Son of David," amounted to this. It was a principle universally acknowledged among the Jews, that the Lord, or King Messiah, should be of the seed of David. To address him, therefore, under this character, was confessing him to be the Christ. This was the appellation under which he was more than once invoked by certain blind men; and in every instance the same idea was meant to be conveyed. These poor people did not address our Saviour in a way of unmeaning complaisance; they understood that the Messiah, "the Son of David," was to be distinguished by the exercise of *mercy*; hence they continually associated these ideas. "*Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David!*"—"Jesus, thou *Son of David*, have mercy on us!" And this is the very character given to the Messiah in the Old Testament, especially in the seventy-second Psalm: "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper." Thus they had heard, thus they believed, and thus their faith wrought in a way of effectual prayer.

But whence had this woman, an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, a stranger to the covenants of promise, this wisdom? Providence had placed her on the borders of the Holy Land, and she appears to have profited by it. The true religion contained in the oracles of God had its influence not only on Israel, but on many individuals in the neighbouring nations. It was foretold that they who dwelt *under his shadow* should return; and here we see it accomplished. Probably this poor Canaanite had often gone into the Jewish synagogue to hear the reading of the law and the prophets; and while many of those who read them gained only a superficial acquaintance with them, she understood them to purpose. One would almost think she must lately have heard the seventy-second Psalm read at one of these assemblies, and have made up her petition out of the passage forecited. "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper;"—then why not me? I will go, and turn this prophecy into a prayer: "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou Son of David!" It is good to have our residence near to the means of grace, and to have a heart to make use of them. It is good to grow upon the banks of this river of the water of life. It is pleasant, also, to think of the good effects of the true religion among the posterity of Abraham. It is thus we see the fulfilment of the promise to that faithful man, "I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing."

But while these things afford pleasure to us, they must, methinks, have been very provoking to the Jews; and happy had it been for them if they had been provoked to a godly jealousy. Many among them were far behind these strangers in knowledge and in faith, though they enjoyed very superior advantages. The Saviour was continually among them, crying, and calling at their gates, and at the entering in of their cities; yet they generally disregarded him: whereas, in this case, he only took an occasional journey, and that in secret (for when he entered into a house, "he would have no man know it"); yet here this poor woman found him out, and presented her supplication. How true is that saying of our Lord, "The last shall be first, and the first last!" and how often do we still see persons of inferior advantages enter into the kingdom of God before others who have possessed the greatest abundance of means!

But what treatment did she receive from our Saviour on this her first application? "He answered her not a word." Who would have expected this? Does it accord with his usual conduct? In what instance had he been known to refuse such an application? It was very mysterious, and very discouraging. Is his ear heavy, then, that it cannot hear? or his arm shortened, that it cannot save?—"Answered her not a word!" Who could understand this as any other than a repulse? If the faith of the petitioner had been weak, she might have concluded that he would not answer her because he could not help her. If her heart had been cold, she might have gone away, as many do after having *said* their prayers, contented without the blessing. If her spirit had been haughty, she must and would have resented it, and have asked no more. In short, had she been any thing but what she was—great in faith, in love, and in humility—she would have turned away. And here we may see the wisdom of our Saviour's conduct; had he immediately granted her request, we had seen little or nothing of the exercise of these graces. But let us proceed.

Here is a *second* application made on her behalf; and this is by the disciples; they "came and besought him to send her away." I hope they meant that he would grant her petition. One might have expected something considerable from the intercession of the twelve apostles. He had consented to go and heal the centurion's servant at the request of the Jew

ish elders; and surely his own disciples must have an interest with him equal to theirs. If the poor woman knew of their becoming her advocates, it is natural to suppose her expectations must have been raised: and this it is likely she did; for while they were speaking, she seems to have held her peace. Neither need they have been at a loss for a precedent; for though she was a heathen, yet they had lately witnessed his kind attention to a Roman centurion; and had they pleaded this, he might have shown mercy at their request. But to what does their intercession amount? Alas, it is mean and pitiful; it does not appear to have a spice of benevolence in it, but to have been merely the effect of self-love: "Send her away," said they, "for she crieth after us." O disciples! and does the voice of prayer trouble you? How little at present do you resemble your Master! We never read of *his* being troubled with the cry of the poor and needy. And this is all you have to urge, is it? Your charity amounts to just so much as that of some wealthy persons, who give a poor man a penny, not out of compassion, but in order to get rid of him!

What is the answer to this miserable petition? Our Lord takes no notice of the mercenary nature of the plea; and this was like *himself*: amidst the numerous faults of his disciples, he often exercised a dignified forbearance towards them. But what answer did he make? "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." It was true that his commission was especially directed to Israel; and, previously to his resurrection, he even forbade his disciples to go "in the way of the Gentiles:" nor is it any wonder that he should avail himself of this general truth still to withhold his favour, rather than grant it at such a request as this. The motive which they had urged was not likely to work upon him.

But think how it must affect the poor petitioner. Silence was discouraging; but this must have been more so. That might be imputed to other causes: she might suppose he was considering of her request; and though he had said nothing in her favour, yet he had said nothing against her: this, however, is not only giving her a denial, but giving the *reason* of it; which would seem to render it irrevocable. To an eye of sense, it would now seem to be a lost case. It is not so, however, to an eye of faith.

Let us proceed to the *third* application. The disciples had been poor advocates. Make way for her, and let her plead her own cause: she can do it best. It is not one, nor two repulses, that will silence the prayer of faith; nor will aught else, so long as Jesus lives, and the invitations and promises of his word continue unrevoked. It was written, "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper;" and the efficacy of this declaration must be tried again. "Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me!"

Observe, she prefaces her petition with an *act of worship*. She had before acknowledged him as David's Son; now she approaches him as his Lord. Prostrate at his feet, she adores him, and renews her supplication. It is short, yet very full. It has only three words, but more than three ideas, and these full of importance. She here, in effect, tells him that her case is urgent; that she is truly helpless; that no help is to be expected from any other quarter; that she is persuaded of his being able to save to the uttermost; and that it belongs to his character, as Messiah, to help those that have no helper. Though a Canaanite, assuredly she possesses the spirit of an Israelite: "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."

If there be such a thing as holy violence, or taking the kingdom of heaven, as it were, by force, surely this is it; and knowing the character of Christ, we should have concluded that this petition *must* be successful. But "Jesus answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and



to cast it to dogs." What imperfect judges are we of times and seasons! Just now we should have supposed her cause was gained, and yet it was not so; and now we should have been ready enough to conclude it was lost, and yet it is not so. Let us learn to wait patiently for the Lord, and neither conclude, when we enjoy great fervour and freedom in our approaches to him, that our prayers must be answered immediately, or not at all; nor when thrown back into darkness and discouragement, that now there is no hope. Had this poor woman rested her expectation on her own feelings, or on any thing short of the Lord's own word, she had fainted in this trying moment. What a crowd of thoughts might she at this time have cherished; hard thoughts, proud thoughts, and despairing thoughts!—And is this the Messiah, of whom such glorious things are spoken? Is this the compassion that he is to exercise "to the poor, and to them that have no helper?" No mercy, no help for a stranger, even though prostrate at his feet; and, as if it were not enough to refuse his assistance, he must call me a dog! I will ask no more: whatever be my lot, I will bear it!—Such might have been her reflections, and such her conduct; but she was a believer, and faith operates in a different way.

Yet what could our Saviour mean by such language? Did he really intend to countenance that contemptuous spirit with which the carnal Jews treated the Gentiles? Surely not. Did he feel towards this poor stranger as his words would seem to indicate? No: his roughness, like that of Joseph towards his brethren, was assumed for the purpose of trying her; and she endures the trial with singular perseverance. She neither resents being called a dog, nor despairs on account of it; but is resolved still to follow up her suit. Yet what new plea can she find to offer.

Let us hear the *fourth* and last application: "Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table." Most admirable! Such an instance of spiritual ingenuity, of holy and humble acumen, was perhaps never known before, nor since. Now the conflict is at an end; the victory is gained; the kingdom of heaven is taken by the prayer of faith. Jesus, like Joseph, can restrain himself no longer, but appears in his true character: "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt!" Let us review this charming crisis, and mark the ground from which this last and successful plea proceeded. *It was the ground on which the Lord had placed her.* He intimated that she was a dog, unworthy of the children's bread; she readily admitted it, and as a dog presented her petition. Here, then, is the grand secret how to succeed in our approaches for mercy. We must stand upon that ground where the Scripture places us, and thence present our petition. Does the Lord tell us in his word that we are guilty, unworthy, ungodly, deserving of eternal death? On this ground we must take our stand, and plead for that mercy which is provided for characters of this description. All applications for mercy, on any other ground, will be unsuccessful.

The last answer of Jesus, as well as the last prayer of the woman, is worthy of special notice. There are three things remarkable in it; the recommendation of her faith, the granting of her desire, and the affectionate manner in which both were addressed to her.

"Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith!" This accords with his general practice. The blessings of healing, as well as those of a more spiritual nature, were ordinarily suspended on believing, and, when obtained, were ascribed to it. Hence such language as this: "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.—Thy faith hath saved thee.—Thy faith hath made thee whole." Did our Lord, by this language, mean to give away the honour of salvation from himself?

No: it is not used for the purpose of transferring honour to us, but for giving encouragement to faith. Neither is there any opposition of interests between Christ and faith: those who are saved by faith are saved by Christ; for it is of the nature of faith to go out of itself, and draw all from him. Christ's power and grace operate as the cause of our salvation; faith as the means of it; yet, being a means absolutely necessary for *the bringing of Christ and the soul together*, as well as for the promotion of all other graces, it is constantly held up as the one thing needful.

Perhaps, if we had commended the Canaanitish woman, we should have admired her great importunity and great humility; but our Lord passes over these, taking notice only of her faith: and wherefore? Because faith was the root, or principle, from which the others sprang, and by which they were kept alive.

Our Lord often commended the faith of believers; but I recollect only *two instances in which he speaks of it as being great*; and they are both of them Gentiles: one is the Roman centurion; and the other the woman of whom we are discoursing. There doubtless was an eminency, or peculiar strength, in the faith of each of them; but that which more than any thing rendered it great in our Lord's account was its being exercised under such *great disadvantages*. To Israel pertained the *promises*. If Gentiles partook of the root and fatness of the olive tree, it was by being grafted into it, *contrary to nature*. Yet, amidst these disadvantages, they abounded in faith, which, for the degree of it, was not to be found in Israel. Thus we are often provoked to jealousy. Persons whose religious advantages have been small, compared with ours, are nevertheless before us in faith, and love, and heavenly-mindedness. Thus it is that the pride of man is stained, and no flesh suffered to glory in the Divine presence.

Having commended her faith, our Saviour proceeds to *grant her desire*: "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." The Lord does not excite a willing mind, with a view finally to cross it; or an earnestness of desire, in order to disappoint it; such willingness and such desire, therefore, are indicative of his designs. Christ only can satisfy the desires of the mind; and Christians are the only men in the world whose desires are satisfied. Cæsar, in the full possession of empire, is said to have exclaimed, "Is this all?" And such is the disappointment that every sinner will meet with who sets his heart on any thing but Christ. It is not in the power of the whole creation to say to an immortal, guilty creature, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt;" but Jesus hath the words of eternal life.

The *tender and affectionate manner* in which our Saviour commended the faith, and fulfilled the desire, of the poor petitioner, is deserving also of remark. It is introduced with an interjection, *O woman!* In the lips of a speaker abounding in affectation, such words signify but little; but Jesus never affected to feel when he did not. Whenever, therefore, an interjection is seen in his speeches, we may be certain he felt. He felt *compassion* towards her, on account of her affliction; but chiefly *admiration* and *delight*, on witnessing the peculiar energy of her faith. Thus he *marvelled* at the Roman centurion. The genuine, and especially the eminent, exercises of grace are, more than any thing, the delight of Christ's heart. In looking at the poor and contrite spirit, he overlooks heaven and earth.

It may be rather surprising to us that our Saviour should hold this poor woman so long in suspense; but if he had not, her graces would not have been so apparent, and the exercise of them so grateful to him. And thus we may account for many of the afflictions through which the Lord brings his servants. If tribulation work patience, and patience experience, and experience hope; and if, in his esteem, the exercise of these graces be of

greater account than our present ease, it is not surprising that he should prefer the former to the latter; and this consideration should reconcile us to those providences which, for a time, hold us in painful suspense.

From the whole we may remark that *genuine, yea, great grace, may be exercised in respect of temporal mercies*. It was not for the salvation of her soul, or the soul of her daughter, that this poor woman was so importunate; but for the removal of an affliction. Yet such was the grace which was exercised in it, that there is no doubt of her being eternally saved. The exercise of spirituality is not confined to the seeking of spiritual blessings. We may serve the Lord in our daily avocations; and it is essential to true religion that we do so. Such prayer may be offered, and such faith exercised, in respect of our daily bread, as have the promise of everlasting life.

Finally, If our Saviour suffered himself to be overcome by one who sought for a temporal blessing, *much more will he accept of those who come to him for such as are spiritual and eternal*. His promises are much stronger in the one case than in the other. Though there were several general intimations that the Messiah would exercise compassion towards the bodies as well as the souls of men; and the numerous miracles which he wrought afforded full proof of his readiness to do good in every way; yet he nowhere bound himself, that I recollect, to heal *all* that came to him. I believe he never sent away an individual without a cure; but still he seems to have reserved to himself a kind of discretionary power to do so. But, in matters of everlasting moment, the word *is* gone out of his lips, "Him that cometh unto me, I will *in no wise* cast out." Here, every one that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh, we are assured by the Keeper of the gate, it shall be opened. If any man, therefore, be hereafter shut out of the kingdom of heaven, it will appear, in the end, that he sought not after it in the present life; or, at least, that he sought it not by faith.

We shall all be importunate, sooner or later; but importunity will one day be unavailing! Many will then seek to enter in, and shall not be able. Yes, they will cry earnestly, saying, "Lord, Lord, open unto us.—We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say,—Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." O my hearers! let us agonize to enter in at the strait gate. All the zeal and earnestness which we may feel in other things is spending our money for that which is not bread, and our labour for that which satisfieth not. Incline your ear, and come unto Him; hear, and your souls shall live; and he will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

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#### XIV.

##### THE FUTURE PERFECTION OF THE CHURCH.

"Christ—loved the church, and gave himself for it: that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."—Eph. v. 25—27.

It is a distinguishing feature in the apostolic writings, that motives to the most ordinary duties are derived from the doctrine of the cross. Who but an apostle would have thought of enforcing affection in a husband to a wife from the love of Christ to his church? We are, undoubtedly, hereby taught to act, in the common affairs of life, from Christian principle; and

I am inclined to think that our personal Christianity is more manifest in this way than in any other. It is not by a holiness put on on religious occasions, as we put on our Lord's-day dress, that we shall prove ourselves to be Christians; but by that which is habitual, and which, without our so much as designing it, will spontaneously appear in our language and behaviour. \* If the apostle's heart had not been full of Christ, he would have thought of other motives than this; but this, being uppermost, presented itself on all occasions. We may be thankful that it was so on this, especially; for we are hereby furnished with a most interesting and affecting view of the salvation of sinners—a salvation originating in the love of Christ, and terminating in their being presented to him without spot, and blameless.

Three things require our attention: namely, the character of the church, when the designs of mercy shall be fulfilled upon her—the causes to which it is ascribed—and the honour for which it is intended to prepare her.

I. THE CHARACTER OF THE CHURCH, WHEN THE DESIGNS OF MERCY SHALL BE FULFILLED UPON HER:—"A glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but holy and without blemish," We are at no loss to perceive the meaning of the term *church*, in this connexion. It manifestly expresses the whole assembly of the saved, elsewhere called "the church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven." It is denominated *glorious*, through the glory which Christ shall have put upon it; and which, it is intimated, will consist in a freedom from every imperfection, and the consummation of purity, or holy beauty.

In the description here given the apostle has, no doubt, an eye to the church in its different states, as *fallen*, as *renewed*, and as *perfected*. In the first it is supposed to have been defiled, so as to need *sanctifying and cleansing*; and even in the second, to have many things which diminish its beauty; such as *spots and wrinkles*; but, in the last, it shall be a "glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing;" or, speaking more literally, "holy and without blemish."

Our ideas of a state of perfection are very defective. An apostle acknowledged, "We know not what we shall be." Indeed it is, at present, but very partially revealed; and if it were otherwise, our minds, naturally weak and greatly enfeebled by the remains of indwelling sin, would be unable to sustain a direct view of it. We can better conceive what it is *not* than what it is. The apostle himself writes as if he could not fully conceive of the immaculate state of the church; but he could say what it would *not* be, or that it would be *without* those spots and wrinkles which at present attended it, and greatly impaired its beauty! As this, then, was the apostle's manner of contemplating the future glory of the church, let it be ours.

I shall not attempt to compare the church perfected with what it was antecedently to its being sanctified and cleansed, in virtue of Christ's having given himself for it (for in that view it admits of no comparison); but with what it is at present, notwithstanding; that is, the subject of many imperfections.

*Spots* suppose a loveliness of character upon the whole, though in themselves they are unlovely. They could not, with propriety, have been attributed to the church, while she remained unsanctified; for then she was altogether polluted. The same may be said of *imperfections*. It is improper to attribute them to unconverted sinners. Such characters will often acknowledge themselves to have their imperfections; but in truth, they thereby pay themselves a compliment which does not belong to them. Imperfection supposes the mind to be engaged in the pursuit of perfection, though it has not, as yet, attained it. Spots and imperfections, then, are properly attributed to the church in its present state; indicating a general

loveliness of character, though they are in themselves unlovely. Whatever has tended to deface it, or to detract from its holy beauty, that is to be reckoned among its spots.

How much, then, in the first place, has the beauty of Christ's church been defaced by *false doctrines*, and by the strifes and divisions which have followed upon them. While we are of the apostle's mind, determined to know nothing but Christ and him crucified, we shall not be in danger of deviating very widely from the truth, in any of its branches; but if we lose sight of this pole-star, we shall soon fall upon the rocks of error. Paul and his fellow apostles, inspired as they were, could not maintain the purity of all the churches. The number of worldly men who obtrude themselves upon the church, some in the character of members, and others in that of ministers, together with the tendency to err which is found even in believers themselves, too easily accounts for the same things in that and every succeeding age. When the gospel was addressed to the Jews, many of them believed; but among their leaders, there were men whose minds were not subdued to the obedience of Christ. Christianity, said they, is very good, so far as it goes; but it is *defective*. It grates with our feelings, who have been used to so much religious pomp. Circumcision, and a few of our decent ceremonies, would complete it. So also, when the gospel was addressed to the learned Greeks, some of them believed; but among them were men who wanted to supply some of its supposed defects. Christianity, said they, is good, so far as it goes; but it wants a little philosophy to be added to it, and the whole to be cast into a philosophical mould; and then it will be respectable, and worthy of being the religion of the whole human race.

But what said the apostle to the churches in respect of these proposals? Hear him: "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him; rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ; for in him dwelleth all the *fulness* of the Godhead bodily. And ye are *complete* in him, which is the head of all principality and power; in whom also ye are *circumcised* with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. *Let no man therefore judge you* in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holy-day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days; which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. *Let no man beguile you of your reward*, in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind; and not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God."

Had the church of Christ adhered to this counsel, it had been free from many spots which have since defaced it; but it has not. In every age there have been men of corrupt minds, who have followed the example of these *Judaizing* and *philosophizing* teachers, in their attempts to render the doctrine of Christ more *complete*, that is, more congenial to the wishes of their

own hearts; and the church has, in too many instances, been carried away by them. Some have degraded the dignity of Christ, and thereby undermined his sacrifice; others have disowned the freeness of his grace; and others have turned it into licentiousness. Behold, how, at this day, the beauty of the church is marred by these antichristian principles, and the strifes which ensue upon them! One denomination, or society, sees the spots upon the face of another, and is employed in exposing them, instead of removing those upon its own; while the impartial eye must perceive that deviations from the simplicity of the gospel are, in different degrees, to be found in all.

Blessed be God, who hath given us to expect a day when the church shall be freed from all this deformity; when the watchmen shall see eye to eye; when the people of God, now divided into parties, shall be of one heart and of one soul; when neither discordance nor defect shall attend their researches; and when we shall all come, in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ!

How much also has the beauty of Christ's church been defaced by *superstitious* and *unscriptural worship*. The method of *completing* Christianity, by the addition of a number of decent ceremonies, first practised by the Judaizing teachers, has been acted over and over again. The introduction of such things in the first three centuries made way for the grand papal apostacy; and spots of this kind remain upon the faces of many protestant communities to this day. The nearer we approach to the simplicity of primitive worship the better. The meretricious ornaments of man's invention may adorn the mother of harlots, but they are blemishes to the bride of Christ. They are the *wood, hay, and stubble* of the building, which later builders have laid upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, and which, when the day shall come that shall declare every man's work, of what sort it is, will be burnt up.

Finally, The beauty of Christ's church has been greatly defaced by the *impure lives* of great numbers of its members. I do not now refer to the immoral practices of all that have been called Christians; as a large proportion of them cannot be said to have deserved the name. I refer to those only who have either been Christians indeed, or, at least, received and treated as such by those who were so. The evils which have prevailed among them have been great, and still furnish matter of shame and grief in all the churches. The primitive churches themselves, some more especially, had many spots of this description. And it is worthy of notice, that those who most departed from the doctrine of Christ, such as the Corinthians, the Galatians, and the Hebrews, were most faulty in matters of practice. The evil communications of some of their teachers tended to corrupt good manners. The same causes continue also to produce the same effects. Those congregations where the pure doctrine of the cross is relinquished, whether it be in favour of what is called morality on the one hand, or high notions of orthodoxy on the other, are commonly distinguished by the laxity of their conduct. Many of the former, by a conformity to the genteel vices of the world, have nearly lost all pretensions to Christianity; and many of the latter, by their opposition to practical preaching, and neglect of Christian discipline, have been offensive to common decency. Nor is this all; even the purest communities have their spots. Individuals are chargeable with things for which the good ways of God are evil spoken of; and they that have been enabled to maintain a fair character in the eyes of men, have, nevertheless, much alienation of heart, and many faults to acknowledge and bewail before God.

We are given, however, to believe that it will not be thus always. The church will not only see bitter days, before the end of time, but, ere she is presented to her Lord, shall be entirely purified: "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all *things* which offend, and *them* which do iniquity: *then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.*"

Another term by which the present imperfections of the church are expressed is that of *wrinkles*. These, as well as spots, are inconsistent with perfect beauty. They are signs of the decay of life, and health, and vigour: hence they are the ordinary symptoms of old age, or of an enfeebled constitution. Surely a more appropriate term could not have been chosen for expressing those *spiritual declensions to which the church, in its present state, is continually subject*. The church at Ephesus, during her *first love*, resembled a virgin in the bloom of youthful beauty; but when she left it, and with it her *first works*, she became as a woman bowed down by age, and covered with wrinkles. In this church we see what the church in general is, compared with what it was in the primitive ages; what protestants are, compared with what they were at the Reformation; what Protestant Dissenters are, compared with the puritans and nonconformists; and what many congregational churches are, compared with what they have been at certain periods. I need not enlarge on these particulars: your own reflections are sufficient to convince you that great numbers of each description are in a wrinkled or decayed state. There is indeed, in us, a strong and perpetual tendency to declension. Things which have formerly been interesting and impressive will, if we do not habitually walk with God, lose their influence. We shall read of the zeal of the apostles, of the martyrs, and of other Christian worthies; but we shall not feel it. On the contrary, we shall seem to be reading of men whom we cannot but admire, but whom we know not how to imitate.

How cheering is the thought that the time is coming when these spots and wrinkles will be no more; but the church, and every individual member of it, shall be "holy and without blemish."

Holy beauty, in every stage and degree of it, is lovely. The character given to that generation of the Israelites which grew up in the wilderness, and which, warned by the crimes and punishments of its predecessors, claved in great numbers to the Lord, is charming: "Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first-fruits of his increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, said the Lord." It was then that Balaam endeavoured in vain to curse them; and that, instead of cursing, he was constrained to bless them. Like an old debauchee, awed by the dignity of virtue, he was compelled to desist, and even to admire the object which he could not imitate: "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!—Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" Such, I may say, was the youthful beauty of the Jewish church; and that of the Christian church was still greater. To read the Acts of the Apostles, and to see the faith, the love, the zeal, the disinterestedness, the diligence, and the patience of the first disciples, is very affecting. It was then that they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers; that great grace was upon them all; and that, having believed in Jesus, they rejoiced in being thought worthy to suffer for his name. But, lovely as both the Jewish and Christian churches were, neither of them could vie with the church made perfect. The disparity between the highest degrees of holi-

ness and a state of sinless perfection is inconceivable. The deliverance of the captives from mere temporal thralldom, and which was only the *effect* of sin, was so overcoming, that they were *like those that dream*, scarcely believing themselves to be what and where they were; but for the church of God, in full remembrance of its foul revolts, to feel itself *holy, and without blemish*, is an idea too great for sinful creatures to comprehend.

If any imagine that this language is too strong, and that sinless perfection, or what is near to it, has been attained by many in the present life, I would recommend them to consider that to be *holy, and without blemish*, is different according to the different kinds and degrees of light in which it is viewed. A vessel may be clean if viewed in a dim light, and very foul if viewed in a clear one. Thus a *character* may be *holy, and without blemish*, if viewed only in the light of selfish partiality, or even by the partiality of friendship; nay, if he be a recluse, the prejudice of an enemy may not be able to detect his faults; but place him before the tribunal of God, set his secret sins in the light of *his* countenance, and the decision will be different. To be presented *holy, and without blemish*, is to be so *in his sight*. Such is the idea conveyed by the words of Jude: "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless *before the presence of his glory*, with exceeding joy. To be faultless in the presence of an earthly judge, especially of one distinguished by his penetration and impartiality, is no small matter; but to be so in the presence of *him* to whom all things are known, implies a change far surpassing every thing experienced among mortals.

The low ideas which some persons entertain of sinless perfection may be owing, in part, to their considering it chiefly in a *negative* point of view. Feeling, it may be, very little positive desire after their evil courses, they begin to think they have not sinned for such a length of time, and consequently are now nearly, if not altogether, perfect. But perfection does not consist merely in a cessation from evil, (which is no more than may be ascribed to animals,) but in the love of God with all the heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and of our neighbours as ourselves. The state to which the church shall be brought, before she is presented to her Lord, is that of being not only "without blemish," but "*holy and without blemish.*"

In that perfect state, we shall be unreservedly *devoted to the Lord*. No more shall the mind be betrayed, by the illusive reasonings of men, to listen to God-dishonouring principles; no more shall it lose sight of Christ, in the maze of its own researches. The blandishments of the world shall no more seduce the heart; nor hope, nor fear, nor shame divert the feet from the path of rectitude. No more shall slothfulness, or any kind of sinful indulgence, unnerve the soul in its labours for God. No more shall the flesh lust against the Spirit, nor the Spirit have to struggle with the flesh. No more shall our half-hearted services render it doubtful, to ourselves or others, on whose side we are. In a word,—there the Lord's "*servants shall serve him.*"

The multitude, in that perfect state, will also, *in respect of each other*, be of one heart and of one soul. No discordant sentiments divide them; no unkindnesses grieve them; no bitter strifes interrupt their harmony; no slights, misunderstandings, misconstructions, hard thoughts, or cutting words, have place among them; no giving or taking offence; no opposition of interests; no selfishness; no envies, jealousies, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults: all is sweet peace and love. Bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, with all malice, are for ever put away from among them. In him that loved and gave himself for them, all hearts are one.



This leads us to consider,

II. THE CAUSES TO WHICH ALL THIS IS ASCRIBED: Christ "loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." I think it not improbable that the apostle may allude to the parable concerning the Jewish church in the sixteenth chapter of Ezekiel. The substance of it is this:—A female infant, the fruit, perhaps, of an illicit connexion, (whose wretched parent, in order to hide her shame, had left it in the fields,) was discovered by a humane prince, who happened to be passing that way at the time. He looked at the perishing babe, and pitied it. I will save thy life, said he; and as thou art fatherless and motherless, I will be both father and mother to thee, and thou shalt be mine.—He then washed and clothed her; and taking her to his palace, gave her an education suited to his intentions, which in fact were, at a proper time, to marry her. On her arriving at years of maturity, he carried his design into execution; she became his wife, and the crown royal was placed upon her head.

Look at this representation, and at his conduct who "loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Look, I say, at both these representations, and judge if the one has not some reference to the other.

There are three things to which the salvation of the church is here ascribed; namely, the *love* of Christ—the *sacrifice* of Christ—and the *word* of Christ.

I. For the accomplishment of so great a deliverance, it was necessary that Christ should *LOVE the church*. The thought of this is overwhelming. His wisdom, and power, and majesty may induce us to admire and adore him; but to think of his *loving* sinful men excites amazement.

There are several properties pertaining to the love of Christ which require to be taken into the account, if we would form any thing like a just view of it. Love may be founded upon *character*. Christ himself speaks of loving his disciples on this account: "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." But that of which we are discoursing could not be founded upon any thing of this kind; for its object is supposed to be altogether polluted. He loved his church, and gave himself for it, not because it was sanctified and cleansed, or in view of its being so; but "that he *might* sanctify and cleanse it." Again, love towards an unworthy object is, commonly, no other than *general benevolence*. Such was that compassion which our Saviour felt when he wept over Jerusalem; and such that *good-will towards men* of which his being born into the world was an expression. God's giving his only begotten Son to be made a sacrifice, and declaring that "whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life," was a great expression of Divine goodness towards sinners, whether they believe and be saved or not. But the love which Christ is said to have borne to the church was *discriminating* and *effectual* to its salvation. The church is supposed to have been given him of the Father, to be unto him as a bride to a husband, and, ultimately, the reward of his undertaking. The love of Christ, therefore, in this connexion, can be no other than *electing* love; and the passage may be considered as parallel with that at the beginning of the Epistle, "He hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."

2. For the accomplishment of the church's redemption, it was necessary that Christ should *give himself a sacrifice*. In this way his love must ope-

rate, or be ineffectual. We are now, my brethren, upon the most interesting part of the most interesting subject that was ever presented to men or angels. It was this on which Paul wrote so feelingly: "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who *loved me, and gave himself for me.*" It was this that furnished John with his affecting doxology: "Unto him that *loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,*—to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." It is this that furnishes the church in heaven with its "new song:" "Thou art worthy—for *thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood* out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

But wherefore must our Redeemer give *himself* for us? Would nothing short of life suffice? Nothing. We, as transgressors, being justly exposed to eternal death, must have borne our iniquity, had he not offered himself as a substitute in our place, life for life. Some who profess to believe in the atonement have hesitated, from I know not what kind of modesty, to maintain the *necessity* of it in order to forgiveness; alleging that it does not become us to say what God could or could not have done. But does it become us, when he has, in effect, declared any thing to be inconsistent with his perfections, to question whether it might not, nevertheless, be admissible? Why did not the cup pass from him, when, with strong crying and tears to God, he besought that IF IT WERE POSSIBLE, it might do so? It is true, "it *pleased* the Lord to bruise him;" but, surely, not without a necessity for it! If mercy could have been manifested consistently with justice, without his suffering, surely the cup would have passed from him! Whoever had been given up to be made a curse, God would have spared his own Son! But "it *became* him for whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." To give up the *necessity* of atonement is half giving up the thing itself; and the half which remains will have but little effect on our hearts, or on the tenor of our labours.

The connexion in which the death of Christ is here introduced, namely, as being *for his church*, or, which is the same thing, for his elect people, teaches us that all which he did and suffered was with a view to their salvation. The invitations of the gospel, it is true, are addressed to sinners, as sinners; and I believe it to be equally true that such invitations are founded on the *sufficiency* of Christ's atonement for the pardon of all the sins of the whole world, were they to believe in him; but if we will allow the Scriptures to speak out on all occasions, and form our principles by them, taken as a whole, we must conclude that it was his *intention, design, or purpose* to save those, and only those, by it, who were given to him of the Father. In other words, it never was his intention to impart faith, and other succeeding benefits, to any other than his elect: "Whom he did predestinate them he also called." We are saved and called, "not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began."

I am aware that many objections might here be raised; but I am also aware that they all rest upon the principle that *Divine predestination and human agency cannot be consistent, unless they appear to us to be so.* This I do not believe. It did not belong to Moses to explain *how* the messages of peace to Pharaoh and Sihon were consistent with the purpose of God to destroy them; but I suppose he believed they were so, because the same Being (who could not do wrong) ordered the former and declared the latter. Neither does it belong to me to show *how*, with respect to the persons who shall be ultimately benefited by the death of Christ, a limitation of design is consistent with universal invitations; but I believe it to be so,

because he that has ordered the one has, in effect, declared the other. Vain men may ask, "Why doth he yet find fault; for who hath resisted his will?" But if, instead of "replying against God," they were to throw themselves at the feet of sovereign mercy, and seek forgiveness in the name of Jesus, it would turn to a better account.

3. For the accomplishment of the church's salvation it requires that it should be sanctified and cleansed by faith in the *word* of God. The latter of these terms frequently denotes the removal of sin, as to its condemning as well as its defiling influence. The blood of Christ operates in both ways; and the faith of him, in different respects, both justifies and sanctifies. As the process, however, seems principally to refer to the *mectening* of the church, by a gradual increase of holy beauty, the terms *sanctify* and *cleanse* may, in this place, convey much the same idea. It never was the Lord's design to save his people in their sins, but from them. Sanctification, therefore, is an essential branch of salvation. The word, especially the word of the gospel, truly believed, is the laver in which the sinner is washed from his uncleanness. He may have, heretofore, yielded a traditional assent to it, and remained a slave to his lusts notwithstanding; but when, being convinced of sin by a view of the Divine law, he receives it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, it worketh *effectually in him*. He may have made many attempts at cleansing himself while under the power of unbelief; but every thing of this kind was ineffectual, and left him fouler in the sight of God than it found him. And well it might; for it was going, as it were, to Abana and Pharpar, in contempt of the waters of Jordan. Till, therefore, the sinner, renewed in the spirit of his mind, is brought to relinquish all confidence, except in Christ, his attempts at holiness are but wearying himself with very vanity.

There is, it is observable, a marked *connexion* in this as well as in many other passages between the sacrifice of Christ and the sanctification of his people. He "gave himself for the church, *that he might sanctify and cleanse it*." Had not Christ laid down his life, there had been no holiness among the fallen sons of Adam, no gospel laver in which to wash, nor any such thing as sanctification of the Spirit; all had continued in their uncleanness. It had been as inconsistent with the perfections of God to have given his Holy Spirit to a sinner as to have pardoned his sins, or bestowed upon him any other spiritual blessing. But having sacrificed his life, and that under a promise, the effectual grace of God not only may be imparted consistently with justice, but the communication of it is rendered certain, inasmuch as it is a part of the promised reward. Hence it is represented as the *fruit*, or *effect*, of his death. Believers are the *seed* which he was to see; the *travail* of his soul, which should yield him a satisfaction, like that of a mother who "remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world!"

It is on this principle that our Lord, in view of the unbelief of the Jewish nation, thus speaks in prophecy: "I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain; *yet surely my judgment is with Jehovah, and my work with my God*." As if he should say, Whether Israel be gathered or not, I shall be rewarded. My work is before God, the Judge of all, who will not suffer it to fall to the ground. If Israel be lost, their loss will be to themselves; it shall be more than made up to me from among the Gentiles.

To render manifest this *connexion*, it was ordered, in the Divine counsels, that an extraordinary measure of the Holy Spirit should be poured out immediately after the sacrifice was offered; and, lest the cause of it should be

overlooked, our Saviour expressly declared, that if he went not away, the Comforter would not come; but that if he went, he would send him; and that he should convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. This was the appointed time for great numbers of the Jews to be convinced of their unbelief, as well as for the Gentiles to be converted, and given to Christ, as the reward of his death. Things were thus connected in order of time, that they might appear to be connected in order of nature; or that one might appear to be, what it actually was, the effect of the other.

Add to this, The death of Christ is not only a procuring cause of sanctification, but, as a doctrine, it operates to the producing of it. Hence, the same effects are ascribed to the washing of water by the word, and to the blood of the Lamb. The atonement offered was that in *virtue* of which we are sanctified; and the atonement preached and believed is the *means* of its accomplishment: "We are sanctified by faith that is in him."

I proceed to notice,

III. THE HONOUR FOR WHICH THIS GRACE TOWARDS THE CHURCH IS INTENDED TO PREPARE IT: "That he might present it to himself." There is no doubt but the term here alludes to the presenting an espoused virgin to her husband. Under this imagery, the Scriptures are wont to represent the different joyful advances of the church towards perfection. As the destruction of Jerusalem, and the overthrow of the heathen empire of Rome, are described in language applicable to the last judgment, intimating that they would be, to the parties concerned, days of judgment in miniature; so the different advances of the church towards perfection are described in language applicable to a state of perfection itself. Thus the conversion of sinners is represented as an espousal of them to one husband, that they might be presented as a chaste virgin to Christ. The conversion of the Gentiles to Christ is also thus described: "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people and thy father's house. So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him.—The king's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace." Under the same imagery seem to be represented the great conversions to Christ in the latter day. Immediately after the fall of Babylon, the voice of a great multitude is heard in heaven, saying, "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the *marriage* of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the *marriage-supper* of the Lamb.—These are the true sayings of God."

On each of these occasions there is a partial presentation of the church to Christ; and all are preparatory to that universal and perfect one which shall take place at the end of time.

But there seems to be something singular in the idea of Christ's *presenting the church to himself*. The office of presenting the bride, we should suppose, properly belongs to her parent. But how if she had no parent, and, like the orphan before described, was cast out, without an eye to pity or a hand to help her? In this case the bridegroom must himself be her father, and perform the office of a father throughout, even to the presenting of her to himself. If such be the allusion, it represents in an affecting light our forlorn condition as under the fall; and teaches us that in every stage

of our salvation we must remember it, in order to heighten our love to Christ.

The perfection of bliss that will succeed to this presentation is beyond all our present conceptions. Suffice it to say, that Christ will be the sum and substance of it. We have already noticed the glory of the church as being freed from her spots and blemishes; but this, though a great blessing, is chiefly negative. Besides this, there is a positive source of enjoyment in an uninterrupted and endless communion with her Lord and Saviour. To be able to comprehend the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Christ, and so to be filled with all the fulness of God, is the mark on which saints on earth are directed to keep their eye; but to attain it is reserved for saints in heaven. Nor shall they so comprehend it as to leave no room for continued researches; for how shall they perfectly know that which "passeth knowledge?"

Finally, It is observable, that under the figure of being admitted to a marriage-feast, or excluded from it, we see what will shortly be the test of us all: "At midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.—And they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut." If there be any thing of importance in this world, it is to be *ready* when the Lord cometh; not by such preparations as those to which sinners are apt to flee when their fears are alarmed, but by believing in the Son of God, and keeping his commandments. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Look off from every other dependence, and put your trust in him. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.—Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord.—Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching!"

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## XV.

### THE GOSPEL THE MEANS OF UNIVERSAL PEACE.

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.—Mal. iv. 5, 6.

MALACHI, the last of the Old Testament prophets, lived in an age of great degeneracy, and much of his prophecy is taken up in bearing testimony against it. The last two chapters, however, inform us of a remnant who feared the Lord and thought upon his name. Partly for their encouragement, and partly for the awakening of the careless, he introduces the coming of the Messiah, and intimates that the very next prophet who should be sent would be his harbinger.

That we may understand the passage first read, I shall offer a few observations upon it.

1. John the Baptist is here called "Elijah the prophet" because he would be as it were another Elijah; resembling him not only in his austerity and general appearance, but in the spirit and power with which he preached: "And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts

of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

2. The coming of Christ is called "that great and terrible day of the Lord." This may seem to disagree with the general current of prophecy. It is common for the prophets to represent the great event as a source of unusual joy, and to call men not only, but the very inanimate creation, to join in it. The truth is, the same event which afforded joy to those who received him, brought desolation and destruction to those who received him not. It is in this light that the prophet represents it in chap. iii. 2, "Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?" And the fact was, that for the rejection of him such tribulations came upon the Jewish nation as were not since the beginning of the world to that time, and would never be again. This was the "day" referred to in ver. 1, which should "burn as an oven;" when all the proud, and all that shall do wickedly, would be stubble; the day that should burn them up, and leave them neither root nor branch.

3. It is intimated that previously to the ministry of John there would be great dissensions and bitter animosities among the Jewish people; parents at variance with their children, and children with their parents: altogether producing such a state of society, that if there had been no change for the better, the land might have been smitten with a curse sooner than it was. Subjugated by the Romans, one part of the nation, for the sake of private interest, sided with them, and accepted places under them, by which they became odious in the eyes of the other. Some became soldiers under the Roman standard, and treated their brethren with violence; others became publicans, or farmers of the public taxes, entering deeply into a system of oppression. A spirit of selfishness pervaded all ranks and orders of men, prompting those on one side to deeds of oppression, and those on the other to discontent and bitter antipathies. Besides this, they were divided into a number of religious sects, which bore the most inveterate hatred to each other, and were all far off from truth and godliness.

4. It is predicted that John's ministry should have a conciliating influence, turning men's hearts one to another, and so tending to avert the curse which hung over them. Such were actually the effects of it. Nor were they accomplished by a mere interference between the parties, or by labouring to produce a mere outward reformation; but by first turning them to God, through Jesus Christ. Hence Luke, in quoting the words of Malachi, connects the turning of the hearts of the fathers to the children with the turning of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, and the making ready a people prepared for the Lord. John's errand was to call sinners to repentance, adding, withal, that they should believe in him that should come after him. And wherever this effect was produced, a new bond of union existed, and former antipathies were forgotten. The exhortations also which he gave to those who repented and applied for baptism were such as struck at every species of selfishness, and tended to promote peace and unanimity among men. He called for "fruits meet for repentance."—"The *people* asked him, saying, What shall we do then? He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. Then came also *publicans* to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. And the *soldiers* likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages." Such repentance, and such fruits, so far as they prevailed, must produce the most happy effect upon the country,

and tend to avert the curse. Those who believed through the ministry of John, of Christ, or of the apostles, were as the salt of the land; and it might be for their sakes that its punishment was deferred till forty years after they had crucified the Lord of glory. When God had gathered a people from among them, the remnant grew worse and worse, till, in the end, the curse overtook them. Previously to that "great and terrible day of the Lord," it was predicted that to all their other crimes they would add that of the most bitter persecution of Christ's servants. "The brother," said our Lord, "shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child; and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death." Such was the fact. Having "killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets," they persecuted his followers, and that with a rage which not only displeased God, but rendered them odious to men. In short, we see that so far as the gospel was received it tended to heal the country and to retard the day of evil.

It is easy to perceive that the same causes, if applied to the world in general, would be productive of the same effects; or that the gospel is the only effectual means of healing the divisions among mankind, and so of turning the curse which hangs over us into a blessing.

That we may see the evidence and importance of this truth, it will be proper to take a view of the divisions which have obtained among men, with their causes and tendency; of the inefficacy of all human means for removing them; and of the efficacy of the gospel for this great purpose.

I. Let us take a view of THE DISSENSIONS WHICH HAVE OBTAINED AMONG MEN, WITH THEIR CAUSES AND TENDENCY. The state of the Jewish people in the times of John was but an epitome of human nature, as sunk into a gulf of depravity. From the fall of man to this day the earth has been a scene of discord. Jealousies and antipathies rendered the first-born child of Adam a murderer; and, prior to the flood, "the earth was corrupt before God, and—filled with violence." Whether war was then reduced to a system, as it has been since, we are not told; but if not, it might be owing to the world not being yet divided into nations. The springs of domestic and social life were poisoned; the tender ties of blood and affinity violated; and quarrels, intrigues, oppressions, robberies, and murders pervaded the abodes of man.

When that generation was swept away, and a new world arose from the family of Noah, it might have been expected that the example which had been so recently exhibited would have had some effect; but in a little time the same things were acted over again. The story of Nimrod, though brief, affords a specimen of what has been going on in the world ever since. What is the history of nations, but an account of a succession of *mighty hunters* and their adherents, each of whom, in his day, caused terror in the land of the living? The earth has been a kind of theatre, in which one part of mankind, being trained and furnished with weapons, have been employed to destroy another; and this, in a great measure, for the gratification of the spectators!

Nor is this spirit of discord confined to nations. It pervades, in different degrees, every department of society, civil or religious. If the heavenly plant decay in any connexion, or among any people, this weed will presently spring up in its place. No sooner did the church at Corinth become degenerate in their principles and conduct, than there were *divisions* among them. And when the Galatians had corrupted the doctrine of Christ, they required to be warned against "hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife," &c., and to be told that "they which do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

Whence is it that this evil spirit proceeds? Doomed as men are to innumerable evils during their short residence upon earth, and to death as the issue, one would think it might excite a sympathy towards each other as fellow sufferers, and a concern to mitigate, rather than to increase, the miseries of their situation. And when such things are viewed generally and abstractedly, there are few men who would not admit so much as this, and wonder, indeed, that the world cannot live in peace. But when particular cases occur, and the general good is thought to clash with private interest, all these reasonings evaporate like smoke, and the *lusts* which war in the members bear down every thing before them. The root of the evil lies in our having *forsaken God*, and become alienated from *him*. It was the law of our creation, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and thy neighbour as thyself;" and there is a closer connexion between these different branches of the law than we are apt to suppose. If we love God, we shall love our brother also. For a man to *fear* God was sufficient to insure a just, kind, and humane treatment of his fellow men. But if we cease to love *him*, we shall not be able to love one another, unless it be for our own sake. It is the love of ourselves only that, in this case, governs us; and this is a principle which, not being subordinate to the love of God, is of the essence of sin, and tends, in its own nature, to fill the world with discord. Men form connexions, some on a small, and some on a larger scale; but where self-love is the motive, every thing is expected to be done for their own honour, interest, or happiness; and the same thing being expected on the other side, there is no place for concord.

If two persons bear an affectionate good-will to each other as children of the same family, and each seek the good of the other from the pleasure of doing him good, and without so much as thinking that it is to issue in his own advantage, it *will* issue in his own advantage; and that to a far greater degree than if he had directly sought it; for God has so constituted things that in seeking another's good we shall find our own. If parents and children, husbands and wives, feel only for themselves, they will resemble men in a famine, in which "no man spareth his brother;" one snatches on the right hand, and is hungry; another eats on the left hand, and is not satisfied. But if they feel one for another—if, like the widow of Zarephath by Elijah, each one be willing to divide his morsel, that morsel becomes seven times more sweet, and God often blesses and increases it till the return of plenty.

These remarks are equally applicable to nations as to individuals and families. It is owing to self-love having taken place of the love of God, that treaties of alliance and commerce are so frequently broken. While each party seeks nothing but its own interest, and requires that of the other to give place to it, it is impossible that concord should be of any continuance. If such leagues be not at once dissolved, it is merely in consideration of the one party hoping to gain, *notwithstanding* the selfishness of the other, or fearing that greater evils will result from the breach than from the fulfilment of the treaty. But unions on so frigid a principle are unworthy of the name.

It is not difficult to perceive what must be the *tendency* of such a state of things. Nothing can better express it than the words of the Lord by the prophet, "Lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." Where the love of God has no place, and self-love is the ruling principle in every department of society, every thing is ripening for destruction. If the whole earth were in this state, it would be as the barren fig tree, and Heaven would say, "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" It were better that there should be no world than such a world as this.



II. Consider THE INEFFICACY OF ALL HUMAN MEANS FOR THE REMOVAL OF THESE EVILS. The miseries produced in the earth by discord are so serious, that it is become the necessary study of the thinking part of mankind to counteract them. Had the love of God ruled in the heart, this had been the cement of the world. Had men been ten thousand times more numerous than they are, this would have bound them all together: but, this principle being extinct, others of a very inferior nature must be substituted in its place. It is partly by softening the asperities of human nature, and partly by cultivating its most pacific principles, that any thing is effected; but though these means may diminish the evil, yet they cannot produce any thing like a radical cure. Let us instance in a few particulars:—

First, Great things have been done by *education*. By a course of discipline in early life mankind are taught to avoid all rude and provoking language, and to carry it courteously and respectfully to all about them. Even harsh things, if expressed in soft and gentle terms, will, in a good degree, lose their harshness, and tend to disarm the party of resentment. “A soft answer turneth away wrath, while grievous words stir up anger.” Herein consists the difference between barbarous and civilized society; a difference for which there is great cause for thankfulness. But, after all, the change which is hereby effected is nearly confined to the surface of things; the real temper of the heart is much the same. The grand study in this science is appearance. The most bitter and malignant speeches are uttered without shame by those who reckon themselves gentlemen; and murder itself is patronized by the laws of honour. It were a difficult question to determine which would be the least friendly to human happiness, for the whole world to be sunk into the lowest state of barbarism or raised to these haughty and atheistical notions of honour. Assuredly, this is not the way in which universal peace will be produced on earth.

Another principle to which great things also are ascribed is *a union of interests*. It is an undoubted fact that God, in his providence, has so interwoven the interests of mankind that they cannot subsist without each other. We talk proudly of independence; but we are all dependent, both upon God and one another. What would any individual be, if left alone? What would a family be, if separated from all other families? What would cities be without the country, or the country without cities? Nay, what would nations be, if shut out from all intercourse with other nations? These considerations ought, no doubt, to induce mankind, of all ranks, degrees, and situations, to study the things which make for peace; and to say that they actually have no influence in promoting concord would be saying what is manifestly untrue. To this principle we are indebted for the stifling of thousands of quarrels, which would otherwise burst forth, and render society intolerable. To this also we are indebted for the suppression of a very large portion of religious hatred. Considering the enmity of wicked men against serious Christians, instead of being surprised at its breaking out so much as it does, we have more reason to be surprised that it breaks out no more. Had not God so bound mankind together that they cannot obtain their own ends without being civil and kind to others, where there is one instance of bitter persecution, we might expect a hundred; and the same may be said of every other species of malevolence.

But though such a constitution of things furnishes matter for thankfulness, yet it is utterly inadequate to the producing of peace on earth, and good will to men. Stifled animosity is very different from love; the good understanding which arises from it is not peace, but the mere suspension of hostilities for the sake of convenience. It has been said that the only thing necessary to produce universal peace is that mankind be enlightened

to know their true interests. Certain it is, that if our true interests were known and pursued, we should seek the good of mankind in all that we have to do with them; but sin, operating in a way of selfishness, blinds the mind, and prompts men to seek their own interest, in opposition to that of others. Such also is the strength of corrupt propensity in men, that in many cases, which must appear to be injurious to themselves as well as others, they will frequently give way to it, whatever be the consequence, and even ruin themselves for the sake of ruining their neighbours. It is not therefore, on this ground that we can rationally build our hope of any essential amelioration of the state of mankind.

Let us examine a third principle; namely, *government*. This is, doubtless, an important blessing to mankind. It is among the means by which God, in his providence, preserves the world in some degree of order. The peace of the governed, so far as it respects one another, is hereby in a measure secured. If a nation were, for one week, or half that time, without law, they would learn, by woeful experience, the value of living under it. The most oppressive governments are preferable to a state of anarchy. It may be on this account that even that of Nero afforded no exception to the general doctrine of government being ordained of God for good. But though order may be produced by human laws and regulations, yet it is chiefly confined to the exterior of human action. And, with respect to that, it extends only to a single territory: between one country and another there is no paramount authority to settle their differences. What are termed the laws of nations have but little influence when one nation possesses the means of setting them at defiance. It is in vain to deny that the most effective law in the world is *power*; and as power is constantly varying, the world in one part or other is constantly in a state of warfare. Great conquerors call themselves "*benefactors*," and require to be called so, even by the conquered; and, what is worse, are admired and praised for their exploits in the page of history.

But the hopes which have been entertained of peace pervading the earth by means of government have arisen, not from the thing itself, but from *certain forms of it*. There is, no doubt, a difference as to these. That form of government, be it what it may, which contributes most to the administration of substantial justice in a country, and cuts off the motives to war in respect of other countries, is the best: but while men are corrupt, selfish, and ambitious, and possess the means of extending their power, they will never be in want of a plea for disturbing the repose of mankind. To expect them, under such circumstances, to be restrained by forms of their own creating, is expecting too much, and indicates but a slender acquaintance with human nature. A form that should leave no scope for the propensities of a people would be borne away before them in a little time. To banish wars from the earth, therefore, it is necessary to banish selfishness, ambition, and other corrupt affections, which produce them. Even allowing a nation and its government to be, upon the whole, justly and peaceably disposed; yet as cases will be always occurring in which its interests will clash with those of other nations, and in which amicable discussion, through the partiality which each side feels for its own cause, fails to produce mutual satisfaction, the consequence will often be a recourse to arms. The principles on which wars are undertaken are, in many instances, the same as those by which two individuals are prompted to fight a duel. They may have no desire to fight, nor to kill each other; but *the laws of honour* require them to act as they do! So long, therefore, as these laws, to the exclusion of the laws of God, continue to rule the higher orders of mankind, it is impossible but that wars and fightings will come.

But if education, interest, and government fail to produce the desired effect; yet is there no other principle, whose influence shall extend more to the heart, by which it may be accomplished? If there be, it must be *kindred*, or *relationship*. This, I acknowledge, has done great things. By the tender and endearing ties of blood and affinity the asperities of human nature are greatly softened, and God has, in a manner, bound us together. Hence, perhaps, arise the practicability of mankind dwelling together in families. By alliances of this sort, a good understanding is frequently kept up in neighbourhoods, and sometimes between great nations. Though a natural affection is in itself mere animal attachment, and has nothing morally good in it, yet to be without it argues the perfection of depravity. Nothing short of an habitually wicked heart can extinguish it. If this principle be overcome, there seems to be nothing left in human nature that can withstand the tide of corruption. It is, therefore, with peculiar force and propriety that God, by the prophet, represents the depravity of the Jewish nation as having set the hearts of the fathers against their children, and the hearts of the children against their fathers; and, having reached this height, as being incurable by any thing short of a Divine interposition.

Strong as are the ties of blood and affinity, yet there are two reasons why universal peace can never be expected to proceed from them. One is, their influence extends only to a small part of mankind. It is true, we are all akin as creatures, and as having sprung from one common ancestor: this, however, is a consideration that has but little weight among the bulk of mankind. It is only towards *near* relations that the attachment in question is felt. The other is, that, even with respect to that part of mankind who are nearly related to each other, there is in general no such attachment as to overbalance the selfish affections.

The sum is, there is not a principle in human nature from which any rational expectation can be formed of the world ever becoming materially different from what it is. It may be more enlightened; but this will present no sufficient barrier against the tide of corrupt passions, which bears along its stream the educated part of mankind, no less than the uneducated. Man may shift and change into a thousand forms, and may promise himself peace in each of them; but he will not find it. He may attribute his misery to circumstances, and flatter himself that if *they* were different, all would be well; the cause, however, is in himself, and is, therefore, sure to accompany him in every situation and condition. He may "change the place, but will keep the pain." If there were no hope from a higher quarter, the world would be shut up under sin, and have nothing to expect, but to be smitten with the curse.

III. Consider THE EFFICACY OF THE GOSPEL FOR THE DIFFUSION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE. That which was wrought among the Jews by the preaching of John furnished a specimen of what should be wrought in the world at large by the same means. They who had been disobedient were turned to the wisdom of the just. Repenting of their sins, they believed in the Messiah as at hand; and being thus reconciled to God, they became reconciled to one another; loving and being loved, forgiving and being forgiven.

In ascribing these effects to the gospel, we only ascribe to it that which, in its own nature, it is evidently adapted to produce—that which it actually has produced, so far as it has been cordially received—and that which the tenor of Scripture prophecy gives us to expect.

1. *The gospel is, in its own nature, evidently adapted to produce peace on earth, and good-will to men.* It may, indeed, be the occasion of contention and bitterness, in unbelievers; but this is not its proper effect; it is accidental to it, and reflects no more dishonour upon it than the good works

of its Author, which occasioned his being stoned by the Jews, reflected upon him.

We have seen already that the root of all the discord in the world is found in mankind having *forsaken God*: that, therefore, which is the means of bringing them back to God, and that only, will restore concord. It is thus that the root of bitterness is plucked up, and love, the plant of paradise, substituted in its place. We have seen that "wars and fightings" proceed from the "lusts" which war in our members; that, therefore, which teaches us to mortify these lusts removes the causes, and, by so doing, removes the effects. Pride, self-will, and the love of money, are the great sources of those calamities which, in all ages, have deluged the world with misery; but if we believe the gospel, they will be in a good measure dried up, and then the current which has been fed by them must cease to flow. "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever."

The gospel is a system *in direct opposition of selfishness*. It not only enforces a benevolent disposition, but is fraught with principles adapted to promote it. It furnishes the mind with a new set of views and feelings, both toward God and toward man. It tells us of one who, when all other means failed, said, "Lo, I come—to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart;" of one who laid down his life for us, even when we were yet enemies. Now, to imbibe this doctrine, is to become, in a measure, of the same mind. He that is born of God possesses the spirit of a little child. "Old things are passed away, and all things are become new." Laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speaking, as a new-born babe he desireth the sincere milk of the word, that he may grow thereby.

The gospel also furnishes us with a *centre*, or *bond of union*. Devoid of this, men are like grains of sand, without any principle of adhesion, and must therefore, of necessity, be divided and scattered. The physical strength of a nation is of small account in a time of danger, if they have no standard to repair to, and no leader and commander in whom they can place confidence. But a wise and patriotic prince will hold a people together, and induce them to love their country and one another the better for his sake. Such is our Redeemer, and such the love of one another which love to him inspires. Yea, more, it teaches us to love all mankind, from a hope that they may become his friends.

Now if such sentiments and feelings were universal, or if only the greater part of mankind possessed them, the world, from being a wilderness, would become a paradise. "Instead of the thorn" would come up "the fir tree; and instead of the brier the myrtle tree; and it would be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that should not be cut off."

2. *The gospel, so far as it has been cordially received, has actually produced these effects.* I say, *cordially* received; for it has met with a kind of reception that is not cordial, and to call which *believing* we must understand the term in a very restricted and partial sense. We have been asked, by unbelievers, "How is it, if Christianity be that pacific system which it professes to be, that Christian nations do not live in peace?" We answer, 1. Because a very large proportion of the people who inhabit those nations are Christians only in name. When any question arises between serious Christians and avowed unbelievers, persons of this description commonly prove themselves to be one in heart with the latter, and ought therefore to be classed with them. 2. Because those who believe the doctrine which they profess, and are real Christians, yet do not always act consistently with their profession. These things certainly furnish occasion for the unbelieving

part of the world, who seek occasion to stumble at the gospel; hence a woe is pronounced on the world because of offences, or stumbling-blocks, and a still heavier one on those by whom the offence cometh. Yet, notwithstanding these deductions, Christianity has wrought enough to establish its pacific character. We could tell of myriads who, from being persecutors and injurious, like Saul of Tarsus, no sooner embraced the gospel than they became other men; seeking the good of all around them, even of their worst enemies. We could appeal to the pacific spirit and conduct of thousands in our own times, who, influenced by the same principles, seek, by every means in their power, to heal the divisions and alleviate the miseries of mankind.

If the Christians scattered over bleeding Europe could have healed her, she would have been healed before now. They, as well as other men, may have been engaged in the wars; and, when called for in defence of their country, it may have been their duty so to do: but they have surely hailed the return of peace; and that not for their own sakes only, but from good-will to men.

Why should unbelievers load Christianity with the persecutions, intrigues, and unjust wars which have been carried on in Christendom; when, if they were disposed to judge righteously, they must allow, not only that the same things existed, and were accompanied with much more ferocity, under the heathen governments; but that what has existed since is not to be ascribed to Christianity, but to the want of it? It was not till the gospel was corrupted, and in a manner lost, among those who called themselves *the church*, that such things occurred. Instead, therefore, of their proving any thing against the pure and peaceful nature of genuine Christianity, they furnish an argument in its favour. The immoralities in the churches at Corinth, and in Galatia, when they have corrupted the gospel, were a proof of its moral, rather than of its immoral tendency. Is it to Christ or to anti-christ that the blood which has been shed for the last twelve hundred years, on account of religion, ought to be imputed? Have the atrocities committed by Europeans on the shores of Africa, and in other parts of the world, been owing to Christianity, or to the want of it? Let truth and conscience give the answer.

3. *The tenor of Scripture prophecy gives us to expect far greater effects than those which have yet been produced.* The world, like an abandoned sinner, may go on till it is "wearied in the greatness of its way;" but if we believe in God and his prophets, we must conclude that it will not be so always. It was one great end of Christ's coming into the world, to "set judgment in the earth;" and though he have to encounter great opposition, yet shall he "not fail nor be discouraged" till it be accomplished. The present disorders of the world will assuredly issue in a peaceful and happy state of things. Of this the following, among many other passages, it is presumed, afford ample proof:—

"And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.—And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy inountain: for *the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord*, as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse.

which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious.—The jealousy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the enmity of Judah shall be no more: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.—The greaves of the armed warrior in conflict, and the garment rolled in much blood, shall be for a burning, even fuel for the fire.\*—For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called . . . *The Prince of peace.* Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever: the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.—In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.—God be merciful unto us, and bless us: and cause his face to shine upon us. That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God, let all the people praise thee. O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth.—And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.—As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For ye shall go out with joy, and shall be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

There are some who, by refining on the spirituality of Christ's kingdom, have concluded that things will always continue much the same as they are now; and that to understand these prophecies as denoting a general spread of the gospel over the various nations of the earth, would be holding with national establishments of religion, and symbolizing with the Jews in their expectation of a worldly kingdom! If these persons be capable of deriving happiness from such opinions, we need not envy them, nor can we be surprised at their feeling no more interest in the conversion of sinners, and taking no more pains to accomplish it, than they have hitherto done. If there be any symbolizing with the carnal Jews on either side, it would seem to consist in that selfish spirit which would confine the gospel to those who already possess it, "forbidding us," in a manner, "to speak to the Gentiles, that they may be saved." I have no wish to decide how far the mind of a Christian may be perverted by the infatuating influence of hypothesis, nor how far he may be suffered to pervert the word of God in supporting it; but of this I am satisfied, that such notions are in their very essence antichristian.

\* Lowth's Isaiah.

Taking the foregoing passages in their simple and obvious meaning, they manifestly predict things which hitherto have had no accomplishment, or at most only a partial one. The earth has not yet been "full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." God's "saving health" has not yet been so "known among all nations," as for *all the people* to form a kind of chorus in his praise. It is not as yet that Christ, as the Head of a spiritual kingdom, "judges" and "governs the nations upon earth." The time is not yet arrived for "swords to be beaten into ploughshares, and spears into pruning-hooks." "The garment rolled in blood" has not yet become "a burning, even fuel for the fire." Christ's reign seems not as yet to have assumed the character of a glorious rest: hitherto, it has borne a greater resemblance to that of David, who was engaged in continual wars, than to that of Solomon, to whom the Lord gave rest on every side, and who was therefore employed in building a temple for his name. It is said of the promises made to Abraham and his posterity, that "the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers: and they possessed it, and dwelt therein: and that "the Lord gave them rest round about, according unto all that he swore unto their fathers."—"There failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel: all came to pass." But if things continue much the same as they now are to the end of time, I do not perceive how this language could apply to the promises made to Christ and the church. In this case, the prophets must have dealt largely in hyperbole, and their words, when reduced to meaning, amount to little in comparison of what they would seem to convey.

It is further observable from the foregoing prophecies, that whatever evils may precede the triumph of the gospel, yet the thing itself will take place without bloodshed, treachery, intrigue, tumult, or parade. The overturning of those governments which set themselves against the preaching of it may be necessary to prepare the way; and this may be accomplished by wicked men and wicked means: but this will be only as the wind, the earthquake, and the fire, to the still small voice. The noise of hammers and axes, though necessary in preparing for the temple, was not to be heard in the building of it. The kingdoms of this world are commonly founded either in violence or deceit, and often in both; but that of "the Prince of peace" will correspond with his character: justice and judgment will be the basis of his throne. He himself hath "done no *violence*," neither was any "*deceit* in his mouth:" and however he may turn such measures in his enemies to the advantage of his cause, he will never allow his servants to have recourse to them. The *peace* produced by other conquerors is merely the effect of fear; it is the stillness of the oppressed, who dare not complain, lest their oppression should be increased: but the peace promised under the reign of Christ is ascribed to the earth "being filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." His conquests are those of the heart. His subjects will be such from conviction and choice.

The kingdoms of this world are introduced and supported by parade; but it will not be so with the kingdom of Christ. This, as he told the Pharisees, came "not by observation," or outward show; neither should they say, "Lo, here, or, Lo, there;" for it was already among them. And thus we may conclude it will come, when it shall fill the whole earth. Men shall not be able to point to this place or that and say, Lo, it is here, or Lo, it is there; for before they are aware it shall be among them. Worldly men may at the time be pursuing their schemes with such earnestness as to think no more of it than Festus did "of one Jesus who was dead, and whom Paul affirmed to be alive;" but while they are pursuing their schemes,

God will have so pursued his as that they shall find themselves surrounded by it in every direction, and as unable to stop its progress as the Jewish rulers were, when they complained of the apostles for having "filled Jerusalem with their doctrine." In this silent and imperceptible way the gospel continued to operate in the early ages when it was left to its own evidence and the power of the Holy Spirit to recommend it. In the days of Tertullian, that is, in less than two hundred years after the death of Christ, that apologist could tell the Roman senate that it had overspread their empire. "Your cities, islands, forts, towns and assemblies; your very camps, wards, companies, palace, senate, forum, all," said he, "swarm with Christians." Yet all appears to have been conducted without violence or tumult, save that which was found among unbelievers.

We read of the stone cut out of the mountain breaking in pieces the great monarchies of the earth; of the kingdoms of this world becoming kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; of his judging the people righteously, and governing the nations upon the earth; and of the kingdoms under the whole heaven being given to the people of the saints of the Most High. But it does not follow that governments will be destroyed *as governments*, but merely *idolatrous* or *antichristian governments*. We have no reason to think that Christ will abolish civil authorities, and set up a government of his own in their stead. His kingdom never was and never will be of this world. If the government of nations, as well as that of lesser societies, be CONDUCTED ON CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES, then will Christ reign; then will the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of the Lord and his Christ; and then may the nations be glad and sing for joy. These principles existing in the hearts of governors and governed, would shortly burst the bands of oppression, still the tumults of the people, and cause wars to cease unto the ends of the earth. The demon of discord might then be addressed in the language of the psalmist: "O thou enemy! destructions are come to a perpetual end; and thou hast destroyed cities; their memorial is perished with them. But the Lord shall endure for ever; he hath prepared his throne for judgment."

And now, things being reduced to this peaceful state, instead of the earth being *smitten with a curse*, we are given to expect that it will be loaded with blessings: "Then shall the earth yield her increase, and God, even our own God, shall bless us."—"And all the ends of the earth shall fear him." Nor do I see any objection to the "increase" here predicted being literally understood. It is a fact that, from the day that man departed from God, the earth was cursed with barrenness, in comparison of what it was before; and it is not unnatural to suppose that, when the greater part of men shall have returned to him, this curse may be in a manner removed. At present the system of depravity which prevails among men renders it *unnecessary*. Sin counteracts the tendency to "increase and multiply" with which we were created. The world is in a manner depopulated by selfishness, intemperance, and war; and a great part of it inhabited by wild beasts and other noxious creatures. But when men shall know the Lord, and these wide-wasting evils shall subside, population will increase; and he that sends men will amply provide for them: "In that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground; and I will break the bow, and the sword, and the battle, out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely. And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies: I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord.—And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith



the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel."

Moreover, at present, the system of depravity which prevails among men would render any considerable increase of earthly fulness exceedingly *dangerous*. There appears to be as much wisdom and goodness as there is justice in the sentence passed on men, to eat bread by the sweat of their faces. Were there no necessity for hard labour, every day might be taken up in riot and debauchery. The deeds of the people of Sodom and of the Canaanites might be reacted. The bacchanalian revels which are seen at some of our contested elections (where men can indulge free of expense) afford a specimen of what might be expected, if God, while men are what they are, were to cause the earth to yield her increase. It would be nothing less than furnishing them with the means of being seven times more wicked. But when men shall know the Lord, the danger will have subsided; and then he will take pleasure in pouring forth his blessings upon them; and then, instead of those blessings being abused, as heretofore, they shall tend to recommend the gospel: "God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him."

Once more: As peace among men will be followed with a blessing on the earth, so peace among Christians will be followed with a blessing on the means of grace. The depravity which has hitherto prevailed in the world has, in too great a measure, extended to the church, and wrought much in a way of destroying its fruitfulness. Corruptions have produced divisions, envies, jealousies, and almost every evil work. Hence the blessing of God has been, in a great measure, withheld. We read of great things among the apostles and primitive Christians, and now and then hear of a minister and a people, who, approaching somewhat near to their doctrine and spirit, are honoured with a portion of their success; but, in general, we are as "when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape-gleanings of the vintage; there is no cluster to eat," though our souls desire the first-ripe fruit. Now as the carnal notions, envies, and petty discords of the apostles ceased from the time of their Lord's resurrection, and as "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul," so will it be with the whole church of Christ when the Spirit shall be poured out from on high. And then "the earth shall yield her increase," in a still higher sense. Not only every nation and city, but every town, if not every village, will furnish a church of Christ, "walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit." Then will God, even their own God, bless them, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him. The people of God will be of good comfort, will be of one mind, will live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with them!

From the whole, we may conclude,

1. It becomes Christians to set their hearts much on the spread of the gospel; to pray for it, labour for it, contribute of their substance for it; and to rest all their hopes of the amelioration of the state of mankind upon it. Political men may place their hopes on political changes; but Christians should always remember that "peace on earth and good-will to men" connect with "glory to God in the highest;" and that they are reserved to grace the triumphs of the Prince of peace.

2. It is of infinite importance for us to repent and believe the gospel. So long as any of us are unbelievers, we are under the curse; and the whole career of our life tends to draw down the curse of Heaven upon us, and upon the earth on which we dwell. We have heard much of the conversion of the Jews and heathens; but of what account will either be to us,

if we ourselves be not converted? All the great and good things which the Lord has promised, either in this world or that which is to come, will, if we be unbelievers, only aggravate our misery.

3. Sinners, even the greatest of sinners, have every encouragement to repent and believe in Jesus. The invitation of Moses to Hobab is the same, for substance, as Christ's servants are now warranted to address to every one they meet: "We are journeying to the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."

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## XVI.

### THE RECEPTION OF CHRIST THE TURNING POINT OF SALVATION.

"He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But us many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."—John i. 10—12.

AMONG the numerous self-deceiving notions which are cherished in the minds of men, is that of their being willing to return to God at any time, provided they had opportunity and the means of doing so. In accounting for their own impenitence and perseverance in sin, they will impute it to their situation, their temptations, their callings, their connexions, or to any thing but their evil hearts. Some have even learned to speak evil of their hearts, while it is manifest that they mean to include, under that term, nothing pertaining to intention, desire, or design, but something that exists and operates in them against their inclination. Hence, you will often hear them acknowledge themselves to be unconverted, and at the same time express how willing and desirous they are of being converted, if it would but please God to put forth his power in their favour. The word of God, however, speaks a different language; while it ascribes all that is good to grace only, it lays the evil at the sinner's own door.

A great number of instances might be alleged from the Scriptures in proof of this truth; but the greatest proof of all is the manner in which Christ himself was treated, when he appeared on earth. The evangelist, having introduced him to his reader in all the glory of Divinity, describes in plaintive language the neglect and contempt he met with, both from the world in general, and from his own nation in particular. Let us examine these complaints.

"*He was in the world.*" It has often been objected, If the religion of Christ has a claim on the world, why has not the world had more of an opportunity to hear it? It might be the design of the evangelist to obviate this objection. His being "in the world" does not seem to refer so much to his personal presence among men, in the days of his flesh, as to those manifestations of him which, from the beginning of the world, had furnished them with the means of knowing him, and which, therefore, rendered their ignorance inexcusable. He had been revealed, at the outset of the world, as the woman's Seed, who should bruise the head of the serpent. Sacrifices were appointed to prefigure his atonement; which, though perverted, were never discontinued, even among the heathen. The selection of the seed of Abraham, and their miraculous settlement in Canaan, must have attracted universal attention; and as the Messiah was a prominent feature of their

religion, he was, in a manner, proclaimed through every nation. The effect produced on the mariners, when Jonah told them that he was a Hebrew, and feared JEHOVAH, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land, shows very plainly that the displays of omnipotence, in behalf of Israel, were not unknown to the surrounding nations. That, also, which was soon after produced on the Ninevites, when they learned that he was a Hebrew prophet, sent of God, evinces the same thing. And if they were not ignorant of God's judgments, they were not destitute of the means of inquiring after the true religion. Nay, more, the expectation of the promised Messiah was, for a long time before he appeared, very general among the nations. Had they, therefore, possessed any portion of a right spirit, or any desire after the true God, they would have been as inquisitive as were the wise men of the east, and as desirous as they were of paying him homage.

Not only was he in the world, so as to render their ignorance of him inexcusable, but "*the world*" itself "*was made by him.*" Though, as to the state of their minds, they were far from him, yet he was not far from every one of them; for in him they lived, and moved, and had their being. When he became incarnate, it was nothing less than their Creator in very deed dwelling with them upon the earth. Such an event ought to have excited universal inquiry, and to have induced all men every where to repent.

But though he was in the world, and the world was made by him, yet "*the world knew him not!*" Full of their own schemes and pursuits, they thought nothing of him. The Roman governors, in hearing the accusations of the Jews against Paul, and his defences, had great opportunities of knowing the truth; but the ignorance and contempt expressed by Festus, in his report of the matter to Agrippa, show the inefficacy of all means, unless accompanied with the mighty power of God. The Jews "brought none accusation of such things as he supposed; but had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive!"

But this is not the heaviest complaint: "*He came unto his own, and his own received him not.*" How appropriate are the terms here used! He *was* in the world, and therefore within the reach of inquiry. But to the seed of Abraham he *came*, knocking, as it were, at their door for admission; but "*they received him not.*" The world are accused of ignorance, but they of unbelief; for *receiving him not*, though a merely negative form of speech, yet is expressive of a positive refusal of him. Instead of welcoming the heavenly visitant, they drove him from their door, and even banished him from the earth. Who would have supposed that a people whose believing ancestors had been earnestly expecting the Messiah for a succession of ages would have rejected him when he came among them? Yet so it was: and if Jews or deists of the present day ask, "How could these things be?" we answer, It was foretold by their own prophets that he should possess neither form nor comeliness in their eyes, and that when they should see him, there would be no beauty that they should desire him.

The consideration of their being *his own* people, the children of Abraham his friend, added to their sin, and to his affliction. It was this which he so pathetically lamented, when 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."

Grievous, however, as this treatment was to our blessed Lord, he was not utterly disregarded. Though the world in general knew him not, and though the great body of his own nation rejected him; yet there was "a remnant according to the election of grace," partly Jews and partly Gentiles,

who received him: and whether they had been previously distinguished by their sobriety, or by their profligacy; whether they came in companies, as under Peter's sermon, or as individuals, like her who wept and washed his feet, or him who sought mercy when expiring by his side on the cross; all were received by him, and raised to the highest dignity: "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." And thus, though Israel was not gathered, yet Christ was glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and had a people given him from among the heathen.

I need not say that the treatment which our Saviour received is the same, for substance, in all ages. There is a world that still knows him not, and many who, though possessed of the means of grace, yet receive him not; and, blessed be God! there are also many, both Jews and Gentiles, who still receive him, and are still blessed with the privilege of being adopted into his heavenly family.

That we may understand and feel the importance of the subject, I shall first inquire, What is supposed and included in receiving Christ? Secondly, Consider the great privilege annexed to it. And lastly, Observe the wisdom of God in rendering the reception of Christ the great turning point of salvation.

I. Let us, inquire, WHAT IS SUPPOSED AND INCLUDED IN RECEIVING CHRIST? The phrase is supposed to be equivalent with "believing on his name." To receive Christ is to believe in him; and to believe in Christ is to receive him. There are some slight shades of difference between these and some other terms which are used to express faith in Christ; such as *believing, trusting, receiving, &c.*, but they must be the same in substance, or they would not be used in the New Testament as convertible terms. Believing seems to respect Christ as exhibited in the gospel testimony; trusting, as revealed with promise; and receiving supposes him to be God's free gift, presented to us for acceptance in the invitations of the gospel; but, as I said, all come to the same issue. He that believeth the testimony, trusteth the promise and receiveth the gift; and the whole is necessary to an interest in his benefits, whether pardon, justification, adoption, or any other spiritual blessing.

If we were inquiring into the nature of believing, it might be necessary to examine the testimony; if of trusting, we must ascertain wherein consists the promise; and so, if we would form just conceptions of receiving Christ, we must observe what is said of the gift of him; for each is the standard of the other, and will be found to correspond with it: "So we preached, and so ye believed."

Considering Christ, then, as the gift of God, it is necessary to observe that he is the *first* and *chief* of all his gifts, and that for his sake all others are bestowed. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not *with him* freely give us all things?" Other gifts may be so great that nothing in this world can be compared with them; this, however, is the greatest. It is great for God to forbear with us; greater to forgive us; and greater still to accept and crown us with eternal life: but all this is supposed to be small, in comparison of the gift of his own Son; and therefore it is argued that, having bestowed the greater, we may trust him for the less. But if God first give Christ, and with him all things freely, we must first receive Christ, and with him all things freely. The first exercise of faith, therefore, does not consist in receiving the benefits resulting from his death, or in a persuasion of our sins being forgiven, but in receiving Christ; and having received him, we *with him* receive an interest in those benefits. Hence the propriety of such language as this:

“He that *hath* the Son hath life; and he that *hath not* the Son of God hath not life.”

It is on this principle that union with Christ is represented as the foundation of an interest in his benefits, as it is in the following passages: “Of him are ye *in* Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us *wisdom*, and *righteousness*, and *sanctification*, and *redemption*.—There is therefore now *no condemnation* to them that are *in* Christ Jesus.—That I may be found *in* him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” It is thus in the marriage union, to which that of believers with Christ is compared. As she that is joined to a husband becomes interested in all that he possesses, so they that are joined to Christ are, by the gracious constitution of the gospel, interested in all that he possesses. He is heir of all things, and they are joint-heirs with him. The sum is, that receiving Christ is the great turning point of salvation, or that by which we obtain a revealed interest in all the blessings of the gospel.

But, more particularly, To receive Christ presupposes a sense of sin, and of our exposedness to the just displeasure of God. It is a great error to hold up a sense of sin as a qualification which gives us a warrant to receive the Saviour, and so to consider the invitations of the gospel as addressed to sensible sinners only, as this must necessarily teach men to reckon themselves the favourites of God while yet they are in a state of unbelief. But it is no less an error to suppose that any sinner will receive the Saviour without perceiving and feeling his need of him. It is one thing to require a sense of sin as a qualification that gives a warrant to receive the Saviour, and another to plead for it as necessary, in the nature of things, to a compliance with that warrant. What is the reason that Christ is rejected, and the gospel made light of, by the great body of mankind? Is it not, as the Scriptures represent it, because they are whole in their own eyes, and therefore think they need no physician? While men are righteous in their own esteem, the gospel must appear to be a strange doctrine, and the dwelling so much upon Christ, in the ministry of the word, a strange conduct. How is it that the doctrine of salvation by grace, through the atonement of the Son of God, should be so generally opposed even by nominal Christians? The reason is the same. Sin is considered as a light thing, a mere frailty or imperfection, unfortunately attached to human nature; and while this is the case, there appears to be no need of a mediator, or at least not of one that is Divine, and who, to atone for sin, should be required to assume humanity and render his life a sacrifice. Hence it is necessary to be convinced of sin in order to receive the Saviour.

Much of this conviction may respect only our guilt and danger, and so have nothing spiritually good in it; but in those who, in the end, receive the Saviour, it is not wholly so. There is such a thing as *spiritual conviction*, or conviction which involves in it an abhorrence of sin, and of ourselves on account of it. Such is that sense of its intrinsically evil nature, or, as the Scriptures speak, of its *exceeding sinfulness*, which is produced by a just view of the spirituality and equity of the Divine law. And such is that repentance towards God which is represented as necessary to faith in Christ, and as included in it. We may be convinced of our guilt and danger by an enlightened conscience only, and may be very sorry for our sin, in reference to its consequences; but this, though it may be used to prepare the way of the Lord, yet will neither divest the sinner of his self-righteous spirit, nor render him willing to come to Christ, that he may have life; and, instead of issuing in his receiving him, may end in his destruction. A sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, on the other hand, tends, in its own nature,

to kill a self-righteous spirit, and to induce the sinner to embrace the gospel. It is impossible to have a just sense of the evil of sin, and, at the same time, to object to the way of salvation by grace, through a mediator.

Again, To receive Christ implies the renunciation of every thing which stands in opposition to him, or comes in competition with him. Viewing Christ as a guest, he stands at the door, and knocks; and why is it kept barred against him? Because the sinner has a variety of other guests already in his house, and is aware that, if he enter, they must be dismissed; and, being reluctant to part with them, he cannot find in his heart, at least for the present, to welcome the heavenly visitant. These guests are not only darling sins, but corrupt principles, flesh-pleasing schemes, and a spirit of self-righteous pride. With these Christ cannot associate. If we receive him, we must reject them; and not as being forced to it for the sake of escaping the wrath of God, but with all our hearts. Many, considering the necessity of the thing, would willingly receive Christ, so that they might retain what is most dear to them; but this being inadmissible, they, like him who was nearest of kin to Ruth, decline it, lest they should mar their own inheritance.

It was not so with Moses. He had to *refuse* as well as *choose*; and, for the sake of Christ, yea, for the *reproach* of Christ, he did refuse even the prospect of a crown. Paul had great advantages by birth, and had acquired many more by application; but when they came in competition with Christ, all this gain was counted loss. Nor did he ever repent the sacrifice, but, towards the close of life, declared, saying, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him."

Moreover, to receive Christ is expressive of the exercise, not of one faculty only, but of *all the powers of the soul*. If it were merely an exercise of the understanding, as distinguished from the will and affections, it would not be properly opposed to a *rejection* of him, which is manifestly the idea suggested by the term "received him not." As unbelief includes more than an error in judgment, even an aversion of the heart from Christ and the way of salvation by his death; so faith includes more than an accurate notion of things, even a cordial acceptance of him and the way of salvation by him. Nothing short of this can, with any propriety, be considered as *receiving* him, or as having the promise of eternal life.

Finally, To receive Christ requires not only to be by all in *us*, but to have respect to *all in him*. If we receive Christ as the gift of God, we must receive him for all the purposes for which he is given. These purposes may be distinguished, and one may come in order after another; but they must not be separated. Were it possible to receive him as an atoning sacrifice without yielding ourselves up to his authority, or to yield ourselves up to his authority without relying on his sacrifice, each would be vain; and could both of them be united without sitting at his feet as little children, to be instructed in his will, it were still in vain. The invitation of our Lord, in the eleventh chapter of Matthew, shows both the order and connexion of these things: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." The first concern of a sinner is to *come* to Christ as the *Saviour* of the lost; but, at what time he does this, he must also take his yoke upon him as his *Lord* and *Lawgiver*. Nor is this all; he must take him for his *example*; learning his spirit, and following his steps.

II. Consider THE PRIVILEGE ANNEXED TO RECEIVING CHRIST: "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." The relation of sons seems to be ascribed to believers, in the text and context, on two accounts, viz. their *regeneration* and their *adoption*. The one is expressed in verse 13, "Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." This consists in a reimpression of the Divine image, and is introduced to account for some having received Christ, while others received him not. The other is denominated a "power," or *privilege*, and belongs to our restoration to the Divine favour.

It was a high honour, conferred on our species from the beginning, for God to call himself their Father; an honour extended, as it would seem, to no other part of the lower creation. "His tender mercies," indeed, "are over all his works;" but man was created in his image: "In the image of God created he him." Men, therefore, are ranked among the children of the Most High. Nor was it a mere name; the love of the Creator was truly that of a father. We see this expressed in the strongest manner even in the punishment of the wicked; as though it were against the grain of his native goodness, and as though nothing but a conduct exceedingly offensive could have induced him to do what he did. Such are the ideas in the following passages: "And the Lord said, I will destroy man, *whom I have created*, from the face of the earth."—"He that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will show them no favour." And though it sometimes appears as if sin had, in a manner, extinguished his paternal goodness, yet, in exercising mercy through his Son, he still calls to remembrance the original relation: "I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth; for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls *which I have made*." What an evil and bitter thing, then, must sin be, to have induced so good a God to disown us as *aliens*, and to require that if we be again admitted into his family, it shall be by *adoption*—a proceeding to which men have recourse when they wish to favour children that are not their own!

The kindness of God toward Israel is described as an *adoption*. Their deplorable condition in Egypt is represented by that of a helpless infant, left to perish in the open field in the day that it was born; and the favour conferred upon them, by the kindness of a benevolent stranger, who, passing at the time, had compassion on it, and adopted it as his own. This, however, though an act of grace, and through a mediator, yet was only a shadow of that blessing which is bestowed on them who believe in Jesus Christ. It separated them from other nations, and conferred on them distinguished privileges, but it ascertained no inheritance beyond the grave. This, on the contrary, not only puts us among the children, but gives us "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." The depth of alienation and disgrace from which it takes us, with the height of glory to which it raises us, accounts for that strong language which is more than once used in describing it: "But I said, How shall I put thee among the children?—Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!"

The *adoption of children* is reckoned among those spiritual blessings wherewith the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath blessed them that believe in him, having predestinated them to it by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will. With all other spiritual blessings, its bestowment is in consequence of our *having been* predestinated to it; but the thing itself, like justification, is a blessing of time, and follows on believing. It were absurd to speak of our being predestinated to that which was, in itself, eternal. The privilege itself is held up as an in-

ducement to forsake the family of Satan, and separated from them: "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,—and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

But the connexion between receiving Christ and having power to become the sons of God is designed to mark not only the order of time, but that of nature; or to show the influence of the one upon the other: we "are all the children of God *by faith in Christ Jesus.*" This is exactly the same language as is used of our justification: and the blessing is obtained in the same way; not in reward of the act of believing, but out of respect to him in whom we believe. He that believeth on the Son is joined or united to him, and, as such, by the constitution of the covenant of grace, becomes interested in all its benefits. It is thus that we are justified by faith, and it is thus that we are adopted. Christ, in reward of his obedience unto death, is appointed "heir of all things;" and we, receiving him, are received into God's family for his sake, and become "joint-heirs" with him. Such is the delightful harmony of the gospel, and such the way in which "the adoption of children" is "*by Jesus Christ to himself,*"—"to the praise of the glory of his grace."

Regeneration gives us a new nature; and adoption adds to it a *new name*, even that of sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. Nor is it a mere name; for the richest blessings both in this world and that which is to come are attached to it. Of these we may reckon the following as the principal:—

1. *Access to God as our own God and Father.* During our unbelief, whatever were our necessities or troubles, we had no access to God. Though under the pangs of woe we might cry for mercy, yet it was unavailing. How should it be otherwise, when we set at nought the only name by which a sinner can be introduced, and his cause obtain a hearing? But, believing in Jesus, we draw near to God, and God to us. The term *προσευωγή*, rendered *access*, in Eph. iii. 12, signifies as much as *introduction, manduction, or a being taken by the hand*, as one who is introduced to the king by a third person; teaching us that we cannot be admitted to the Divine presence by ourselves. While obedient we had free access to our Creator; but, having sinned, the door is shut upon us, and not a child of Adam can see his face, but as introduced by the Mediator. As Job's friends, whose folly had offended the Divine Majesty, were required to bring their offerings to Job, that he as a mediator might present them and pray for the offenders, so it is with us in drawing near to God. All our offerings must be presented by the great and gracious Intercessor. Him will God accept. Coming in his name, we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. The spirit which is congenial with the gospel dispensation is not that of bondage, that we should be held in slavish fear, but that of adoption, whereby we cry, *Abba, Father*; and if we do not actually possess it, it is because we are wanting to ourselves. A promise is left us of entering into rest, of which if we seem to come short, it is owing to unbelief. Did we but act up to our privileges, guilt would not lie rankling on our consciences in the manner it often does, nor would care corrode our peace, nor morbid melancholy eat up our enjoyments. Having God for our Father, we should confess our sins to him, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son would cleanse us from all sin; we should cast all our care on him who careth for us; we should be inordinately "careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let our requests be made known unto God;" and the effect would be, that "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, would keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."



2. *Access to all the ordinances of God's house, and to the fellowship of his people.* From being "strangers and foreigners," we become "fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." The church of God is here described as a *city*, and as a *household*. As a city, God is a wall of fire round about her, and the glory in the midst of her, blessing her provision, and satisfying her poor with bread. To be made free of this city, is no small favour. As a household, God is the Father of it; and as many as receive Christ receive power to become its members, and to share in all the privileges of the family. There are believers, no doubt, whose situation does not admit of these social advantages, and others who are prevented by something amiss in the state of their own minds from embracing them; but such do not excel in spirituality or in usefulness. It is as being planted in the house of the Lord that we may hope to flourish in the courts of our God.

3. *A part in the first resurrection.* The resurrection of the saints is called "the manifestation of the sons of God;" "the glorious liberty of the children of God;" "the adoption;" "the redemption of our body." It is the grand jubilee of the church, and even of the creation. Till then the former as well as the latter will be held under a degree of bondage, as being yet subject to the effects of sin: but then Christ's promise shall be fulfilled, "I will raise them up at the last day;" and the deliverance of the saints will be the signal for that of the creation, which during the apostacy has been *unwillingly compelled* to subserve its Creator's enemies, and which is therefore represented as waiting for and earnestly expecting the moment of deliverance. The last enemy being then destroyed, the war will be ended: death will be swallowed up in victory.

4. *An interest in the eternal inheritance.* The natural inference from this Divine relation is this: "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." With such thoughts our minds are overwhelmed, and no wonder; for an inspired apostle had no adequate conception of it: "Beloved," says he, "now are we the sons of God, and it *doth not yet appear what we shall be*: but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

Such are the leading privileges included in the power of becoming the sons of God, which are sufficient to show, that though many reject the Saviour, yet it is not for want of kindness on his part towards those who accept of him.

III. Let us observe THE WISDOM OF GOD IN RENDERING THE RECEPTION OF CHRIST THE TURNING POINT OF SALVATION. When a person who neither understands nor believes the gospel way of salvation thinks on the subject, it must appear to him a strange thing that so much should be made of Christ in the New Testament, and of faith in him. He has no conception of it, or of the reason why it should be so. It was thus that the gospel was "unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness;" to them that believed, however, it was "the power of God, and the wisdom of God." There are three things in particular in which the wisdom of God appears in this adjustment of things.

1. *It accords with the leading design of God in the gospel; namely, to glorify his character and government in the salvation of sinners.* Receiving Christ, as we have seen already, is the corresponding idea to his being *given*, and that which answers to it, as the loops and taches of the tabernacle answered to each other. If the gift of Christ, on God's part, was necessary to secure the honour of his character and government in showing mercy, the receiving of him, on our part, must also be necessary, as belonging to

the same proceeding. Without this, the gift would not answer its end. Hence, though God, through the propitiation of his Son, is *just* and a *justifier*; yet it is of him only that *believeth in Jesus*.

If, instead of receiving Christ as God's free gift, and eternal life with him, we had received favour irrespective of him, God, so far as we can conceive, must have compromised his honour. To show favour to a sinner in the way he wishes, that is, in reward of what he calls his good works, would be consenting to vacate his throne at the desire of a rebel. It would be agreeing not only to pass over his past disobedience, and so to render null and void his own precepts, warnings, and threatenings, but to accept, in future, of just such obedience, and such a degree of it, as it suited his inclination to yield: "Offer it now unto thy governor, will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts."

But, in receiving Christ, we acquiesce in the whole system of salvation by his death, as glorifying the character and government of God; we subscribe to the great evil of sin, and to the justice of our condemnation on account of it; we become of the same mind with Christ, and, in our measure, stand affected as he does toward God and man, and sin and righteousness. That law which *was* within his heart is *written* in ours. Thus it is that God and his government are glorified, not only by the gift of Christ to be a sacrifice, but in the reception of him, as such, by the believing sinner.

2. *It secures the honours of grace.* If, instead of receiving Christ as God's free gift, and eternal life through him, we had received favour irrespective of him, we should have considered ourselves as having whereof to glory. It would have appeared to us, as it does and must appear to every one that hopes to be saved without an atonement, that the Almighty has no right to expect perfect obedience from imperfect creatures; that there is no such great evil in sin as that it should deserve everlasting punishment; that if God were to be strict to mark iniquity, according to the threatenings of the Bible, he would be unjust; and, therefore, that in showing mercy he only makes just allowance for the frailties of his creatures, and acts as a good being must needs act. Thus it is that the very idea of grace is excluded, and the sinner feels himself on terms with his Creator. But in receiving Christ, and salvation through his death, these imaginations are cast down, and all such high thoughts subdued to the obedience of Christ. He that has been disputing with his Maker for a number of years, at once finds the ground sink under him, all his arguments answered, and himself reduced to the character of a suppliant at the feet of his offended Sovereign.

It is as hard a thing for a proud and carnal heart to receive Christ, and salvation by grace through him, as it is to keep the whole law. If, therefore, we expect the good news of the gospel to consist in something more suited to the inclinations, and not merely to the condition of sinners, we shall be disappointed. It is said of a certain character, who some years since was banished from this country for attempting to revolutionize it after the example of France, that he was offered a free pardon if he would only acknowledge his fault and petition the throne; but *he could not do it!* Such is the inability of men to receive the Saviour; and herein consists the damning sin of unbelief.

If our spirit were brought down to our situation, as sinners, the most humiliating truths of the gospel, instead of offending us, would appear to be right, and wise, and glorious. We should feel that the dust was our proper place; or rather, if we had our deserts, the pit of perdition. We should consider ourselves as lying at the absolute discretion of God: instead of being stumbled at such an assertion of the Divine sovereignty as that addressed to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I

will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," we should cordially subscribe it, and supplicate mercy only on that principle. And when we had obtained it, we should never think of having made ourselves to differ, but freely acknowledge that it is by the grace of God that we are what we are. Our minds would be in perfect unison with the language of the apostle to Timothy: "Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began."

3. *It provides for the interests of holiness.* In receiving Christ, and salvation through him, we receive a doctrine that strikes at the very root of depravity. "The Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil;" he, therefore, that receives him must thenceforth be at variance with them. We are not only justified, but sanctified, by the faith that is in him. The doctrine of the cross, while it gives peace to the conscience, purifies the heart. There is not a principle in it but what, if felt and acted upon, would cause the world to be dead to us, and us unto the world. The objections, therefore, that are made to this doctrine, as being unfriendly to holiness, have no foundation in the doctrine itself, whatever may be seen in the lives of some that profess it.

From the whole, *The first concern of a sinner is to receive the Saviour.* It ought to be no question whether he *may* receive him, since the gospel is addressed to every creature, and its invitations to the "stout-hearted and far from righteousness." The only question is whether he be *willing* to receive him. To a spectator, unacquainted with the depravity of human nature, it must be beyond measure surprising that this should be a question; and, indeed, few men can be convinced that it is; yet if it were not, there would be no difficulty in receiving him. "Why do ye not understand my speech? Because ye cannot hear my word;" that is, because ye are averse from it. But no man will be able to excuse this his aversion, which is itself sin. The Judge of all the earth makes no allowance for it, nor for its not having been removed by Divine grace. Grace is never represented in the Scriptures as necessary to our accountableness; but as a free gift, which God might justly withhold. It is deemed sufficient to justify the condemnation of sinners, that they *were averse* from the gospel and government of Christ: "Take these mine enemies, that *would not* that I should reign over them, and slay them before me."

Should it be objected that these principles must tend to drive a sinner to despair; I answer by asking, What sinner? Not him whose desires are toward the Saviour; not him whose prayer is, "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned:" if any, it must be him who has no desire after God; and, even in his case, the despair is not absolute, but merely on supposition of his continuing in that state of mind. But this, to him, is most necessary; for, till a sinner despair of obtaining mercy in the way he is in, he will never fall at the feet of sovereign grace, and so will never be saved. As he that would be wise must first become a fool that he may be wise; so he that layeth hold of the hope set before him in the gospel, must first relinquish his hopes from every other quarter.

## XVII.

## JUSTIFICATION.

“Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.—Rom. iii. 24.

THE doctrine expressed in this passage runs through the Epistle, and constitutes the scope of it. It is taught in many other parts of Scripture, but here it is established by a connected body of evidence. Both heathens and Jews are proved to be under sin, and, consequently, incapable of being justified, by a righteous God, on the ground of their own obedience. As to the former, they were wicked in the extreme. If any thing could have been alleged in excuse of them, it had been their *ignorance*; but even this failed. They had means of knowledge sufficient to render them “without excuse;” but having neglected them, and cast off God, God gave them up to their own corrupt affections and propensities; so that even the philosophic Greeks and Romans were “full of all ungodliness and unrighteousness, holding,” or rather withholding, “the truth,” which they understood above the common people, “in unrighteousness.” But if heathens could not be justified, yet did not they who had the oracles of God stand on higher ground? Not so; for those very oracles describe men as “all gone out of the way,” as having become “unprofitable,” as none of them “doing good, no, not one;” and what revelation says, it says of them who were under the light of it. Israel, therefore, was a part of the corrupt mass. The sum is, “Every mouth is stopped, and all the world become guilty before God.—By the deeds of the law no flesh living can be justified in his sight.”

These sentiments, contained in the first three chapters of the Epistle, make way for the following interesting statement: “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God: being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.”

I call this an *interesting* statement; for, of all the questions that can occupy the human mind, there is none of greater importance than that which relates to the way of acceptance with God. We learn from our own consciences, as well as from the Scriptures, that we are accountable creatures; but how we shall stand before the holy Lord God is a question that overwhelms us. If there were no hope from the gospel, we must despair. We must appear before the judgment-seat, but it would be only to be convicted and condemned. The doctrine, therefore, that shows a way in which God can be just, and yet a justifier, must be interesting beyond expression. This is, in substance, the good news to be proclaimed to every creature.

Justification by grace has been thought by some to be inconsistent with justification through the atonement and righteousness of Christ. Yet it is here expressly said to be of grace; and, as though that were not enough, *freely* by grace: nor is the sacred writer less express concerning its meritorious cause than concerning its source or origin: it was not only of free grace, but “through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.”

In every kind of justification in which justice is regarded there is some ground, or reason, for the proceeding. In ordinary cases, among men, this ground, or reason, is found in the character of the prisoner. He is considered as innocent, and therefore is acquitted. In the justification of a sinner by the Judge of all, it is "the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." That which innocence is to the one, the redemption of Christ is to the other: it is his *righteousness*, or that in consideration of which, being imputed to him, he is justified.

In discoursing upon this great subject, I shall endeavour to ascertain the meaning of the term—to give proof of the doctrine—and to show the consistency of its being of free grace, and yet through the redemption of Jesus Christ.

I. LET US ENDEAVOUR TO ASCERTAIN THE MEANING OF THE TERM JUSTIFICATION. Many errors on this important subject may be expected to have arisen from the want of a clear view of the thing itself. Till we understand what justification is, we cannot affirm or deny any thing concerning it, but with great uncertainty.

It is not the making a person righteous by an inherent change from sin to righteousness, this is *sanctification*; which, though no less necessary than the other, yet is distinguished from it: Christ "is made unto us righteousness and sanctification." The term is forensic, referring to the proceedings in a court of judicature, and stands opposed to *condemnation*. This is evident from many passages of Scripture, particularly the following: "He that *justifieth* the wicked, and he that *condemneth* the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord.—The judgment was by one to *condemnation*; but the free gift is of many offences unto *justification*.—There is therefore now no *condemnation* to them that are in Christ Jesus.—It is God that *justifieth*: who is he that *condemneth*?—He that believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life; and shall not come into *condemnation*; but is passed from death unto life." If a prisoner who stands charged with a crime be convicted of it, he is *condemned*; if otherwise, he is acquitted, or *justified*.

But though it be true that the term is forensic, and stands opposed to condemnation, yet, as in most other instances in which the proceedings of God allude to those of men, they are *not in all respects alike*. He that is justified in an earthly court (unless it be for want of evidence, which cannot possibly apply in this case) is considered as being really innocent; and his justification is no other than an act of justice done to him. He is acquitted, because he appears to *deserve* acquittal. This, however, is not the justification of the gospel, which is "of grace, through the redemption of Jesus Christ." Justification, in the former case, in proportion as it confers honour on the justified, reflects dishonour on his accusers; while, in the latter, the justice of every charge is admitted, and no dishonour reflected on any party except himself. Justification among men is opposed not only to condemnation, but even to *pardon*; for, in order to this, the prisoner must be found guilty, whereas, in justification, he is acquitted as innocent. But gospel justification, though distinguishable from pardon, yet is not opposed to it. On the contrary, pardon is an essential branch of it. Pardon, it is true, only removes the curse due to sin, while justification confers the blessing of eternal life; but, without the former, we could not possess the latter. He that is justified requires to be pardoned, and he that is pardoned is also justified. Hence a *blessing* is pronounced on him whose iniquities are forgiven; hence also the apostle argues from the non-imputation of sin to the imputation of righteousness; considering the blessedness of him to whom God imputeth not sin as a description of the blessedness of him to whom he imputeth righteousness without works.

Finally, justification, at a human bar, *prevents* condemnation; but gospel justification finds the sinner *under* condemnation, and delivers him from it. It is described as a "passing from death to life."

From these dissimilarities, and others which I doubt not might be pointed out, it must be evident, to every thinking mind, that though there are certain points of likeness, sufficient to account for the use of the term, yet we are not to learn the Scripture doctrine of justification from what is so called in the judicial proceedings of human courts, and, in various particulars, cannot safely reason from one to the other. The principal points of likeness respect not the *grounds* of the proceeding, but the *effects* of it. Believing in Jesus, we are united to him; and, being so, are treated by the Judge of all as one with him; his obedience unto death is imputed to us, or reckoned as ours: and we, for his sake, are delivered from condemnation as though we had been innocent, and entitled to eternal life as though we had been perfectly obedient.

But let us further inquire, *What is gospel justification?* Alluding to justification in a court of judicature, it has been common to speak of it as a *sentence*. This sentence has been considered, by some divines, as passing—first, in the mind of God from eternity; secondly, on Christ and the elect considered in him when he rose from the dead; thirdly, in the conscience of a sinner on his believing. Justification *by faith*, in the view of these divines, denotes either justification by Christ the object of faith, or the manifestation to the soul of what previously existed in the mind of God.

Others, who have been far from holding with justification as a decree in the Divine mind, have yet seemed to consider it as a manifestation, impression, or persuasion in the human mind. They have spoken of themselves and others as being justified under such a sermon, or at such an hour; when all that they appear to mean is, that at such a time they had a strong impression, or persuasion, that they were justified.

In respect of the first of these statements, it is true that justification, and every other spiritual blessing, was included in that *purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began*; but as the *actual bestowment* of other blessings supposes the existence of the party, so does justification. Christ was "raised again *for* our justification," in the same sense as he died for the pardon of our sins. Pardon and justification were *virtually* obtained by his death and resurrection; and to this may be added, our glorification was obtained by his ascension; for we were not only "quickened together with him," and "raised up together," but "made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." But as this does not prove that we were, thenceforth, *actually* glorified, neither does the other prove that we were actually pardoned or justified.

Whatever justification be, the Scriptures represent it as taking place on our *believing* in Christ. It is not any thing that belongs to *predestination*, but something that intervenes between that and glorification. "Whom he did *predestinate*, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also *justified*; and whom he justified, them he also *glorified*." That which the Scriptures call justification is by faith in Jesus Christ; and is sometimes spoken of as future, which it could not be if it were before our actual existence. For example: "Seeing it is one God who *shall* justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith.—Now it was not written for Abraham's sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it *shall* be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.—The Scripture *foreseeing* that God *would* justify the heathen through faith," &c. If justification were God's decree finally to acquit, condemnation must be his decree finally to condemn. But

every unbeliever, whether elect or non-elect, is under condemnation, as the Scriptures abundantly teach; condemnation, therefore, cannot be God's decree finally to condemn. Saul of Tarsus, while an unbeliever, was under condemnation, yet God had "not appointed him to wrath, but to obtain salvation by Jesus Christ." The sum is, that neither condemnation nor justification consists in the secret purpose of God, but in his will as revealed, or declared, as by a sentence in open court.

And as justification is not a purpose in the Divine mind, neither is it a *manifestation to, an impression on, or a persuasion of, the human mind*. That there are *manifestations* to believers is admitted. God *manifests* himself unto them as he does not unto the world. The things of God, which are hidden from the wise and prudent, are *revealed* to them. But these are not things which were previously locked up in the Divine purposes, but things which were already revealed in the Scriptures, and which were previously hidden from them, as they still are from unbelievers, by their own criminal blindness. God does not reveal his secret counsels to men, otherwise than fulfilling them. To pretend to a revelation, or manifestation, of that which is not contained in the Scriptures, is pretending to be inspired in the same extraordinary manner as were the prophets and apostles.

If justification consist in a manifestation, impression, or persuasion that we are justified, condemnation must be a like impression, or persuasion, that we are condemned; but this is not true. The Jews who opposed Christ were under condemnation; yet so far from being impressed, or persuaded, of any such thing, they had no doubt but God was their Father. Believers in Jesus, on the other hand, may, at times, be impressed with strong apprehensions of Divine wrath, while yet they are not exposed to it. Neither justification, therefore, nor condemnation, consists in a persuasion of the mind that we are under the one or the other. Besides, to make a thing consist in a persuasion of the truth of that thing is a palpable absurdity. There can be no well-grounded persuasion of the truth of any thing, unless it be true and evident antecedently to our being persuaded of it.

Justification is a relative change, not *in, or upon, but concerning* us. It relates to our standing with respect to God, the Lawgiver and Judge of all. It is "passing from death to life," in respect of the law; as when the sentence against a malefactor is not only remitted, but he is, withal, raised to honour and dignity. It is our standing acquitted by the *revealed will of God declared in the gospel*. As "the wrath of God is *revealed* from heaven" in the curses of his law, so "the righteousness of God is *revealed* from faith to faith," in the declarations of the gospel. It is in this *revelation* of the mind of God in his word, I conceive, that the *sentence* both of condemnation and justification consists. He whom the Scriptures bless is blessed; and he whom they curse is cursed.

As transgressors of the holy, just, and good law of God, we are all, by nature, children of wrath. All the threatenings of God are in full force against us, and, were we to die in that condition, we must perish everlastingly. This is to be under *condemnation*. But condemnation, awful as it is, is not damnation. The sentence is not executed, nor is it irrevocable: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*." Hence, the sinner stands in a new relation to God as a Lawgiver. He is no longer "under the law, with respect to its condemning power, but "under grace." As the manslayer, on having entered the city of refuge, was, by a special constitution of mercy, secure from the avenger of blood; so the sinner, having "fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before him," is, by the gracious constitution of the gospel, secured from the curse. All those threatenings

which belonged to him heretofore no longer stand against him; but are reckoned, by the Judge of all, as having been executed on Jesus his substitute, who was "made a curse for us." On the other hand, all the blessings and promises in the book of God belong to him, and, die when he may, eternal life is his portion. This is that state into which every believer is translated, on his becoming a believer; and herein, I conceive, consists the blessing of justification.

There are a few points pertaining to the subject which yet require illustration; namely, What it is, in the redemption of Christ, to which the Scriptures ascribe its *efficacy*—What is the concern of *faith* in justification, and why it is ascribed to this grace, rather than to any other—Finally, Whether justification includes the pardon of our sins, *past, present, and to come*.

1. Let us inquire, *What it is, in the redemption of Christ, to which the Scriptures ascribe its EFFICACY.* Justification is ascribed to his *blood*, and to his *obedience*. By the blood of Christ is meant the shedding of his blood, or the laying down of his life; and by his obedience, all that conformity to the will of God which led to this great crisis. He was "obedient unto death." By the death of Christ sin is said to be "purged," or *expiated*; and sinners to be "redeemed," "reconciled," and "cleansed from all sin;" and by his obedience many are said to be "made righteous." This his obedience unto death was more than the *means* of salvation; it was the *procuring cause* of it. Salvation was the effect of the "travail of his soul." We may be instruments in saving one another; but Christ was "the *author* of eternal salvation."\* The principle of substitution, or of one standing in the place of others, being admitted by the Sovereign of the universe, he endured that which in its effect on the *Divine government* was equivalent to the everlasting punishment of a world, and did that which it was worthy of God to reward with eternal glory, not only on himself, but on all those on whose behalf he should intercede. What is there, then, in this his obedience unto death, that should render it capable of producing such important effects? To this question the Scriptures make answer, as follows: We are "redeemed—with the precious blood of Christ.—The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, *cleanseth* us from all sin.—Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had *by himself*" expiated "our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." If there be any meaning in language, the efficacy of the sufferings and work of Christ is here ascribed to the dignity of his person; and that dignity amounts to nothing short of his proper Deity. The Scriptures often ascribe the miracles of Christ, the strength by which he was borne up in his sufferings, and his resurrection from the dead, to the power of the Father; for, being "in the form of a servant," it was fit that he should be supplied, and supported, and vindicated by HIM whose servant he was; but when the *value*, or *virtue*, of his interposition is spoken of, it is ascribed to the intrinsic glory of his person, as the Son of God. We inquire,

2. *What is the concern of FAITH in justification, and why it is ascribed to this grace, rather than to any other.* Were we to conceive of the gospel as a new "remedial law," and of faith as the first principle of obedience constituting the condition of it, or that which God graciously consented to accept as the term of justification, instead of a perfect conformity to the old law, we should be greatly beside the gospel plan. The gospel plan of jus-

\* The redemption of Christ may, indeed, be considered as a *means*, or *medium*, in respect of the *first cause*. Thus, in the text, it stands distinguished from grace: that is the source whence it sprang; *this* the medium through which it flows. The redemption of Christ is not the *cause* of the Father's grace; but that in *consideration* of which it is exercised.



tification excludes *boasting*, and that is excluding *works*; but justification, on this principle, excludes not works, but merely works of a certain description. There is, on this principle, a law that can give life; and righteousness, after all, is by law. If we are justified by any doings of our own, whatever they are, we have *whercof to glory*. Whether we call them legal or evangelical, if they be the *consideration* on which we are forgiven and accepted, we are not justified *freely by grace*, and boasting is not excluded.

It is said to be "of faith that it might be by grace." There must, therefore, be something in the nature of faith which peculiarly corresponds with the free grace of the gospel; something which looks out of self, and receives the free gifts of Heaven as being what they are—pure undeserved favour. We need not reduce it to a mere exercise of the intellectual faculty, in which there is nothing holy; but whatever holiness there is in it, it is not this, but the obedience of Christ, that constitutes our justifying righteousness. Whatever other properties the magnet may possess, it is as pointing invariably to the north that it guides the mariner; and whatever other properties faith may possess, it is as receiving Christ, and bringing us into union with him, that it justifies.

In order to be interested in justification, and other blessings arising from the obedience and death of Christ, we must first be interested in *Christ himself*; for it is as *having the Son* that we "have everlasting life." The benefits of Christ's obedience unto death require to be received in the same order as that in which they are given. As God first *gives* HIM, so we must first *receive* HIM, and with him *all things freely*. Many would wish for the benefits of Christ's death, who yet have no desire after Christ. Like him that was nearest of kin to the family of Elimelech, they would, on various accounts, be pleased with the inheritance; but when it is understood that, in order to possess it, they must take *him* with all that pertains to him, and that this would mar their present inheritance, they give it up.

Thus it is that justification is ascribed to faith, because it is by faith that we receive Christ; and thus it is by *faith only*, and not by any other grace. Faith is peculiarly a *receiving* grace, which none other is. Were we said to be justified by repentance, by love, or by any other grace, it would convey to us the idea of something good in us being the *consideration* on which the blessing was bestowed; but justification by faith conveys no such idea. On the contrary, it leads the mind directly to Christ, in the same manner as saying of a person that he lives by *begging*, leads to the idea of his living on *what he freely receives*.

It is thus that justification stands connected, in the Scriptures, with *union* with Christ: "Of him are ye *in* Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us—righteousness."—"There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are *in* Christ Jesus."—"That I may be found *in* him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." From these and other passages, we perceive that faith justifies, not in a way of merit, not on account of any thing in itself, be it what it may, but as uniting us to Christ. It is that which the act of marriage is on the part of a female; by it she becomes one with her husband, and (whatever might be her former poverty) legally interested in all that he possesses. Having him, she has all that is his. Thus it is that, Christ being "heir of all things," believers in him become "heirs of God," not in their own right, but as "joint-heirs with him." And as, in a marriage union, the wealth which an indigent female might derive from the opulence of her husband would not be in *reward* of her having received him, so neither is justification the reward of faith, but of the righteousness which is of God by faith.

Great things are ascribed to faith, in a way of *healing*. Many of the miraculous cures performed by our Lord are ascribed to the faith of the parties. The *virtue*, however, proceeded not from faith, but from him. It is the same in justification. By faith we receive the benefit; but the benefit arises not from faith, but from Christ. Hence the same thing which is ascribed in some places to faith, is in others ascribed to the obedience, death, and resurrection of Christ.

3. We inquire, *Whether justification includes the pardon of our sins, past, present, and to come.* That it includes the pardon of sin has been proved already from Rom. iv. 6, 7; and seeing it is promised of him that believeth that he "shall not come into condemnation," it must, in some way, secure the pardon of all his sins, and the possession of eternal life. Yet, to speak of sins as being pardoned before they are repented of, or even committed, is not only to maintain that on which the Scriptures are silent, but to contradict the current language of their testimony. If all our sins, past, present, and to come, were *actually* forgiven, either when Christ laid down his life, or even on our first believing, why did David speak of "confessing his transgression," and of God "forgiving his iniquity?" Why did Solomon teach us that "he that confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall find mercy?" Why did our Lord direct us, in our daily prayers, to say, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors?" and why add, "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses?" Finally, why did the apostle John teach us that "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness?"

Nor is it sufficient to understand this language of *manifestation* of forgiveness to the mind. Forgiveness is not opposed to merely withholding the comforts of religion, but to *laying our sins to our charge*. The parable of the servant who took his fellow servant by the throat, and was delivered by his lord to the tormentors, is thus applied by our Lord, "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." This, undoubtedly, means more than withholding a sense of forgiveness in the present life. Nor is there any thing in all this inconsistent with the certain perseverance of true believers, or with the promise that they "shall not come into condemnation." The truth taught us in this promise is not that if, after believing in Christ, we live in sin and die without repentance, we shall, nevertheless, escape condemnation; but that provision is made, on behalf of believers, that they shall *not live in sin*; and when they sin, that they shall *not die without repentance*, but return to God, and so obtain forgiveness. The promise of non-condemnation includes that of repentance and perseverance: "I will put my law in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me."

We may think that if the Lord has appointed us to obtain salvation by Jesus Christ, whatever be our conduct, he will never threaten us with any thing beyond a severe chastisement; but Christ did not act in this manner towards his disciples. He not only gave the unforgiving to expect no forgiveness at the hand of God, but enforced the giving up of that which "caused them to offend," though it were as dear as a right hand or a right eye, on pain of being "cast into hell-fire!" He allowed no one, while in an evil course, to take it for granted that he was, nevertheless, a good man; but pointed him to the end whither that course, if persisted in, would lead him. Warnings are as necessary, in some circumstances, as encouragements are in others; and their being enforced on pain of eternal destruction may be the appointed means of saving us from it.

## XVIII.

## JUSTIFICATION.

“Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”—Rom. iii. 24.

HAVING shown what I conceive to be meant by justification, I proceed to the next head of discourse; namely,

II. TO OFFER EVIDENCE IN SUPPORT OF THE DOCTRINE; OR TO PROVE THAT WE ARE NOT JUSTIFIED BY ANY WORKS OF OUR OWN, BUT OF FREE GRACE, THROUGH THE REDEMPTION OF JESUS CHRIST. There are but two ways in which creatures can be justified before God: one is by works, the other by grace. If we had been obedient to the holy, just, and good law of our Creator, that obedience would have been our *righteousness*, and we should have been justified on the ground of it; for “the man that doeth these things shall live by them.” But having all sinned, we have come short of the glory of God. Instead of gaining his favour, we stand exposed to his righteous curse; for thus it is written, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.”

We need not, on this subject, inquire into the *degrees* of evil, or whether we have gone greater lengths in sin than other men; for if we had only broken *one* of God’s righteous commandments, that were an everlasting bar to our justification. As well might a murderer plead in arrest of judgment that he had killed only *one* man. The number of our sins will, doubtless, heighten the degrees of punishment; but it is the nature of them that insures condemnation. Nor does this disprove the equity of the law; for we cannot break a single precept without contemning the Divine authority, which at once destroys the principle of obedience to every other. We may not actually go into all other sins: but it is not *the love of God* that restrains us; it is interest, or fear, or regard to our own reputation that holds us back. On this principle, he who offendeth but in one point is said to be guilty of all: “For *he that said*, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet, if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.” But if a single offence be an everlasting bar to justification by our own works, what ground can there be to hope for it, when our whole lives have been one continued series of revolt?

We are all transgressors, and, as such, under the curse. Here, too, we might have been left to perish. God was not obliged, in justice or in honour, to interpose in behalf of a seed of evil-doers. The law by which we stand condemned, being *holy, just and good*, might have been executed, and no reproach would have attached to the Divine character. Having sided with Satan against God, we might justly have had our portion with him and his angels. All who were not themselves implicated, and disaffected to the Divine government, would have said, “*True and righteous are thy judgments, O Lord.*” And we ourselves, at the last judgment, should not have been able to open our mouths against it.

And now that “God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins,” has interposed and revealed a way in which he can be “just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus,” shall it be objected to by us? Shall man, lying as he does under the dominion of sin, and the righteous condemnation of Heaven on account of it—shall man take state to himself, and be ever aspiring to be justified

on the ground of at least his comparative righteousness? Such, however, is the fact. When the first-born son of fallen Adam brought his offering, he came as though he had never sinned; bringing no sacrifice, and yet entertaining high expectations of success. Hence, when the signal of acceptance was withheld, his countenance fell. Thus it is that millions are bringing their offerings to this day, overlooking "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." All the false religions that have existed, or do now exist, in the world are so many modifications of a self-righteous spirit, so many devices to appease the conscience and propitiate the Deity.

Nor is it confined to heathens, Mahomedans, and Jews; there are professing Christians who are very explicit in avowing their dependence upon their own works.\* Where the Divinity and atonement of Christ are disavowed, this is no more than may be expected. But neither is it confined to such. Many who profess to believe these doctrines, yet seem to consider the grand object of the death of Christ to have been that he might obtain for us that repentance, faith, and sincere obedience should be accepted as the ground of justification, instead of sinless perfection.†

Many, who in consequence of being educated under a gospel ministry disavow in words all dependence on their own works, are nevertheless manifestly under the influence of a self-righteous spirit. They do not confess their faults one to another, but justify themselves as far as possible, and, wherein they fail in this, will invent so many pleas and excuses as shall extenuate the sin to little or nothing. They are not self-diffident nor humble, but the contrary, trusting in themselves that they are righteous, and despising others, just as the Pharisee did the publican. They "thank God" for being what they are; and so did the Pharisee: but as words in the one case signified nothing, neither do they in the other.

To this may be added, it is not an unusual thing for those who have been awakened to a serious concern about salvation to overlook the Saviour, and to build their hopes on the consideration of the *tears they have shed, the prayers they have offered, and the pains they have taken* in religion. But if it should prove that all confidences of this sort are only a refined species of self-righteous hope, and that the first substantial relief of a sinner arises from a belief of the gospel way of salvation, the consequences may be no less fatal than if they had never wept nor prayed, nor taken any pains in religion.

One thing is certain: we must be justified wholly of grace, or wholly of works; for there is no medium: "If by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if," on the other hand, "it be of works, then is it no more of grace: otherwise work is no more work." Taking it for granted that what God has revealed in his word is the only sure ground on which to rest a matter of such high importance, I shall state

\* "When will Christians permit themselves to believe that the same conduct which gains them the approbation of good men here will secure the favour of Heaven hereafter?"—MRS. BARBAULD.

† "Repentance and a good life are of themselves sufficient to recommend us to the Divine favour."—DR. PRIESTLEY.

"The practice of virtue is always represented as the *only means* of attaining happiness, both here and hereafter."—MR. BELSHAM.

† This seems to be the idea of Bishop BUTLER. "The doctrine of the gospel," he says, "appears to be, not only that Christ taught the efficacy of repentance, but rendered it of the efficacy which it is, by what he did and suffered for us: that he obtained for us the benefit of having our repentance accepted unto eternal life: not only that he revealed to sinners that they were in a capacity of salvation, and how they might obtain it; but, moreover, that he put them into this capacity of salvation, by what he did and suffered for them; put us into a capacity of escaping future punishment, and obtaining future happiness."—*Analogy, Part II. Chap. 5, p. 305.*—Christ, it seems, was no otherwise our *Saviour* than as enabling us to save ourselves!

what appears to me the Scripture evidence for the first of these methods of justification under the following particulars:—

1. *The righteousness of God does not admit of a sinner's being justified on the ground of his own doings.* It belongs to the righteousness or justice of God to do justice to his own character. But to pardon and accept of sinners, on account of any thing done by them, were to fly in the face of his own law and government; and if any thing could cause both them and him to be treated with contempt, this proceeding must do it. "It became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.—Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his *righteousness* for the remission of sins.—For they being ignorant of God's *righteousness*, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." If these passages do not convey the idea of its being inconsistent with the righteous character of God to pardon and accept of sinners in consideration of their own doings, I can conceive of no determinate idea conveyed by them. If it was *becoming* the Divine perfections to bring sinners to glory through a suffering Saviour, it would have been unbecoming those perfections to have brought them to glory in virtue of their own doings. If Christ were set forth to be a propitiation that God might declare his righteousness for the remission of sins, his righteousness would not have been declared in the remission of sins without it. Finally, if ignorance of God's righteousness were the reason of the non-submission of the Jews to the gospel way of justification, there must have been in that truth something directly opposed to justification in any other way, and which, had it been properly understood, would have cut up all hopes from every other quarter. It was in this way that Paul, when the righteous law of God appeared to him in its true light, "died" as to all hopes of being accepted of God by the works of it. It was "through the law" that he became "dead to the law," that he might live unto God.

2. *The Scriptures in a great variety of language exclude all works performed by sinful creatures as the ground of acceptance with God.* In proof of this, the following passages are very express: "Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man that doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise,—If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.—By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.—If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory.—Now to him that worketh is the reward reckoned not of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.—Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law: for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone.—Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.—As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not

in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.—But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God it is evident: for the just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but the man that doeth them shall live in them.—Christ is become of no effect unto you: whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace.—Not of works, lest any man should boast.—Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us,—that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

Distinctions have been made on this subject between the works of the *ceremonial* and those of the *moral* law; also between the works of the *law* and those of the *gospel*; as though it were not the design of the Scriptures to exclude moral duties from being grounds of justification, but merely those which are ceremonial; or if it were, yet not the evangelical duties of repentance, faith, and sincere obedience. But whatever differences there may be between these things, they are all *works*; and all works of man are excluded from justification. If the foregoing passages be considered in their connexions, they will be found to respect all obedience, of every kind, which is performed by men, be it ceremonial or moral, or what it may. They teach a justification by a righteousness *received*, in opposition to a righteousness *done*, or *performed*, and which leaves no room for boasting. If we were justified by faith itself, considered as a duty of ours, or if the Law-giver had respect to any conformity to God in us, as the cause, or reason, of the sentence, there would be no meaning in such language as this: “To him that *worketh not*, but *believeth* on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”

The language of the apostle to the Galatians goes not only to exclude obedience to the ceremonial and the moral law, but *obedience to law in general*, as the ground of justification. The reason given why the law is not against the promises, or why it cannot furnish an objection to the free grace of the gospel, is this: “If there had been a *law* which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.” This is equal to saying, the patient was given up as incurable by law, before the promised grace of the gospel took him in hand: whatever, therefore, is done by the latter cannot be objected to by the former. The terms *νόμος* and *ἐκ νόμου*, *law* and *by the law*, in Gal. iii. 21, as observed by Dr. Guyse, show it, according to Mr. Locke’s rule of interpretation, to relate to law in general, or to any or every law. But if the works of every law be excluded, all distinctions between ceremonial and moral, or between moral and evangelical, are of no account.

3. *Being justified freely by grace is itself directly opposed to being justified by works.* The term *grace* denotes *free favour to the unworthy*. If God had been obliged, in justice or in honour, to have done what he has done—if the law by which we were condemned were too strict, or the penalty annexed to it too severe—if Christ, and the offer of salvation through him, were a compensation given us on account of the injury we received from our connexion with our first parents—that which is called grace would not be grace, but debt. There is just so much grace in the gospel as there is justice in the law, and no more. The opposition between grace and works, in this important concern, is so clear in itself, and so plainly marked by the apostle, that one can scarcely conceive how it can be honestly mistaken: “If it be by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace.”

But, strong as the term *grace* is, the apostle adds to its force. As though it were not enough for him to affirm that we are justified by grace, he says we are justified *freely* by his grace. There is, doubtless, a redundancy in

the expression; but the design of it is to strengthen the thought. Thus, when he would forcibly express his idea of future glory, he uses a kind of tautology for the purpose, calling it a "*far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*" We are not only justified without any desert on our part, but contrary to it. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so are his thoughts, in the forgiveness of sin, higher than our thoughts, and his ways than our ways. They who are justified are said to receive *abundance of grace*, or grace abounding over all the aboundings of sin. Sin reigns over our species, subjugating them all to death; but grace conquers the conqueror, reigning through righteousness to eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.

4. *The terms used relative to gospel justification render it evident that it is not our own righteousness that is imputed to us, but the righteousness of another.* "Abraham believed God, and it was *counted* unto him for righteousness."—"Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But he that believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is *counted* for righteousness."—"David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God *imputeth* righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not *impute* sin." The terms *imputed* and *counted*, in this connexion, are manifestly used to express, not that just reckoning of righteousness to the righteous which gives to every man his due, but the gracious reckoning of righteousness to the unrighteous, as though he were righteous. When the uncircumcised Gentile kept the law, his uncircumcision was *counted* for circumcision; not that it really was such, but it was graciously reckoned, in the Divine administration, as if it were. When Paul, writing to Philemon concerning Onesimus, says, "if he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account," he did not mean that he should treat him according to his deserts, but that he should forgive and accept him, for his sake.

When *faith* is said to be counted for righteousness, it is as relating to Christ. The faith by which Abraham was justified had immediate relation to him as the promised seed; and it is easy to perceive, in the New Testament accounts of justifying faith, a marked attention to the same thing. "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification."—"By *him* all that believe are justified from all things."—"That God might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." "It is evident," says President Edwards,\* "that the subject of justification is looked upon as destitute of any righteousness in himself, by that expression, 'It is counted, or imputed, to him for righteousness.' The phrase, as the apostle uses it here (Rom. iv. 5) and in the context, manifestly imports that God, of his sovereign grace, is pleased, in his dealings with the sinner, to take and regard that which indeed is not righteousness, and in one that has no righteousness, so that the consequence shall be the same as if he had righteousness; and which may be from the respect that it bears to something which is indeed righteous. It is as if he had said, *As to him that works*, there is no need of any gracious *reckoning*, or *counting* it for righteousness, and causing the reward to follow as if it were a righteousness; for if he has works, he has that which is a righteousness in itself, to which the reward properly belongs."

5. *The rewards promised in the Scriptures to good works suppose the*

\* Sermon on Justification, p. 9.

*parties to be believers in Christ; and so, being accepted in him, their works also are accepted, and rewarded for his sake.* That good works have the promise of salvation is beyond dispute. Nothing that God approves shall go unrewarded. The least expression of faith and love, even the giving of a cup of cold water to a disciple of Christ *because he belongs to him*, will insure everlasting life. But neither this nor any other good work can be a ground of justification, inasmuch as it is *subsequent* to it. For works to have any influence on this blessing, they require to precede it; but works before faith are never acknowledged by the Scriptures to be good. It was testified of Enoch that he *pleased God*; whence the apostle to the Hebrews infers that he was a believer, inasmuch as "without faith it is impossible to please God." "It does not consist with the honour of the majesty of the King of heaven and earth to accept of any thing from a condemned malefactor, condemned by the justice of his own holy law, till that condemnation be removed."\* The Lord had respect "first to Abel," and "then to his offering." Even those works which are the expressions of faith and love have so much sinful imperfection attached to them that they require to be presented by an intercessor on our behalf. The most spiritual sacrifices are no otherwise acceptable to God than by *Jesus Christ*.

Perhaps I ought not to conclude this part of the subject without noticing the apparent opposition between Paul and James; the one teaching that "we are justified by faith, without the deeds of the law;" the other that "by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." The words are, doubtless, apparently opposite; and so are those of Solomon, when he directs us, in one proverb, *not to answer, and, in the next, to answer a fool according to his folly.* In reconciling these apparently opposite counsels, we are led, by the reasons given for each, to understand the terms as used in different senses; the former, as directing us not to answer a fool *in a foolish manner*, for this would make us *like unto him*; the latter to answer him *in a way suited to expose his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.* In like manner the terms *faith* and *justification* were used by Paul and James in a different sense. By faith, Paul meant that which worketh by love, and is productive of good fruits; but James speaks of a faith which is *dead, being alone.* By justification, Paul means the acceptance of a sinner before God; but James refers to his being approved of God as a true Christian. "Both these apostles bring the case of Abraham in illustration of their principles; but then, it is to be observed, they refer to different periods and circumstances in the life of that patriarch. Paul, in the first instance, says of Abraham, that he was justified by faith, while yet uncircumcised: this was his justification *in the sight of God*, and was without any consideration of his works. James refers to a period some years subsequent to this, when, in the offering up of his son, he was justified by works also; that is, his faith was shown to be genuine by its fruits. Paul therefore refers to the acceptance of a sinner; James to the approbation of a saint."†

Supported by this body of Scripture evidence, as well as by the experience we have had of the holy and happy influence of the doctrine, I trust we shall continue unmoved in our adherence to it. Let others boast of the efficacy of their own virtues, we, with the apostle, will "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord;" will "count all things but dung, that we may win Christ, and be found in him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

\* President Edwards's Sermon on Justification.

† The word "justification" is used in this sense Matt. xii. 37; 1 Cor. iv. 4. See Williams's Vindication against Belsham, pp. 145, 146.



## XIX.

## JUSTIFICATION.

“Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”—Rom. iii. 24.

HAVING endeavoured to explain and establish the doctrine of justification, it remains for me,

III. TO SHOW THE CONSISTENCY OF ITS BEING OF FREE GRACE, AND YET THROUGH THE REDEMPTION OF JESUS CHRIST. This is a subject of the last importance. Almost every thing pertaining to the way of salvation is affected by it. The principal reason alleged by those who reject the doctrine of atonement is its inconsistency with grace. God needed nothing, they say, but his own goodness, to induce him to show mercy; or, if he did, it is not of grace, seeing a price is paid to obtain it. The question, however, does not respect the first moving cause of mercy, but the manner of showing it. The friends of the doctrine of atonement allow that the sacrifice of Christ was not the cause, but the effect, of the Father's love. They do not scruple to admit that his love was sufficient to have pardoned sinners without an atonement, provided it had been consistent with the righteousness of his character and government. “It is not the *sentiment*, but the *expression* of love,” that requires an atonement. David was not wanting in love to his son Absalom; for *his soul longed to go forth* to him; but he felt for his honour, as the head of a family and of a nation, which, had he admitted him immediately into his presence, would have been compromised, and the crime of murder connived at. Hence, for a time, he must be kept at a distance, and when introduced, it must be by a mediator. This statement, which has been made, in substance, by our writers repeatedly, has seldom, if ever, been fairly met by writers on the other side. I never recollect, at least, to have seen or heard any thing like a fair answer to it.

It is remarkable, too, that those who make this objection never appear to regard the doctrine of grace, but for the purpose of making void the atonement. On all other occasions grace is virtually disowned, and works are every thing; but here it is magnified, in much the same manner as the Father is honoured, as the object of worship, to the exclusion of the Son.

Cases may be supposed, I acknowledge, in which the ideas of grace and atonement would be inconsistent. First, *If the atonement were made by the offender himself enduring the full penalty of the law*, his deliverance would be a matter of right, and there would be no grace in it. But, as in a case of murder, it is not in the sinner's power to make atonement for himself, so as to survive his punishment. The punishment threatened against sin is everlasting, which admits of no period when the penalty shall have been endured. No man, therefore, can, by any length of suffering, redeem his own soul.

Secondly, *If the sufferings of another could avail for the offender, and he himself were to provide the substitute*, his deliverance might be a matter of right, and there might be no grace in it. But neither of these suppositions can exist in the case before us. Strict distributive justice could not admit of the innocent suffering for the guilty, even though the innocent were willing. Its language is, *Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book*. But if it could, the guilty party could not find a substitute either able or willing to stand in his place.

Thirdly, *If God himself should both consent to accept of a substitute, and*

actually provide one, yet if the acts and deeds of sinners be considered as literally becoming his, and his heirs, whatever grace there might be in the acceptance and provision of the substitute, there would be no place for the FORGIVENESS of the sinner, and justification would be merely an act of justice. If Christ, in having our sins imputed to him, became a sinner, and, as some have said, the greatest of all sinners, then, in his sufferings, he was only treated according to his desert; and that desert, belonging to him, could no longer belong to us; so that, had we been in existence, and known of it, we might, from that moment, have claimed our deliverance as a matter of right. And if we, in having the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, become that which he was, namely, meritorious, or deserving of eternal life, then might we disown the character of supplicants, and approach the Judge of all in language suited to those who had always pleased him. But neither can this be. The acts and deeds of one may affect others, but can, in no case, become actually theirs, or be so transferred as to render that justice which would otherwise have been of grace. The imputation of our sins to Christ, and of his righteousness to us, does not consist in a transfer of either the one or the other, except in their effects. Christ suffered, not because he *was*, but merely *as if he had been*, the sinner: notwithstanding the imputation of sin to him, he died, "the just for the unjust." On the other hand, we are justified, not because we *are*, but *as though we were* righteous; for the worthiness belongs to him, and not to us.

Finally, *If justification through the redemption of Christ were considered as not only consistent with justice, but required by it, it must, I think, be allowed that every idea of grace is excluded.* That favour toward creatures which justice requires must needs be their due, which leaves no room for grace. It is only of God's *essential* justice, however, that this is true, and not of his covenant righteousness, which relates to his own free engagements. God having pledged his word, would be "*unrighteous* to forget the work and labour of love of his believing people; and thus it is that, "if we confess our sins, he is *faithful and just*, to forgive us our sins." The righteous fulfilment of engagements, made in a way of grace, is not opposed to it; but that which is required by *essential* justice is.

This representation of things cannot, in any wise, depreciate the *merit* of Christ; for be this what it may, it is not *ours*, and cannot, therefore, constitute any *claim on our behalf*, but in virtue of God's *free promises*, which, being made in grace, continue such in all their fulfilments.

It is enough if the justification of sinners be *consistent with justice*; and this renders the whole in harmony with grace. Such was the value of Christ's blood-shedding, as, in regard of its effects on the Divine government, to be equivalent to our being everlastingly punished; and such the merit of his obedience, as to be worthy of all that God has bestowed on us in reward of it; yet as there is no transfer but of the *effects*, it does not, in the least, interfere with grace.

If the principles on which the doctrine of atonement proceeds be carefully considered, they will not only be found consistent with grace, but will rank among the strongest evidences in favour of it.

In proof of this, let the following observations be duly considered:—

1. *It is common among men, in showing kindness to the unworthy, to do it out of regard to one that is worthy; which kindness is nevertheless considered as a matter of free favour.* You had a friend whom you loved as your own soul. He died, and left an only son. The son proves a dissolute, worthless character, and reduces himself to beggary. Still he is the son of your friend, and you wish to show him kindness. If your kindness be unaccompanied with an explanation of your motives, he may think you

have no dislike to his vices.—Young man, say you, therefore, I am sorry it is not in my power to be your friend from a respect to your own character; but I knew and loved your father, and what I do for you is *for his sake!*—Here is an exercise of both justice and grace; justice to the memory of the worthy, and grace in the relief of the unworthy. The worthiness of the father is imputed to the son, inasmuch as, in consequence of it, he is treated as though he were himself worthy; but it makes no difference as to his real character or deserts, nor in any wise renders what is done to him less a matter of grace than if it had not been done in consideration of his father's worthiness. If Onesimus were forgiven by Philemon, at the intercession of Paul, (as there is no reason to doubt that he was,) he would not, on that account, think of its being less an act of grace.

2. *God, in his dealings with mankind, has frequently proceeded upon the same principle, bestowing blessings on the unworthy, out of respect to one that was worthy; which blessings, nevertheless, have been of pure grace.* God promised the posterity of Noah exemption from a future flood; but knowing that they would utterly corrupt themselves, his covenant was primarily made with *him*. It was thus in the blessings promised to the posterity of Abraham. The Lord, knowing that they would be very corrupt, spoke thus to Abraham himself: "As for me, behold, my covenant is *with thee*, and thou shalt be a father of many nations." Hence, in a great number of instances wherein mercy was shown to the rebellious Israelites, they were reminded that it was "not for their sakes," but on account of the covenant made with their father Abraham, and renewed with Isaac and Jacob. Thus, also, in the covenant made with David, God blessed his posterity for his sake, saying, "My covenant shall stand fast *with him*." And when the heart of Solomon was turned away from the Lord God of Israel, he was told, that if the Lord did not rend the kingdom utterly from him, it would not be for his sake, but for David his servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, which he had chosen. In these instances, there was a display of both justice and grace, and the righteousness of the fathers was, as I may say, imputed to the children, inasmuch as, in consequence of it, they were treated as if they themselves were righteous; but it makes no difference as to their deserts, nor in any wise renders what was done to them less a matter of grace than if it had proceeded merely from the Divine goodness, and without any consideration of the righteousness of their fathers. So far from this, the very language, "Not for your sakes do I this,—be it known unto you,—but for my holy name's sake,—and for the covenant that I made with your fathers," would tend, more than any thing, to humble them, and to impress them with the idea that what they had was altogether of grace.

If it be objected that in these cases, though the blessing was of grace to the party receiving it, yet it was in reward of the party for whose sake it was given; I answer, It is in respect of the party receiving, and him only, that it is called grace; and this is sufficient for its being so denominated. It is of what justification is *to us*, and not what it is *to Christ*, that the apostle speaks. It is enough if it be of grace to us, and if God's bestowing it upon us out of respect to the worthiness of his Son do not diminish that grace, but, on the contrary, augment it.

But it may be said that, in these cases, there was no example of the innocent suffering for the guilty; no atonement; no redemption of the parties by a sacrifice offered in their stead. We therefore proceed to observe,

3. *God, in the appointment of animal sacrifices, (though they were only shadows of good things to come,) sanctified the principle of sin being expiated by the sufferings of a substitute, and yet represented the sinner as*

FREELY FORGIVEN. The process of the burnt-offering is thus described: "If his offering be a burnt-sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish: he shall offer it of his own voluntary will" (or, as Ainsworth renders it, *for acceptance*) "at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord. And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt-offering: and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him," &c. The current language concerning these sacrifices is, "And the priest shall make an atonement for him as concerning his sin that he hath committed, *and it shall be forgiven him*. In all these transactions there was *justice* and *grace*; justice in requiring a sacrifice, and grace in forgiving the transgressor. There was also *imputation*: the sin of the party was imputed to the appointed victim, which was reckoned as though it were the sinner, and treated as such in the Divine administration. The atonement made by the sacrifice was, on the other hand, imputed to him that offered it; that is, it was reckoned to his account, and he was treated accordingly. This is clear from what is said of one the flesh of whose offering was neglected to be eaten before the third day, according to appointment: "It shall not be *accepted*, neither shall it be *imputed* unto him that offereth it: it shall be an abomination, and the soul that eateth of it shall bear his iniquity;" implying that, if offered according to the Divine appointment, it was accepted for him, and imputed to him, and he should not bear his iniquity.

In all these substitutional sacrifices, atonement did not operate to the diminution of grace; they were not such a payment of the sinner's debt as that he should be entitled to deliverance as a matter of claim; since the issue of all was, "And his sins shall be *forgiven* him." On the contrary, every thing was calculated to magnify the grace of God, and to humble the sinner in the dust before him. Of this tendency, particularly, was his having to lay his hand upon the head of the sacrifice, confessing his sin, and acknowledging, in effect, that if he had been treated according to his deserts, he himself must have been the victim.

The doctrine of sacrifices receives an interesting illustration from the case of Job and his three friends: "And it was so, that, after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz, the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends; for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you, for him will I accept; lest I deal with you after your folly."

We see here that the three friends could not be justified on the ground of their own conduct. They must either be accepted through a sacrifice and intercessor, or be dealt with according to their folly. And this sacrifice and intercession, instead of making void the grace of the transaction, goes to establish it. It must have been not a little humiliating to Eliphaz and his companions to be given to understand that all their zeal for God had been folly, and required an atonement; that the Lord would not receive a petition at their hands; that the sacrifices must be brought to Job, and offered up in his presence; and that, after all their contumelious language to him, they must owe their acceptance to his intercession. Had they been forgiven without this process, their sin must have appeared light, and the grace of God in its forgiveness have been diminished, in their apprehension, in comparison of what it was.

4. *The New Testament, while it represents the interposition of Christ as necessary for the consistent exercise of mercy, ascribes the whole of our salvation, nevertheless, to the free grace of God.* I need not prove this position by a number of references. The doctrine of the New Testament on

this subject is summarily comprehended in the verses following the text, which contain the apostle's explanation of his own words. Having stated that we are "justified freely by grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," he adds, "whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare I say at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

"*Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation.*" We see here in what "the redemption of Christ," by which we are justified, consisted. He himself was made an expiatory sacrifice, through which God might be propitious to sinners, without any dishonour attaching to his character.

"*Through faith in his blood.*" In order to an Israelite being benefited by the appointed sacrifices, it was necessary for him, or for the priest on his behalf, to put his hands upon the head of the animal, and there to make confession of sins. Hence the offerers of sacrifices are denominated "the comers thereunto." And thus it is necessary to our deriving benefit from the propitiation of Christ, that we should believe in him.

"*To declare his righteousness for the remission of sins.*" The first thing necessary in our justification is the remission of sin. The grand impediment to this was, that it would reflect upon the "righteousness" of God; representing either his precepts and threatenings as too rigid to be put in execution, or his mercy as being mere connivance. Hence, when a great act of mercy was to be shown, it became necessary to preface it by a declaration or demonstration of righteousness. God, by making his beloved Son a sacrifice, practically declared or demonstrated, in the presence of the universe, his determination to maintain the honour of his government, and his utter abhorrence of sin. Having done this he can now forgive the believing sinner, without any suspicion of connivance attaching to his character.

"*Sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.*" The propitiation of Christ was not only necessary in behalf of believers under the times of the gospel, but of those in former ages. Those who had offered sacrifices were not given in virtue of them, but of this. On the ground of Christ's undertaking to become a propitiation in the fulness of time, the "forbearance of God" was exercised towards them. And now that his righteousness is declared, he can be "just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

Supposing the foregoing comments to be the substance of the apostle's meaning, what is there in any part of it which renders void, or in any wise diminishes, the free grace of God? Does the declaration or demonstration of his righteousness "for the remission of sins" render it no remission? Would it have been more of a favour for God to have pardoned sin without any regard to righteousness than with it? Is there any thing in the whole proceeding that puts the sinner in possession of a claim on the ground of essential justice, or which warrants him to hope for an interest in its blessed results, without coming to the Saviour as guilty and unworthy?

There is nothing in the New Testament which represents the death of Christ as superseding the necessity of repentance, confession, and humble supplication, or as investing the believer with any other claim of spiritual blessings than that which arises from the free promise of God through his dear Son. We never read there of "suing out our right," nor of mercy being a matter of demand since Christ has paid the debt. All is in the language of supplication in the name of Christ.

The *intercession of Christ* himself on our behalf proceeds upon the same principle. It would not otherwise be *intercession*. "Grace," as Dr. Good-

win observes, "requires to be applied for in a way of *entreaty* and *intercession*."\*

Those who plead for the intercession of Christ in a way of *authority*, or *demand*, ground it on his sacrifice and merits; which, being of infinite worth, must, they suppose, entitle him to ask favours for his people in this manner. That God in love to his dear Son should reward this voluntary obedience unto death with the bestowment of eternal salvation on them that believe in him, and even lay himself under *obligation* to do so, is perfectly consistent with its being of grace; but obligation of this kind furnishes no ground for *demand*, nor does it appear from the Scriptures that the Majesty of heaven and earth was ever so approached. In the gospel way of salvation, grace and justice *meet* or are *combined* in the same thing. Grace, through the righteousness of Jesus, "reigns" not in one or two stages, but in every stage, "unto eternal life;" but on the principle of salvation being an object of demand, it must, in some stages of it, become a matter of mere justice; it might be grace to provide the deliverer, but there would be none in the deliverance itself.

However worthy Christ was to receive power, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing, yet, when pleading for *sinner*s, it required to be in the language of *intercession*. His worthiness is that indeed on account of which we are treated *as if we were* worthy, but it does not render us meritorious. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to us; but it is only in its *effects* that it is transferred, or, indeed, transferable. The sum is, there is nothing in the atonement or justifying righteousness of Christ that in any wise supersedes the necessity of our being freely forgiven, or freely blessed.

I conclude with a few reflections on the whole subject:—

First, If the doctrine here stated and defended be true, there is in *the nature of sin* something much more offensive to God than is generally supposed. Is it conceivable that God, whose nature is love, would have *cursed* the work of his hands for a matter of small account? He does not delight in cursing; he afflicts not willingly, nor grieves the children of men. Yet every transgressor of his law is declared to be accursed. All the curses in the book of God stand against him: in his basket, and in his store; in the city, and in the field; in his going out, and in his coming in; and in all that he setteth his hand unto. Nor is it confined to the present life, but includes everlasting punishment. Is it conceivable that God would have made his Son a sacrifice, or that the Lord of glory would have come into the world for this purpose, if sin had not been an evil and a bitter thing? If it were no more than men in general conceive it to be, assuredly so much would not have been made of it. It is upon light thoughts of sin that a

\* The words of our Lord in John xvii. 24, "Father, I will," &c., have been thought to convey a different idea:—

"With cries and tears he offered up  
His humble suit below;  
But with *authority* he asks,  
Enthroned in glory now.  
  
For all that come to God by him,  
Salvation he *demand*s;  
Points to their names upon his breast,  
And spreads his wounded hands."—TOPLADY.

This petition, however, was offered up when our Lord was upon earth; and his intercession in heaven is called *prayer*: "I will *pray* the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter." "The verb rendered *will*," says Dr. Campbell, "is the same which in Matt. xii. 38, and Mark x. 35, is rendered *would*, and ought to have been so rendered here, as it implies request, not command."

disbelief of justification through the blood-shedding of Christ is grafted; but let us think of it as lightly as we may, if God thinks otherwise we shall be in the wrong; for "the judgment of God is according to truth."

Secondly, If this doctrine be true, the danger of our being lost arises, not from the magnitude of our sin, be it what it may, but from a *self-righteous rejection of the only way of acceptance with God*. Let the nature or degrees of sin be what they may, there is no reason on that account to despair of salvation. On the contrary, there is the utmost encouragement for the most guilty and unworthy to return to God by Jesus Christ. Every bar in the way of acceptance which respected the government of God is removed. God can be just, and yet the justifier of the believer in Jesus. More glory redounds to him, even to his justice, from salvation than from damnation. Nor is there any cause to doubt the willingness of God to show mercy. He is, indeed, unwilling to show mercy to those who seek it in any other way than Christ, or rather, is determined they shall not find it; but every one that seeketh in his name findeth. There is one great and overwhelming fact that answers all objections: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" The pardon of sin and acceptance with God are blessings of such magnitude that nothing in this world is to be compared with them; yet these are less than what has been given already; for the argument of the apostle is from the greater to the less. If we be willing to receive Christ, and with him all things freely, there is nothing to hinder it. If the door of mercy be shut upon us, it is a *self-righteous spirit* that shuts it. Look at a self-justifying spirit in respect of faults committed between man and man. Persons of very ordinary capacity in other things will here be ingenious to admiration in framing excuses. They who seem scarcely able to speak on other subjects will be quite eloquent in defending themselves; dwelling on circumstances that make in their favour, keeping out of sight what makes against them, alleging their good intentions, even in things which in themselves cannot be justified; and shunning, as one would shun the road to death, a frank acknowledgment of their sin, and a humble petition for mercy. Of the same nature is a self-righteous spirit in respect of sin committed against God; and this it is that shuts the door of mercy. If a convict, under a just sentence of death, be assured from authority, that if he confess his guilt and petition for mercy, he will be forgiven; and if, instead of making such confession and supplication, he either pleads *not guilty*, or at least insists upon his *comparative* innocence, or upon some circumstance which may *entitle* him to mercy, should we not say of such a man, He shuts the door of mercy on himself? He dies not on account of the magnitude of his crime, but of his pride and obstinacy. His original crime is still indeed the formal cause of his punishment, but it is owing to his self-justifying spirit that it was finally laid to his charge. And thus it is that the Scriptures ascribe the loss of the soul to unbelief: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but *the wrath of God abideth on him*.—Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law; for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone."

It is remarkable that, in drawing a conclusion from the doctrine of absolute sovereignty, in which the apostle had taught that God had "mercy on whom he would have mercy," he ascribes the failure of the Jews, not to their non-election, but to their unbelief.

Finally, Though justification be of "grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus," yet without good works we can give no proof of our

being justified. The whole argument of the apostle, in the sixth chapter of this Epistle, teaches that believers cannot live in sin, being dead to it, and alive to God. Those who are in Christ Jesus, to whom there is now no condemnation, are said to "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." We need not wish for stronger evidence in favour of the doctrine of free justification than that which is furnished by the objections which are answered by the apostle. No other notion of justification than that which is of grace, through Christ, would admit of such objections as he encounters; no other doctrine, therefore, can justly pretend to be apostolical.

It follows, however, that while we contend for the doctrine, it concerns us so to walk as not to furnish its adversaries with a handle for reproaching it as unfriendly to a life of holiness. The law of God, though not the medium of life, is nevertheless the rule of conduct; and though we are justified by *faith* alone, yet good works are necessary to prove it to be genuine. Thus it is that faith is *shown* and *made perfect* by works. All who profess to believe the doctrine do not live under its influence, and they who do are exposed to other influences. Whatever peace of mind, therefore, it may be adapted to produce, it furnishes no ground for carnal or presumptuous security.

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## XX.

### THE BELIEVER'S REVIEW OF HIS STATE.

"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."—Eph. ii. 13.

It is common to speak of our country, in respect of its high state of civilization and cultivation, as a garden. But to know what civilization and cultivation have done for us, we must know what we were in former ages, when the island was little better than a wilderness, and its inhabitants a race of barbarians.

Thus, if we would understand what Christianity has done for us, we must acquaint ourselves with the condition in which we were, while subject to pagan darkness and superstition. It is thus that the apostle, in writing to the Ephesians, teaches them the value of the blessings and privileges of the gospel, by directing their attention to the state in which they were before it reached them.

At the beginning of the chapter, they are reminded of their state as sinners *in common with other sinners*: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespass and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all (Jews as well as Gentiles) had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath even as others." But, in addition to this, the apostle reminds them of their *peculiar condition as heathens*: "Remember that ye, being in time past Gentiles in the flesh,—that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." This being, in some respects, the greatest remove from God at which men could place themselves, they are emphatically said to have



been "*far off.*" Sinners, among the Jews, were subjectively distant from God; but they were so both subjectively and objectively, as being destitute of the most important means of knowing him.

In discoursing upon the subject, we shall first observe that state of distance which is peculiar to heathens; secondly, that which is common to heathens and all other sinners; and, thirdly, the way in which they are recovered, and brought nigh.

I. Let us observe THAT STATE OF DISTANCE WHICH IS PECULIAR TO HEATHENS. This is far from being an uninteresting subject to us. At the time this Epistle was written, our fathers were in this very state; and had not the gospel been brought to us by those who had heard and believed it, we had been in the same state at this day. Instead of being met together, as we now are, to worship the living God through the mediation of his Son, we had been assembled to adore stocks and stones; instead of singing the high praises of Jehovah, nothing had been heard in our cities, towns, and villages but the vociferations of idolatry; instead of the gratifying sights arising from the institutions of humanity and benevolence, we should have been witnesses, and perhaps more than witnesses, of the offering up of human sacrifices!

The description given of this state by the apostle, in verses 11, 12, is very affecting: "At that time ye were *without Christ.*" The only way in which Christ could be known was by revelation; and the only people to whom a revelation was made was Israel. To them pertained the oracles of God, and the covenants of promise. Being, therefore, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, they must needs be strangers from the covenants of promise, and so, of course, be without Christ. And being without Christ, they had *no hope*, either of their sins being forgiven, or of a blessed hereafter. And though they daily partook of the bounties of Providence, yet, being without Christ, and without hope, they were without God in the world!

Such was the state of the heathen world at the coming of Christ. The science of Egypt, Chaldea, Greece, and Rome had discovered much, as to things pertaining to the present life; but, in respect of an hereafter, all was enveloped in gross darkness. The far greater part did not think of it, and they that did, knew but just enough to make them miserable. They were aware that, like all others, they must die; and knowing that they had not lived and acted, even to each other, as they ought, their consciences foreboded a state in which they would be called to account; but what it would be they knew not.

The following lines might be written by a pensive infidel of modern times; but they would have fitted the lips of a pagan:

"Distrust and darkness of a future state  
Make poor mankind so fearful of his fate:  
Death of itself is nothing; but we fear  
To be we know not what, we know not where."

Such, or nearly such, must have been the reflections of the most serious among the heathen; and as to the rest, they were buried in all manner of wickedness. It is of the nature of idolatry to efface and obliterate from the mind all just thoughts of God and true religion, and to substitute in their place vain imaginations and vile affections. Instead of a holy, just, and good Being presiding over the universe, imaginary deities are set up, whose office it is to preside over particular countries and concerns; and this in a manner suited to the inclinations of their worshippers, entering into all their prejudices, and patronizing their most favourite vices.

There is a marked connexion between impiety and obscenity, or the casting off of the knowledge and worship of God and being given up to the

basest practices towards one another. "God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth!" If they dishonour him by transferring his glory to an idol, he will give them up in turn to dishonour their own bodies. If they change the truth of God the Creator, who is blessed for ever, into the practical lie of worshipping that as God which is not God, for this cause they shall be given up to vile affections. As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a mind void of judgment, and to the practice of every thing obscene, unnatural, unjust, malignant, false, and cruel; not only to wallow like filthy beasts in the mire, but to prefer the society of such as their friends and companions! If any doubt whether this picture be not overcharged, let faithful witnesses be heard, and they will report the same things of heathen countries at this day.

We hear, from men calling themselves Christians, but who in fact are infidels, flattering accounts of heathen virtue, and laboured attempts to prove the virtuous tendency of the system. Idols, instead of being competitors with the true God, are represented as connected with him; as though it were a matter of indifference to whom the worship is presented, Jehovah, Jove, or Baal; all is received as a tribute paid to the common Father of all. Such are the sentiments taught by one of our poets; and such are the principles of so large a part of our countrymen, that if Britons do not Christianize India, India may be expected soon to heathenize Britain! Shall we, in complaisance to infidels, throw away our Bibles, and listen to their pleas for the most sottish stupidity that ever disgraced human nature? The voice of reason, and (thank God!) the voice of Britain, answer, No! We ourselves were sometimes darkness; but if we have been made light in the Lord, let us walk as children of the light.

We proceed to observe,

II. THAT STATE OF DISTANCE WHICH IS COMMON TO HEATHENS AND ALL OTHER SINNERS. We have seen already that there is a state, described at the beginning of the chapter, which refers not to what the Ephesians were by education, by custom, or by any other circumstances attending their former life, but to what they were *by nature*. It was in respect of this that the apostle reckoned himself and his countrymen, notwithstanding their living under the light of revelation, among them; and in this respect we also, notwithstanding our living under the light of the gospel, must be reckoned with them: "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

The apostle does not tell the Ephesians from whom, or from what, they were "far off," the reason of which might be that there was no one word that would convey the fulness of the sentiment. He might have said, Ye were far off from happiness; this had been true: or far off from peace; this had been true: or far off from righteousness; this had been true: or far off from hope; this also had been true: he might mean to comprehend them all, and therefore made use of general terms. If any word, more comprehensive than the rest, had been used, it must have been, far off from God. This is the last term, in the preceding description, to which the words "far off" refer: "without Christ—having no hope; and *without God* in the world!"

There is a natural distance from God which necessarily belongs to us, and to the loftiest archangel, as creatures. But this distance is not removed by *the blood of Christ*. The enjoyments of heaven itself will not remove or diminish it. It is not of this, therefore, that the apostle writes; but of that moral distance from God which belongs to us as sinners. There is nothing sinful in being far off from God in the former sense; but to be far

off in our thoughts of him, affections towards him, and desires after him, is of the essence of sin. This is alienation of heart, which stamps the character; for what a man's heart is, that is he. If a subject be so full of disaffection to his rightful prince that he has no feeling of respect towards him, no mind to please him, nor to think, or read, or hear any thing in his praise, this were alienation of heart; and if all this were without cause, we should say, of such a man, that he did not deserve to live under a government to which he was so wickedly disaffected. Yet this is the state of mind of sinners towards the blessed God. They call not upon his name; but rise in the morning, and retire at evening, as if there were no God, and no hereafter; as if they had no soul to be saved or lost; but, like the animals that surround them, were made to eat, drink, and sleep, for a few years, and then to die, and be no more! The things of God do not occupy their minds; and, unless they conceive of his character as very different from what the Scriptures represent it, they do not like to think of him, nor to speak of him, nor to hear others speak of him, or of any thing pertaining to him as revealed in the Bible. The serious mention of his name strikes a damp upon their spirits, and often puts an end to a conversation. They have no delight in reading his word, and never make it their study to do any thing because he requires it. What is all this but practically saying to God, "Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways?"

We have not to go into the heathen world in search of such characters as these; they are found in all our cities, towns, villages, and congregations, and in almost all our families. We may call ourselves Christians, and yet be without Christ; and we may declaim against atheism, and yet live without God in the world.

But though all sinners are far off from God, yet some are farther off than others. Every sinner has gone so far from God that he will never return of his own accord. The ways of sin are our *own ways*; we find them without any difficulty, but never return till the good Shepherd finds us, and brings us home. But some are farther off than others. As sin obtains in different degrees, so does the distance at which it places us from God. The Scriptures represent some persons as in a more hopeless state than others; and the same person is farther off at one period of life than at another. Sin being progressive, the longer any one lives in it without repentance, the farther off he necessarily is from God. Every sinner *going on still in his trespasses* is getting more and more hardened, and farther from the hearing of the calls of conscience and of God.

Shall I mention a few cases of persons whom the Scriptures represent as farthest from God? You may expect me to name the *profligate*, who is at open war with God; who breaks the sabbath, wallows in intemperance and debauchery, and laughs at all serious religion. And true it is that such characters are at an awful distance from God; yet many who have been thus far off have been made nigh by the blood of Christ. Such were some of the Corinthians, and such have been some of us.

There is a case more hopeless than this, namely, that of the *self-righteous*. Of the Pharisees, who were *righteous in their own eyes, and despised others*, it is said that "publicans and harlots entered into the kingdom of heaven before them." When some of them came to John, he called them "a generation of vipers," and asked, with surprise, "Who hath warned *you* to flee from the wrath to come?" Our Lord asked them, "How can ye escape the damnation of hell?" as though they were so fast bound by the chains of spiritual pride as to render their deliverance next to impossible. Reprove a drunkard or a debauchee, and you will have his conscience on your side.

Converse with him seriously on temperance, righteousness, and judgment to come, and he will tremble. But he that is pure in his own eyes, and yet not cleansed from his filthiness, his very *mind and conscience are defiled*. Thinking highly of himself, and of his doings, he will resent every thing said to him which calls in question the goodness of his state. He flatters himself that he is at peace with God, and does not choose to be disturbed in his repose. Talk to him of Christ Jesus having come into the world to save *sinners*, even the chief of sinners, and it will either appear to him a strange doctrine, or, if he comprehend your design, it is likely he will feel himself insulted. He says, in his heart, Am I, after all the pains that I have taken, to be placed on a footing with the worst of characters? If so, where is the justice of God?—Thus the gospel seems a hard saying, and he cannot hear it. A sinner, in such a state of mind, is farther from God, and more hopeless, than the profligate whom he despises: “The Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law; for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone.” Yet, even from this distance, some have been made nigh by the blood of Christ. Of this the apostle himself was an example, as were also the great company of the priests, who were obedient to the faith.

But there is another case which may be reckoned still more hopeless, and the party still farther off from God. This is where a person has sat under the preaching of the gospel for a number of years, but who, living still in his sins, at length becomes *past feeling*. Such characters, I fear, are not very uncommon in our congregations. Should there be one such present at this time, let me reason with him:—Thirty or forty years ago, it may be, you heard the gospel, and felt, and wept under it. Some of your fellow worshippers, observing the tears which fell from your eyes, conceived a hope that the heart of stone was taken away, and a heart of flesh imparted. But these convictions wore off; and, by degrees, the most pungent things might be delivered in your hearing without leaving any impression on your mind. The case was this: Under your convictions, you desisted from your evil courses; but, as the former subsided, you returned to the latter. At first you indulged in lesser sins; then in greater; till, at length, your whole study was, not how you should avoid sin, but how you should indulge in it and yet conceal it: and, it may be, you have succeeded in both, to a great degree; living in uncleanness, or drunkenness, or in some other sin, and yet concealing it from the world, and filling up your place in the house of God. And now you can hear the most awful threatenings, and the most melting expostulations, unmoved. Your heart is become callous and insensible. Conscience itself is seared, as with a hot iron. In a word, you are *past feeling*. Many have perished in this state, and many, doubtless, will perish; yet, even from this state of distance, some have been made nigh by the blood of Christ: “If from *thence* thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart, and with all thy soul.—For the Lord thy God is a merciful God.”

Thus far we have considered the distance of sinners from God merely in respect of their alienation of heart from him; but we must not confine it to this: as men have wickedly departed from God, God has righteously withdrawn from them; and thus the distance, being mutual, is increased. While man continued obedient, his Creator admitted him to near communion with him, as is intimated by his walking in the garden in the cool of the day;

but when he transgressed his commandment, he withdrew his favour, thrust him out of Paradise, and placed a guard about the tree of life, rendering it inaccessible.

Had there been no provision of mercy through the promised Seed, there could have been no more communion between God and man, any more than between God and the fallen angels. Men might have dragged out a guilty and miserable existence in the world, but they must have lived and died under the curse.\* Whatever had been bestowed upon them, it would have been in wrath, in like manner as riches are given some men to their hurt. Whatever had been their troubles, they would have had no God to repair to under them; and, whatever their prospects, the hope of a blessed hereafter would have made no part of them.

This awful state of distance from God is *still* the condition of the unbelieving and the ungodly. The interposition of Christ avails not in behalf of them. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." Being without Christ, they are without hope, and without God in the world. Every thing they do is evil; every thing they possess is cursed; and every hour they live in that state of mind adds to their guilt and misery. As "all things work together for good to them that love God," so all things work together for evil to them that love him not. Under all their calamities and troubles, they have no God on whom to cast their cares, and, in death, have nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment. The very messengers of mercy are charged, on their peril, to say to the wicked, "It shall be ill with him."

How tremendously awful, then, is the condition of the unbelieving and the ungodly! There is one way of escape, and but one: and is it possible that this can be disregarded; and that men can live easy and unconcerned, with the curse of God over their heads? Surely this must be owing to a disbelief of the Divine *threatenings*, as well as of the doctrine of the gospel. But take heed "lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood; and it come to pass when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst: the Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven!" In this terrible condition the gospel finds us. To *this* door of hope we shall now direct your attention, by considering,

III. THE WAY IN WHICH SINNERS ARE RECOVERED AND BROUGHT NIGH TO GOD. It is "in Christ Jesus," and "by the blood of Christ." In Christ we

\* Some have thought that the death threatened in Gen. ii. 17, was merely corporal, and that if it had been executed, man would have been immediately struck out of existence. But the death there threatened, whatever it was, "passed upon all men," which implies the existence of all men, and which would have been prevented if Adam had at that time been reduced to a state of non-existence, or had even been banished from the world. The original constitution of things must, therefore, have provided for the existence of every individual that has since been born into the world; and this whether man should stand or fall. The death here threatened, doubtless, included that of the body, and which God might execute at pleasure; the day he should eat he would be dead in law; but it also included the loss of the Divine favour, and an exposedness to his wrath. If it were not so, the redemption of Christ would not be properly opposed to it, which it frequently is, Rom. v. 12—21. It must be to this sentence that the apostle refers in Heb. ix. 27, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment;" or Christ's being "once offered to bear the sins of many," and his "coming a second time without sin unto salvation," would not have been introduced as antidotes to the evils; but if the sentence included both *death* and *judgment*, it must be more than corporal death.

possess all. It is as being "in Christ Jesus" that we possess all spiritual blessings; and by the shedding of his blood they were obtained.

The blood of Christ may be considered in three views: as shed upon the cross—as proclaimed by the preaching of the gospel—and as believed in for salvation by the perishing sinner. These, being united, bring near those who were once far off.

1. *By the blood of Christ, as shed upon the cross, atonement was made, sin was expiated, and a way opened for God to draw near to the sinner, and the sinner to God.* In punishing transgressors, displeasure is expressed against transgression. In substitutionary sacrifices, displeasure was expressed against transgression; but, withal, mercy to the transgressor; the former, as signifying that thus the offerer deserved to have been treated; the latter, as accepting a substitute in his stead. In the sacrifice of Christ, both these sentiments were expressed in the highest degree: "God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin (or by a sacrifice for sin) *condemned* sin in the flesh."—"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" In proportion as God's own Son was dear to him, and, as possessed of Divine dignity, estimable by him, such were the hatred of sin and the love to sinners manifested in smiting him.

If mercy had been exercised to men without such an expression of displeasure against their sin, it must have appeared to the creation to be connivance, and the character of God must have sunk in their estimation. He must have appeared to be very strict indeed in his precepts, and severe in his threatenings; but as lax in enforcing them as though he had known from the beginning that they would not bear to be acted upon. The fallen angels, in particular, must have felt that it could not be *justice* that consigned them to hopeless perdition; for justice is impartial. If the Creator could connive at sin in one instance, he could in another. Thus the bands of moral government had been broken, and the cords which held creation together cast away.

But, by the atonement of Christ, a way is opened for the consistent exercise of mercy. There was a kind of atonement made by the vengeance taken on the old world; also by that on the Benjamites, as recorded in the last chapters of Judges. Each of these events served to express the Divine displeasure against sin, and each made way for the exercise of mercy; the one toward Noah and his posterity, and the other toward the remnant that had taken refuge in the rock Rimmon. Thus, in the death of Christ, though he died "the just for the unjust," yet God herein expressed his displeasure against sin, and, having done this, could be "just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." There is now no bar, in respect of the government of God, why any sinner should not, on returning to him in the name of his Son, find mercy. On this ground, sinners, without distinction, are actually invited to come unto him and be saved. The only bar that remains is a spirit of pride and unbelief. If they can believe in Jesus, receiving salvation as God's free gift through him, "all things are possible to him that believeth."

When, on visiting a dying man, I hear him talk of having made his peace with God, I tremble for him. If our peace be made with God, it is by the blood of the cross. What are our confessions, or prayers, or tears? Can they heal the awful breach? If so, God would have spared his own Son, and not have delivered him up to be made a sacrifice. It had then been possible for the cup to pass from him, and it would, no doubt, have passed from him. If without the shedding of blood there be no remission, and if it were impossible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sin, the

consequence is, that either Christ must be the sacrifice, or we must die in our sins and perish. *He* hath made peace by the blood of his cross: it is not for us to assume to be peace-makers, but to accept of his mediation.

2. *The blood of Christ, as proclaimed in the preaching of the gospel, is the appointed means of bringing sinners near to God.* It is the doctrine of salvation through the blood of Christ that is, by way of eminency, called *the gospel*. It was the doctrine which Christ commissioned his disciples to preach to every creature: "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be *preached in his name among all nations*, beginning at Jerusalem!" This doctrine is *good news* to every creature; and that whether it be received or rejected. It is good news that a way is opened, by the death of Christ, for any sinner to return to God and be saved; and that, if any sinner walk therein, he shall be saved. It is the ministry of reconciliation, in which the servants of Christ, as though God did beseech by them, pray men in Christ's stead, saying, "Be ye reconciled to God." Its being made light of by the greater part of men does not alter its nature; and this they shall know another day. God brings *near* his righteousness, even to them that are stout-hearted and far from righteousness. "Into whatsoever city ye enter," said our Lord, "and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you; and heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, *The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.* But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that *the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.* But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city."

3. *By the doctrine of salvation through the blood of Christ we are actually brought nigh.* As the prodigal was brought home to his father's house and family, so we are brought home to God. It is thus that we become actually reconciled to God. "If when we were enemies," says the apostle, "we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." The term *reconciled* is, here, manifestly used in different senses. In the former instance, it refers to the making of atonement; in the latter, to our believing acquiescence in it; or, as it is expressed in the following verse, to our "receiving the atonement." It is in this way that our sins are forgiven; that we are justified, or accepted, in the Beloved; that we are invested with the privilege of being the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty; that God is our God, and we his people, by a new and better covenant; that we have access to him as our heavenly Father, and to all the ordinances and privileges of his house: finally, it is as believing in him that died and rose again that we live in hope of eternal life.

There is a term used by the apostle, in Eph. iii. 12, which conveys a very expressive idea, not only of the nearness to which believers are admitted by the faith of Christ, and which is denoted by the term "access," but of their being *introduced* by him, as by one *taking them by the hand*, and presenting them to the King.\* We could not be admitted into the Divine presence by ourselves; but our Mediator, taking us as it were by the hand, presents us to God. It is thus that we are "accepted in the Beloved" on our first believing, and, in all our approaches to the throne of grace, have access to God.

To conclude: If we have been made nigh, it becomes us, not only to be

\* Προσπαγωγή, introduction, manduction, or being led by the hand.

thankful for so great a favour, but to feel a deep and anxious concern for others who at present are far off. Whether we consider the state of heathens, of Mahomedans, or of our own unbelieving countrymen, they have each a claim on our compassion. And if Christ withheld not his blood to bring us nigh, it surely is not for us to withhold any labour or expense in carrying his gracious designs into execution

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## XXI

### THE NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF LOVE TO GOD.

“Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God.”—Josh. xiii. 11.

It is an interesting account that we have of the last days of Joshua. He is very anxious that, when he should cease to be their leader, Israel should cleave unto the Lord. To make as deep an impression upon their minds as possible, he first called for the elders and leading men among them, and delivered a serious charge to them; after this, he gathered all the tribes together before the Lord in Shechem, where he solemnly rehearsed the dealings of the Lord with them, and bound them, by every consideration that he could suggest, not to forsake him, and go after the idols of the heathen. It is in this connexion that he introduces the words of the text, “Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God;” intimating that in order to be obedient to the Lord, and secure against idolatrous departures from him, it was necessary, not merely to own him as their God, but to be cordially attached to his name and government. The word rendered “yourselves” in the text, is, in the margin, rendered *your souls*; denoting that it is not a superficial inspection of the conduct that is meant, but a looking to our inmost motives, seeing to it that we love the Lord from our very hearts.

This is a charge that would well befit the lips of any servant of God before he leaves the world, and be well suited to the conduct of any people. If our hearts be right with God, all is right; if not, all is wrong.

In discoursing upon the subject, we shall offer a few remarks on the nature of love, and of love to God in particular—consider the importance of it in characterizing the whole of our religion—the danger of declining from it—and the means to be used in promoting it.

I. Let us offer a few remarks on THE NATURE OF LOVE, AND OF LOVE TO GOD IN PARTICULAR. That we may perceive the extent of the precept, it is necessary that we understand a few of the different ways in which love operates.

1. Observe, then, in the first place, that *love operates differently according to the condition of its object*. If directed to one that is miserable, it works in a way of pity and sympathy; if to one that is in necessity, it will impart to his relief; but if to one greatly our superior, as to a kind and benevolent sovereign, for instance, then it will operate in the way of honour, complacency, gratitude, and obedience. I need not say that God is not subject to either misery or want, and, therefore, that our love to him cannot operate in the way of pity towards him, or by communicating to his necessities. The ways in which love to God operates are those of honour, complacency, gratitude, and obedience.



2. *Love operates differently according to the condition of the subject of it.* If no offence has existed between the parties, it is peace and amity; but if otherwise, it will operate in the way of regret, repentance, and a desire of reconciliation. Man, in his original state, was admitted to commune with his Creator; and love, during his continuance in that state, operated in a way of grateful adoration. But if a spark of love be kindled in the breast of a fallen creature, it will work in a way of sorrow for sin, and a desire to return to God, as the prodigal did to his father. Moreover, in an innocent creature, love to God would operate in a way of delight and praise; but in a fallen creature, under the preaching of the gospel, it will induce him to embrace the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. Hence the want of faith in Christ is alleged in proof of the want of love to God: "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you; I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not."

3. *A complacency in the Divine character still enters into the essence of love.* There may be affections where this is not; but there can be no true love to God. We may be greatly affected by an apprehension that our sins are forgiven us; and this merely from self-love; but such affections will not abide. Many who joined in singing praise to the Lord, on their deliverance at the Red Sea, soon forgot his works; for their hearts were not right with God. Genuine love to God has respect not merely to his benefits, but to his name, nature, or character, as revealed in the Scriptures. As he that hateth not sin *as sin* has no real hatred to it; so he that loveth not God *as God* has no real love to him. True love to God, for the gift of his Son and salvation through his death, does not merely respect the benefits we receive, but the holy, just, and honourable way in which those benefits are conferred. He that is affected only by the consideration of his own safety, regardless of the way in which it is obtained, cannot be said to love God. Whether God be just or unjust is, to such a person, a matter of indifference, so that he justifies *him*. The love of God will lead us to prize that way of salvation which, in making provision for our necessities, secures the Divine glory.

II. Let us observe THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS PRINCIPLE AS CHARACTERIZING THE WHOLE OF OUR RELIGION. Love is not so much a particular grace as a property pertaining to all the graces. It is to our graces that which the holiness of God is to his moral attributes, pervading and characterizing the whole. Indeed, it is holiness itself; if the law be the standard of holiness, that which is the fulfilling of the law, which love is said to be, must comprehend the whole of it. Observe particularly—

1. *It is the love of God which distinguishes true religion from all counterfeits, and from the effects of merely natural principles.* It is this that distinguishes repentance from repentance, faith from faith, and fear from fear. Each of these graces has its counterfeit. Wherein consisted the difference between the repentance of Judas and that of Peter? The one was mere remorse of conscience; the other proceeded from love to him whom he had denied. Wherein consisted the difference between the belief of those rulers who, because of the Pharisees, did not confess the Saviour, lest they should be put out of the synagogue, and that which was to the saving of the soul? The one was a conviction which forced itself upon them, while their hearts were averse from it; the other was "receiving the love of the truth, that they might be saved." And wherein consists the difference between the fear that has torment, and godly fear? Is it not that the one is void of love, and the other is not so? Perfect love casteth out the former, but promoteth the latter.

So much as we have of the love of God, so much we have of true religion, and no more. The love that we bear to our fellow Christians, to the

law, to the gospel, and even to Christ himself, is the love of God. We see in our brethren the image of God, and love it; in the law of God, a glorious transcript of his mind, and love it; in the gospel, a more glorious transcript of his mind, and love it more; and in the person and work of Christ, the very image of the invisible God, and our hearts are united to him. In loving each of these objects, we love God.

2. *It is the love of God that keeps every thing in a state of moral order.* Under its influence, every thing will be done in subserviency to his glory, and every thing taken well at his hand. If God be loved first, he will be sought first. We shall not think of excusing ourselves in the neglect of our duty, by alleging that we could not find time for it: we commonly find time for things on which our hearts are fixed. It is by the love of God that all our actions are directed to his glory. Unbelievers cannot understand how this is. Whether they eat or drink, or whatsoever they do, it is merely for their own gratification, and they cannot conceive of any other end to be answered. Yet it is easy to perceive how men can make every thing subservient to that which their hearts are set upon, whether it be their interest, or the gratification of their desires. Love to a fellow creature will render every thing we do subservient to the object. All the labours and journeys of a loving head of a family are directed to their comfort; and all the busy cares of an affectionate wife to the honour and happiness of her husband. If then God be the supreme object of our love, whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we shall do all to his glory.

It is thus that the common concerns of life are converted into religion, and that we shall serve the Lord even in our worldly avocations: "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." It is in *abusing* the world, by giving it that place in our hearts which belongs to God, that it retards us in our progress to heaven. If, instead of this, we could *use* it, it would be useful to us even for another life, furnishing us with matter for daily prayer and praise, and thus assisting us in our progress.

If we love God, we shall take every thing well at his hands, and so be reconciled to all his dispensations towards us, whether they be good or evil. We can bear almost any thing from one whom we love; especially when we know that it is accompanied with wisdom, and directed by goodness. When, in the day of Israel's calamity, their enemies asked, "Where is now their God?" it was sufficient to answer, "Our God is in the heavens; he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased." It was love that dictated those memorable sayings of Job, during the early part of his trials: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!—Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?" It was this that reconciled David, when driven from his throne by the rebellion of his own son: "Here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him." And, when cursed by an enemy, viewing it as the Lord's hand stretched out against him, he submitted: "The Lord hath said unto him, Curse David!"

3. *It is the love of God that is the great preservative from error.* If, indeed, the truth of God were a matter of mere speculation, and we might take for granted the sincerity and impartiality of our inquiries, error would then be innocent, and the love of God would be no more of a preservative from it than it is from a mistake in reckoning a sum in arithmetic. But if Divine truth be of a practical nature, and be so clearly revealed that no unprejudiced mind can materially misunderstand, and still less disbelieve it, error is not innocent, and the great preservative from falling into it is the love of God. Such is manifestly the import of the following passages: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of

God.—Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word.—If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.—We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." If it be objected that good men err; that to ascribe their errors to prejudice, and the want of love to God, is uncandid; we answer, No good man is free from prejudice, nor does he love God as he ought. To ascribe the errors of others to the same causes to which we ascribe our own, supposing us to be in error, cannot be uncandid. If we loved God as we ought, there would be no prejudice hanging about our minds, and we should imbibe the truth, as angels imbibe it, desiring above all things to look into it. And if we loved him more than we do, we should be more secure than we are from the seducing influence of error. Hence it is that *the anointing* of the Holy Spirit is represented as teaching us all things, and causing us to abide in the truth. Hence, also, those who have apostatized from the truth are described as not having cordially believed it, but as taking pleasure in unrighteousness.

4. *It is the love of God which is the grand spring of evangelical obedience.* Respect to ourselves, and regard to our present interests, will produce a correctness of conduct sufficient to excite the respect of those around us; but this is not religion. There is no true religion without the love of God; and if, as has been already stated, the love of the law, of the gospel, of our fellow creatures and fellow Christians, and even of Christ himself, be only the love of God ramified, it must follow that without this we shall not be able to exercise the others, but be merely *lovers of our own selves*. If we take heed to this, we shall have but little else to take heed to, as every duty will become our delight, and be cheerfully discharged as a matter of course. Hence we see the force of the wise man's precept, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." Look well to the fountain, or the streams will in vain be expected to be pure. To watch our words and actions to the neglect of our hearts will be unavailing.

III. Let us consider THE DANGER WE ARE IN OF DECLINING FROM THE LOVE OF GOD. The serious tone of caution with which the precept is delivered is expressive of this sentiment: it is only in cases of great danger that we are charged to take good heed.

The love of God is a plant of heavenly extraction; but, being planted in an unfriendly soil, it requires to be well guarded and watered. We are not only surrounded with objects which attract our affections, and operate as rivals to the blessed God, but have a propensity to depart from him. Whether we consider ourselves as individuals or as societies, this will be found to be the case.

In the early stages of the Christian life, love is frequently ardent. The first believing views of the grace of the gospel furnish matter of joyful surprise; and a flow of grateful affection is the natural consequence: "I love the Lord because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live." At this season we can scarcely conceive it possible to forget him who hath done such great things for us; but if twenty years of cares and temptations pass over us without producing this effect, it will be happy for us.

In declining from our first love we are seldom sensible of it till some of its effects appear, as neglecting the more spiritual exercise of religion, or contenting ourselves with attending to them as a matter of form without enjoying God in them, or trifling with those sins from which we should here-

tofore have started back with horror. Our friends often perceive it, and feel concerned on account of it, before we are aware of it ourselves; and happy is it for us if by their timely admonitions, or by any other means, we are awakened from our lethargy and saved from some greater fall, to the dishonour of God and the wounding of our future peace.

I have heard this departure from our first love spoken of as a matter of course, or as that which must be expected. Nay, I have heard it compared to the time when Isaac was *wedded*, at which Abraham made a feast! Some old religious professors, who have become sufficiently cold and carnal themselves, will thus endeavour to reconcile young Christians to the same state of mind; telling them, with a cunning sort of smile, that they are at present on the mount of enjoyment, but must expect to come down. And true it is that love, though it may become deeper and better grounded, may not always operate with such *tenderness of feeling* as it did at first. A change in the constitution from an advance in years will account for this. Many things relating to the present world which in our youth will produce tears will not have this effect as we advance in life, though they may still lie with weight upon our minds. But to confound this with religious declension, coldness, and carnality, and to endeavour to reconcile young Christians to it, is erroneous and mischievous. So did not the apostles in their intercourse with young Christians. When Barnabas visited the young Christians at Antioch, he "saw the grace of God, and was glad;" and instead of leading them to expect a state of declension to follow this their first love, he "exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would *cleave* unto the Lord." The great Head of the church had somewhat against the Ephesians, because they had left their first love.

There is no necessity in the nature of things for the abatement of our love, or zeal, or joy. The considerations which formerly excited these feelings have not lost their force. It is as true and as important as ever that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," and that he is "able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him;" and, excepting what the first impression derived from its novelty, would, if we had not declined in love, be as interesting to us. So far from our regard for these and other truths being diminished, there is ground for its being increased. Our first views of Christ and his gospel were very defective; if we follow on to know the Lord, we shall know him in a much greater degree. "The path of the just," if Scripturally pursued, will be "as the shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day." This was the course which the apostles pursued toward the Christians of their times: "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment.—We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth.—Beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." The apostle himself did not relax as he drew toward the end of his course, but forgetting the things that were behind, and reaching forth unto those that were before, he pressed toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

To decline in our love is practically saying that we were once more spiritually-minded, more tender in conscience, and more devoted to God, than was necessary; that we have not found the religion of Jesus so interesting as we expected, and, therefore, have been obliged to have recourse for happiness to our former pursuits; and that what our old companions told us at the outset, that our zeal would soon abate, and that we should return again to

them, was true. "O my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me!"

If we be in danger of declining as individuals, we are not less so as *societies*. Societies being composed of individuals, a number of backsliding individuals will soon diffuse their spirit and produce a backsliding people. It was to a people that the words of Joshua were addressed. That generation of Israelites who went up with him into Canaan were distinguished by their love to God. They had seen his judgments upon their unbelieving fathers, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness, and had learned wisdom. It was of them that the Lord spoke by Jeremiah, saying, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first-fruits of his increase." But the very next generation relapsed into idolatry: "Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord that he had done for Israel." But when they were gathered to their fathers, "there arose another generation after them which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel." Even before the death of their venerable leader, the young people had begun to tamper with idolatry. It was on this account that he assembled the tribes in Shechem, and so solemnly put it to them to choose on that day whom they would serve; and that when they answered, "God forbid that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods," he added, "Ye cannot serve the Lord; for he is a holy God: he is a jealous God, he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins." This was telling them that they could not serve the Lord and Baalim. Stung with this suggestion, they answered, "Nay, but we *will* serve the Lord." Then said Joshua, "Put away the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel!"

This interesting account furnishes a picture of human nature. The same things have been acted over again in the world. Religion has rarely been preserved in its purity for many generations. Such is the tendency to degenerate, that the greatest and most important reformations have commonly begun to decline, when they who have been principally engaged in them have been gathered to their fathers

Even the apostles themselves, inspired as they were, could not preserve the churches which they had raised from degeneracy. The Lord had many things against those seven in Asia to which the Apocalypse was addressed. We know also that the great body of professing Christians in a few centuries were carried away by the antichristian apostacy; that the descendants of the reformers have mostly renounced their principles; and that the same is true of the descendants of the puritans and non-conformists. Each of these cases furnishes a loud call to us to take good heed unto ourselves that we love the Lord our God.

IV. Let us conclude with A FEW DIRECTIONS AS TO THE MEANS OF PROMOTING THE LOVE OF GOD. It has been observed already that love is a tender plant, requiring to be both guarded and watered. It will not thrive among the weeds of worldly lusts. We cannot serve the Lord in this way; if we would serve him, we must put away our idols and incline our hearts unto the Lord God of Israel. Beware of *the love of the world*. He that loveth the world, the love of God is not in him. Beware of living in the indulgence of *any sin*: any habitual sin is inconsistent with the love of God. It was on this principle that holy David, after declaring the omniscience and omnipresence of God, invoked his scrutiny: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be

any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Wicked *actions* have been found in good men, who have lamented them, and been forgiven; but a wicked *way* is inconsistent with a state of grace, vitiating the very principle of religion, and turning the whole into hypocrisy. Transgression of this nature must lead to perdition. It is an affecting consideration, how many professors of religion have been found, either before or soon after they have left the world, to have lived in private drunkenness, concealed lewdness, or undetected fraud!

But it is not merely by avoiding those things which are inconsistent with the love of God that we shall promote it; we must also attend to those that cherish it. It is by being conversant with the mind of God, as revealed in his word; by drawing near to him in private prayer; by associating with the most spiritual of his people; by thinking upon his name, especially as displayed in the person and work of Christ; that the love of God will be cherished. As our minds are insensibly assimilated by the books we read and the company we keep, so will it be in reading the book of God and associating with his people; and as the glory of God is manifested in the highest degree in the face of Jesus Christ, this is the principal theme for our meditation. It is by our repairing to the cross that the love of God will be kept alive, and renewed when ready to expire.

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## XXII.

### CONFORMITY TO THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

"Being made conformable unto his death."—Phil. iii. 10.

THE death of Christ is a subject of so much importance in Christianity as to be essential to it. Without this, the sacrifices and prophecies of the Old Testament would be nearly void of meaning, and the other great facts recorded in the New Testament divested of importance. It is not so much a member of the body of Christian doctrine as the life-blood that runs through the whole of it. The doctrine of the cross is the Christian doctrine. In determining "not to know any thing—save Jesus Christ, and him crucified," the apostle did not mean to contract his researches, or to confine his ministry to a monotonous repetition of a favourite point, to the neglect of other things; on the contrary, he shunned not to declare "the whole counsel of God." The doctrine of "Christ, and him crucified," comprehended this: it contained a scope which, inspired as he was, surpassed his powers; and well it might, for angels could not comprehend it, but are described as merely desiring to look into it. There is not an important truth, but what is presupposed by it, included in it, or arises out of it; nor any part of practical religion but what hangs upon it.

It was from this doctrine that the New Testament writers fetched their most powerful motives. Do they recommend *humility*? It is thus: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Do they enforce an unreserved *devotedness to God*? It is thus: "Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your

body, and in your spirit, which are God's." If they would provoke Christians to *brotherly love*, it is from the same consideration: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." Do they urge a *forgiving spirit*? It is thus: "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Do they recommend *benevolence* to the poor? It is from this: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.—Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!" Finally, The common duties of *domestic life* are enforced from this principle: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."

It is an immediate relation to this great principle that both the ordinances of baptism and the supper appear to have been instituted. As many as were baptized, were baptized into Christ's death; and, in eating the bread and drinking the wine, they were directed to do it in remembrance of him. It was a wonderful instance of condescending love in the Lord Jesus to desire to be remembered by us. Had we requested in the language of the converted thief to be remembered by him, there had been nothing surprising in it; but it is of the nature of dying love to desire to live in the remembrance of those who are dear to us. It was not, however, on his own account, but on ours, that he left this dying request. He knew that to remember him would answer every case that could occur.

If afflicted, this would be our solace; if persecuted, the consideration of him that had endured such contradiction of sinners would prevent our being weary and faint in our minds; if guilty, this would point out the way of forgiveness; or if tempted to turn aside, this would bind us to his name and cause.

It was by a believing view of this great subject that the apostle, at the first, counted all his former privileges and attainments *loss*; and though, in consequence of renouncing Judaism, he had exchanged all his earthly prospects for hunger, and thirst, and nakedness, and perils, and bitter persecutions, yet, after thirty years' experience, he does not repent, but, in a tone of heavenly triumph, adds, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith!"

A mind thus imbued with the sacred theme, we should think, must have known much of Christ already, and, compared with us, he must; yet, after all that he had thought, and preached, and written, he makes nothing of his attainments, but adopts the language of one that had, in a manner, every thing to learn: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death."

The last of these vehement desires seems to be explanatory of some, if not all, that precede it. That is, he would know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of sufferings, as "*being made conformable unto his death.*"

The sentiment here conveyed appears to be, *That the death of Christ is a model to which Christians must aspire to be conformed.* This sentiment we shall endeavour to illustrate and confirm.

There are other models beside the death of Christ; but they are included in this. The *law* of God is that to which we must become conformed. If

we be born from above, it is "written in our hearts." But one great end of Christ's death was to honour the Divine law, not only in its precept, but its penalty, a conformity to the one must include a conformity to the other. The *character* of God also is represented as a model to which believers are conformed. The new man is created "*after God*, in righteousness and true holiness;" but as in the death of Christ God was glorified in the highest, a conformity to this must be a conformity to the Divine character. The *lives of holy men* are also held up for our imitation; but as this is only in proportion as they are followers of Christ, a conformity to him includes all that is required of us respecting them.

We shall consider the death of Christ in four views: namely, in respect of the principles on which it proceeded—the motives by which it was induced—the spirit with which it was endured—and the ends which it accomplished. Under each of these views we shall find things to which we must be conformed. Observe—

I. THE PRINCIPLES ON WHICH THE DEATH OF CHRIST PROCEEDED. In them we shall find a standard by which to form our principles, and shall be able to judge whether they be of God.

1. The death of Christ presupposes *that we deserved to die*. A sense of this truth is at the foundation of all true religion; it requires, therefore, that we be made conformable to it. God, in the gift of his Son to die, judged us to have been worthy of death; Christ, in giving himself to die, evinced himself to be of the same mind; and such must be our mind, or we can have no interest in the glorious results. Until we see and feel that God is in the right, that we are in the wrong, and that if he had cast us off for ever it had been no more than we deserved, we shall be strangers to repentance, and as incapable of believing in Christ for salvation as he that is whole is of appreciating the value of a physician.

2. The death of Christ presupposes *that sin is exceedingly sinful*. If it were a matter of small account, it may be presumed that the Father would not have made so much of it as to give his Son to be made a sacrifice to atone for it; and that the Son of God would not have laid down his life for that purpose. The curses of the law, and the judgments inflicted at different times on sinners, furnished strong proof of the malignant nature of sin; especially when the native goodness of God is taken into consideration; but the blood of the cross furnishes much stronger. It was a great thing for the Creator to destroy the work of his hands, and it is so represented: "The Lord said, I will destroy man, *whom I have created*, from the face of the earth." But to smite his beloved Son was greater. To be made conformable to this principle, we must not conceive of sin as the *weakness*, or *frailty*, of human nature, a mere *imperfection* which a good God must needs overlook. Neither must we give heed to those systems of religion which are founded upon these depreciating notions, which, however they may flatter us for the present, will, in the end, assuredly deceive us.

3. The death of Christ presupposes *that there was nothing, in all our doings or sufferings, that could furnish a ground of salvation, or a single consideration for which we might be forgiven*. Had it been otherwise, Christ would not have died. Men have ever been busily employed in endeavours to propitiate the Deity; some by ceremonial observances, and some by moral; but instead of accomplishing the object, they have only made the case worse. Even those services which were of Divine appointment became, in their hands, offensive; God was weary of their offerings. Christ is represented as taking the work out of their hands: "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come!" They



were, indeed, required as duties for the time, but not for the purpose of making atonement. Not tears, nor prayers, nor alms, nor any other of our doings, will avail as terms of acceptance with God. If we are conformed to the death of Christ, we shall know and feel this to be the case, and shall seek salvation by grace only, through the Mediator. If we are not conformed to the death of Christ in this respect, we have no reason to expect any interest in it.

4. The death of Christ presupposes *that, for mercy to be exercised in a way consistent with the honour of God, it required to be through a sacrifice of infinite value.* When the apostle declares that "it was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins," he plainly intimates that the inherent value of the sacrifice was of essential importance as to its effect. If it were impossible for animal sacrifices to atone for sin, it must be on account of their insufficiency to demonstrate either the hatred of God to sin or his love to sinners; but the same reason would apply to the sacrifice of Christ, if he were merely a creature. Hence those who deny his Divinity, with perfect consistency deny also his atonement. But, on the principles of his Divinity, his sufferings were of infinite value; and to this the Scriptures ascribe their efficacy. A careful reader of the New Testament will perceive that, in exhibiting the *value* and *efficacy* of his death, it connects it with the inherent dignity of his person: "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had *by himself purged our sins*, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."—"We have a *great High Priest* that is passed into the heavens, *Jesus the Son of God.*"—"The blood of *Jesus Christ, his Son*, cleanseth us from all sin."

The result is, that, to be made conformable to the death of Christ, we must think highly of it, and not reduce it to the death of a mere martyr. It is a serious thing to make light of the Saviour, and of the work of salvation: "He that despised Moses's law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy (or common) thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, the Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!"

Let us observe,

II. THE MOTIVES BY WHICH THE DEATH OF CHRIST WAS INDUCED. In these we shall find a blessed example to imitate. They may all be summed up in *love*; love to God and men; love, great, disinterested, and unparalleled.

There never was such an example of the "love of God" as that which is furnished by the obedience and death of Christ. It was his meat and drink to do the will of his Father. He did not know his nearest relations, but as doing his Father's will. When the bitter cup was presented to him, he said, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name." What was this but exposing his breast, as we should say, to the sword of justice; consenting to be made a sacrifice, that God might be glorified in the salvation of sinners? It was love, working in a way of grief, that caused that affecting exclamation, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He could endure the cross, and even despise the shame; he could bear to be betrayed, denied, and forsaken by his own disciples: but to be forsaken of God wounded him beyond any thing. Oh to be made conformable to his death in these things; to love God, so as to account it

our meat and drink to do his will; so as to reckon his friends our friends, and his cause our cause; to be willing to do any thing, or suffer any thing, for his name's sake; and to feel the withholding of his favour our severest loss!

As there never was such love to God as that which was manifested by Christ, so neither was there ever such *love to men*. "He loved us, and gave *himself* for us—loved us, and washed us from our sins *in his own blood*." The love of creatures is ordinarily founded on something lovely in the object; but Christ died for us while we were yet enemies. To be made conformable to his death in this is to bear good-will to men, to seek their present and everlasting welfare in every way that is within our power; and this notwithstanding the unloveliness of their character and conduct: "Love them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you." Unbelievers, who know no principle superior to self-love, have represented this precept of our Lord as unnatural and extravagant. Yet they themselves are daily partaking of his bounty, who causeth his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and his rain to descend on the just and on the unjust. If they were the children of that Being whom they acknowledge, they would, in some degree, resemble him. Such was the example of Jesus, and such must be ours, if we be made conformable to him.

Let us observe,

III. THE SPIRIT WITH WHICH THE SUFFERINGS AND DEATH OF CHRIST WERE ENDURED. In this we shall find a model for our spirit. The Lord Jesus was possessed of all the original passions of human nature; as love, joy, sorrow, grief, anger, indignation, &c. When reproached and injured, he felt it; his "enduring the cross, and despising the shame," was not owing to his being insensible to either, but to "the joy set before him." The purity of his nature did not extinguish its passions, but rendered them subordinate to the will of his Father. With the greatest sensibility to reproach and injury, he was meek and lowly of heart. Under all the reproaches and false accusations that were preferred against him on his trial, he preserved a dignified silence; not a word was uttered tending to save his life: but, when questioned on the truth of his Messiahship, he, with equal dignity and firmness, avowed it, though he knew the avowal would cost him his life. Nor did the contradiction and abuse which he received from his executioners extinguish his compassion toward them: while they were nailing him to the cross he prayed, saying, "Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do."

If we observe the spirit of the apostles, we shall find them to have made him their pattern: "Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things, unto this day." There appears to have been a holy emulation in the apostle Paul to be a follower of his Lord, even unto death. In all that befell him, he kept his eye on Christ: "If we suffer, we shall also reign *with him*."—"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed, *always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus*, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." Such was that conformity to the death of Christ, after which he panted with the most vehement desire. Nothing was further from his thoughts than partaking with him in the work of redemption; but so far as fellowship in his sufferings was admissible, it was the object of his most ardent desire. Oh to be thus made like him and like his faithful followers!

We proceed to observe,

IV. THE ENDS WHICH THE DEATH OF CHRIST ACCOMPLISHED. In them, though there is much which is peculiar to himself, yet there is also much in which we are made conformable to him.

Did he *satisfy Divine justice*, and thereby open the way of salvation? Certainly, it is not for us to attempt any thing like this; but, by believing in him, we *acquiesce* in what he has done and suffered, and so are made conformable to it. Nor is this confined to our first believing: the more we know of Christ, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, the more we are, in this way, made conformable to his death. The death of Christ will give the impression to the very enjoyment of heaven. "The Lamb that was slain" will be the theme of the song for ever.

Was he "manifested to destroy the works of the devil?" If we be made conformable to his death, we also shall wage war with them. If we live in sin, we are *of the devil*, and must needs be at variance with the death of Christ; sparing that which he was manifested in human nature to destroy. The finished work of Christ upon the cross did not supersede the necessity of our being active in overcoming evil. We must set our feet upon the necks of these spiritual enemies, taking a part in their destruction. Neither did it supersede the necessity of our active perseverance in the use of all means by which we may disengage our souls from the entanglements of sin, praying and struggling from under its dominion, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. It is thus that we have to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling," which, instead of superseding the death of Christ, is being made conformable to it. From his having died *for* sin, we are exhorted to die *to* it, and to live unto God. We cannot enter into the end of Christ's death, which was to make an end of sin, unless we become dead to sin; nor into his resurrection, without rising with him into newness of life!

In waging war with sin, it is necessary to begin with ourselves, but not to end there. If we be made conformable to the death of Christ, we shall be adverse to sin wherever we find it; avoiding all participation in it through complaisance or worldly interest, and uniting to promote sobriety, righteousness, and godliness in its place.

Finally, Christ died "*to save sinners*;" and if we be made conformable to his death, we also shall seek their salvation. Some of the first thoughts which occur to a believer's mind, on having found rest for his own soul, respect the salvation of his kindred and acquaintance; and the direction given to one who had obtained mercy gives countenance to such thoughts and desires: "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee."

It is not for ministers only to take an interest in the salvation of men; the army of the Lamb is composed of the whole body of Christians. Every disciple of Jesus should consider himself as a missionary. All, indeed, are not apostles, nor evangelists, nor preachers; but all must be engaged in serving the Lord: some by preaching, some by contributing of their substance, and all by prayer and recommending the Saviour by a holy conversation.

The death of Christ stands connected, in the Divine promise, with the salvation of sinners. This is "the travail of his soul," which he was to see, and be satisfied; the "joy set before him," in view of which he endured the cross, and despised the shame. To be made conformable unto his death, therefore, we must combine that which God has combined with it. It is a high honour conferred on us to be instruments in thus saving our fellow sinners, and in thus crowning our Redeemer; nor will it be less

advantageous to us, since he has said, "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."

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### XXIII.

#### THE LIFE OF CHRIST THE SECURITY AND FELICITY OF HIS CHURCH.

"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."—Rev. i. 18.

SOME of the most important writings in the church of Christ have been occasioned by the persecutions of its enemies. The Psalms of David, in which a good man will find all the devout feelings of his heart portrayed, were mostly occasioned by the oppositions of the wicked. Many of Paul's Epistles were written from prison; and this book, which contains a system of prophecy from the ascension of Christ to the end of time, was communicated to the beloved disciple when in a state of banishment. Thus it is that the wrath of man is made to praise God; so much of it as would not answer this end is restrained.

Some of the most distinguished prophets under the Old Testament were introduced to their work by an extraordinary and impressive vision. It was thus with Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel; and thus it was with the writer of this book. They beheld the glory of Jehovah in a manner suitable to the dispensation under which they lived: he, being under a new dispensation, of which Christ was exalted to be the Head, saw his glory both Divine and human; as the Alpha and Omega, the first and last, and as the Son of man walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.

On seeing him, the apostle fell at his feet as dead. He on whose bosom he could formerly lean with all the familiarity of a friend, is now possessed of a glory too great to be sustained by a mortal man. But yet how sweetly is this awful grandeur tempered with gentleness and goodness! "He laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, 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."

The force and beauty of the passage will appear to advantage, if we observe the circumstances of the church and of the apostle at the time. It is supposed to be about the year 95, under the persecution of Domitian. The church, at that time, was under a dark cloud. Great numbers of the first Christians and the first ministers would now have finished their course; many would be cut off by the persecution; all the apostles were dead, excepting John, and he was banished. To an eye of sense it would appear as if the cause must be crushed. How cheering, in such circumstances, must it have been to be told, "I am he that liveth!" The Assyrian invasion, in the time of Hezekiah, filled the breadth of Immanuel's land; but, while Jerusalem was preserved, the head was above water, and the body politic, though overflowed even to the neck, would yet live. Much more would the church in the midst of persecution. While Christ her Head lived, she could not die.

It was *on the Lord's day* that the apostle was favoured with this extraordinary vision, the day in which he had risen from the dead; which circumstance would add force to what he said of himself as having been dead, but

as being now alive. It was the day also in which, as far as their persecuted state would admit, the churches were assembled for Christian worship; and while they, doubtless, remembered the venerable apostle in their prayers, the Lord, by him, remembered and provided for them.

There is a charming circumlocution in the passage, which surprises and overwhelms the mind. The Lord might have said, as on a former occasion, "Be not afraid, it is I;" but he describes himself in language full of the richest consolation: "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death!"

Let us observe the characters which our Lord assumes—consider them as a ground of security to the church—and conclude with a few reflections.

I. Let us observe THE CHARACTERS WHICH OUR LORD ASSUMES. The words contain four positions: viz. that he liveth—that he liveth who was dead—that he liveth for evermore—and that he has the keys of hell and of death.

1. He saith, "I am he that *liveth*." It is a truth that Christ liveth, and always did and will live as "the first and the last;" but the life here spoken of, being that which succeeded to his death, was possessed in the same nature as that in which he died. It was the life which commenced at his resurrection; when, "being raised from the dead, he dieth no more: death hath no more dominion over him." It consists, not merely in existence, but in that "blessing, and honour, and glory" which he received as the reward of his humiliation. It is the possession of that "joy that was set before him," in the prospect of which "he endured the cross, and despised the shame."

There appears to be something more in the words, "I am he that liveth," than if it had been said, *I live*; for this had been true of millions as well as of Christ, whereas that which is spoken is something peculiar to him. Paul says of himself, "I live;" but when he had said it, he, in a manner, recalled his words, adding, "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Christ is not only possessed of life himself, but communicates it to others: his life involves that of the church, and of every individual believer in him. In his life they live, and will live for evermore.

In the life of Christ we trace the execution of the great designs of his death. It is as *living* that he intercedes "for us at the right hand of God." "If," says the apostle Paul, "when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his *life*." We see here three distinct stages in the work of Christ. First, By his death he made atonement for us: this is expressed by his having "reconciled us to God," or restored us to his favour as the Lawgiver and Judge of the world. Secondly, By his word and Spirit we are subdued to the obedience of faith, so as, of enemies, to become friends: this is expressed by our "*being* reconciled," or brought into a state of actual peace and friendship with God. Thirdly, By his "*life*," he saves us: this is that branch of salvation which is effected by his intercession, and which is denominated saving us "to the uttermost." From the first two, the apostle argues the last, as from what Christ did for us when enemies to what he will do for us now that we are friends, and from his having begun the work to his carrying it on to perfection.

In the *life* of Christ we trace all the important blessings of his reign. The promise of the "sure mercies of David," is alleged by the apostle as a proof of the resurrection of Christ. But how does this appear? By "the sure mercies of David," as promised in the 55th of Isaiah, there is doubtless a reference to the covenant made with David, "ordered in all things and sure," and which contained all his salvation, and all his desire. But this covenant was to be fulfilled in the everlasting kingdom of Christ.

"The sure mercies of David," therefore, are the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom, the bestowment of which implies his resurrection; for if death had continued to have dominion over him, no such kingdom could have existed. The sum is, that, in saying to his servant John, "I am he that liveth," he furnished one of the richest sources of consolation to the church in its state of tribulation.

2. He speaks of his life as succeeding to his death: "I am he that liveth, *and was dead.*" This part of the description would remove all doubts, if any existed, as to who he was. The disparity between his present appearance, and what he was when the apostle saw and conversed with him in the flesh, must be exceedingly great, and might tend to stagger his belief in his being the same person; but this speech, whatever doubts he felt, would at once remove them. Yes; it is my Lord himself, and not another. It is he whom I saw expire upon the cross!

The connexion between the death of Christ on earth and his succeeding life in glory renders each of them more interesting. There is great joy derived from the consideration of salvation through the *death* of Christ. It is the burden of the heavenly song. But this would be no joy, were it not for the consideration of his life. What if we could all have obtained salvation; yet if it must have been at the expense of the everlasting blessedness of our Deliverer, who could have enjoyed it? What would the feast be, if the Lord of the feast were not there? Though, in enduring the death of the cross, he had "spoiled principalities and powers," and "made a show of them openly;" yet if he had not lived to enjoy his triumphs, what would they have been to the redeemed, and even to the angelic world? If the King's Son had been lost, the victory of that day would have been turned into mourning. If it had been possible for him to be holden of death, the loss to the moral empire of God must have exceeded the gain, and the saved themselves must have been ashamed to appear in heaven at the expense of the general good! But we are not called to so painful a trial. Our salvation, expensive as it was, was not at this expense. He *was dead*, but he liveth! "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead!"

And as the life of Christ adds to the joy arising from his death, so the death of Christ adds to the joy arising from his life. There is great joy, as we have seen, derived from his life; but it would not be what it is if this his life had not succeeded his death. The life of Isaac was dear to Abraham before he attempted to offer him up a sacrifice; but it would be much more so when he had received him *as from the dead*. The life of Joseph was dear to Jacob when he dwelt with him in the vale of Hebron; but it would be much more so after his having in a manner buried him. If Christ had never divested himself of the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, it would not have been to us that which it will be. The very angels, though he died not for them, nor for any of their species, yet honour him as "the Lamb that was slain." And as to the redeemed themselves, their song is sweeter still: "Thou art worthy," say they, "for thou wast slain, and 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."

3. He describes himself not only as "he that liveth, and was dead," but as being "*alive for evermore.*" He was raised, not only to life, but to an immortal life. "He dieth no more: death hath no more dominion over him." This cheering truth arises from the *perfection* of his sacrifice. The sacrifices under the law could not take away sin, but were mere shadows of

good things to come, and therefore required to be often repeated; but the sacrifice of Christ was "*once* for all." The Scriptures lay great stress upon the term *once*, as applied to the sacrifice of Christ: it is used no less than six times in this connexion: "Christ being raised from the dead," saith the apostle, "dieth no more: death hath no more dominion over him;" and thus he accounts for it,—“For in that he died, he died unto sin *once*; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.” A transient suffering in so Divine a person was sufficient to expiate that which would have subjected us to everlasting punishment, and to lay the foundation of a permanent life with God, both for himself and for all those who believe in him. Such was the value of his sacrifice, that its influence will continue for ever. Even when the work of mediation shall be perfected, and the kingdom as mediatorial be “delivered up to the Father, that God may be all in all,” Christ will live, and be the life of the church for ever. In that state where “there will be no temple,” “the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb” are said to be “the temple thereof;” and the reason given for there being no need of the sun, nor of the moon, is, that “the glory of God will lighten it, and the Lamb will be the light thereof.”

The “Amen” which follows this part of the description seems to be added by the apostle, and designed to express the satisfaction that he felt in the life of Christ. The words, “O king, live for ever,” as addressed to an Asiatic sovereign, could only express the wish of the party that his life might be continued; and that in most cases was mere flattery; but here is neither flattery nor hyperbole. The Lord declares that he lives for ever, and the apostle adds to it his cordial “Amen!”

4. He declares the authority with which he is invested: “And *have the keys of hell and of death.*” By “hell and death,” I understand the powers of the invisible world, which, in reward of his humiliation and death, were put under his control. “God raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, 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; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the Head over all things to the church.—Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto him.” Hell, with all its machinations, can do no more than he permits; and death, with all its terrors, comes and goes at his bidding.

But why are hell and death *only* mentioned as subjected to Christ? Does not his empire extend to the church as well as to the world, and to the visible as well as to the invisible powers? Certainly it does; all power in heaven and earth is given to him: but there was a fitness in his here mentioning that part only of his empire which was hostile to the church, and that kind of hostility which at the time threatened to destroy it. Persecution is the storming work of hell and of death on the strong holds of Zion. Hell furnishes the plan, and death carries it into execution. Men, indeed, have a concern in what is done against the church; but it is as agents of the wicked one: the visible world, therefore, may be overlooked as being influenced by the invisible. To control an army it is sufficient to control those that influence its movements.

II. LET US CONSIDER THESE INTERESTING CHARACTERS AS A SOURCE OF SECURITY AND FELICITY TO THE CHURCH. The existence of the church in this depraved world is one of the wonders of Providence. It is a vessel living in a tempestuous sea; a bush on fire, yet not consumed. If we reflect on the enmity of the wicked against the righteous, their great superiority over them, the attempts that have been made to exterminate them, the fre-

quent diminution of their number by defection and death,—their existence—and especially their increase, must be wonderful, and can no otherwise be accounted for but that Christ liveth.

When they were few in number, and wandered as strangers from one nation to another, he suffered no man to hurt them; “he reproveth kings for their sakes; saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.” In Egypt he saw their affliction, and came down to deliver them. Of Jerusalem the enemy said, “Raze it, raze it to the foundation;” but the Lord remembered it, and destroyed its destroyer. Under the Persian dominion, the captives were restored to their own land; yet even then the enemy intrigued against them; so that for one-and-twenty years the building of the temple was hindered, and the prayers of the prophet Daniel were unanswered. Thus it was, I conceive, that “the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood” the angel for “one-and-twenty days;” but, lo, Michael the chief prince stood with him and helped him.\*

Under the gospel dispensation, as the church became more spiritual, the hatred increased; and as religion was henceforth more of a personal than a national concern, such was the opposition directed against it. But still the great Head of the church lived. The persecution which raged at the time of this prophecy was the second of ten cruel persecutions from the heathen emperors; and though, after this, the government became professedly Christian, yet such were the corruptions which entered in at this door, that in a little time that which was called the Christian church became an antichristian harlot, persecuting the servants of Jesus with a cruelty equal, if not superior, to that of heathens. These floods filled the breadth of Immanuel’s land, reaching even to the neck; but, the church’s Head being above water, she has survived them all.

Often have we seen, in our smaller circles, the cause of God reduced to a low condition; sometimes by the falling away of characters who seemed to be pillars, and sometimes by the removal of great and good men by death. But under all this it is our comfort, the Lord liveth—the government is on his shoulder.

Finally, the life of Christ involves not only the security of the church on earth, but its felicity in heaven. The members being united with the Head, their life is bound up with his life. Even in the present world, if one says, “I live,” he must recollect himself, with the apostle, and add, “Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me;” but if it be so in respect of spiritual life in this world, it will be so as to eternal life in the world to come. Every thing which our Lord did and suffered was for us; and every degree of glory that he possesses in reward of it is for us: for us he became incarnate, died, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and liveth at the right hand of God. “Your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”

From the whole we see, First, that the way to everlasting life is to believe in Jesus. The way of life, according to the tenor of the first covenant, was, “The man which doeth these things shall live by them; but the way of life to a sinner is, “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus,

\* Dan. x. 13, 21. Prideaux reckons, from the first interruption of the Jews in rebuilding the temple to the last sentence of Darius in their favour, only *twenty years*; namely, from the third year of Cyrus to the eighth of Darius Hystaspes; but from Dan. x. 1—4, it appears that though the opposition openly commenced in the third year, yet it had been at work in the second. It was within three days of the beginning of the third year that the prophet began to mourn; if one cause of this mourning, therefore, was the obstruction to the work of God at Jerusalem, it must have begun in the second year; which makes it twenty-one years, corresponding with the *three full weeks* of the prophet’s mourning, and with the *one-and-twenty days* of the angel’s detention, according to the usual prophetic reckoning, a day for a year.



and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." It is as believing in the Son of God that we are interested in him, and, having him, have everlasting life. We have, in the life of Christ, the greatest possible encouragement to believe in him and be saved; for it is as ever living to make intercession for us that he is able to save to the uttermost all those that come unto God by him.

O my hearers! this is the hinge on which our salvation or damnation turns. To refuse him in favour of your own righteousness, or of any other idol, is to refuse life; and to hate him is to love death. The question put to the house of Israel is no less applicable to you than it was to them, "Why will ye die?" Those who believe not in him are as unwilling to come to him that they may have life as the house of Israel were to cast away their transgressions. God has no more pleasure in the death of him that dieth eternally than he had in the death of those who perished under some temporal calamity; nor is the one any more at variance with the doctrine of election than the other was with the doctrine of decrees in general, or of God's doing all things after the counsel of his own will.\*

Secondly, the same truth, like the cloud in the wilderness, wears a bright side to believers, and a dark side to unbelievers. The life of Christ will be the death of his enemies. To behold him coming in the clouds of heaven, invested with the keys of hell and of death, must fill their hearts with dismay. The same power that has so often shut the door of destruction against his servants, so as to forbid their entrance, will shut it upon his enemies, so as to leave no hope of escape.

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## XXIV.

### CHRISTIANITY THE ANTIDOTE TO PRESUMPTION AND DESPAIR.

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And, if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."—1 John ii. 1.

WHEN OUR Saviour ascended up on high, his disciples, who were looking steadfastly toward heaven after him, were thus accosted by the angels, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." It might seem, by this language, that whatever our Lord might do for us in the intermediate period, it was not for us to be made acquainted with it. And it has been suggested that we are ignorant not only of "the place where he resides, but of the occupations in which he is engaged."† There is, indeed, nothing revealed on these subjects to gratify curiosity; but much to satisfy faith. If we know not God, we may be expected to think lightly of sin, and meanly of the Saviour; and if, in consequence of this, we disown his atonement, and perceive no need of his intercession and advocateship with the Father, there will be nothing surprising in it. With such a state of mind we might have lived at the time when "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of

\* The doctrine of *free will*, as opposed to that of *free grace*, is not that, in doing good, we act according to our choice, and require to be exhorted to it, and warned against the contrary; this is manifestly Scriptural and proper; but that it is owing to our free will that we are disposed to choose the good and refuse the evil; if not to the exclusion of Divine grace, yet to the rendering it effectual by properly improving it, and so to *making ourselves to differ*.

† Mr. Belsham's Review of Mr. Wilberforce's Treatise, p. 85.

angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory," and have been no more interested by any of these events than were the unbelieving part of the Jewish nation. But if we entertain just sentiments of the moral character and government of God, we shall perceive the evil of sin and the need of a Divine Saviour, shall consider his atonement as the only ground of a sinner's hope, and his intercession and advocacy with the Father as necessary to our being saved to the uttermost.

To satisfy ourselves that such were the sentiments of the apostles, it is sufficient candidly to read their writings. If their authority be rejected, so it must be; but it is vain to attempt to disguise their meaning. And, before we reject their authority, it will be well to consider the force of their testimony concerning themselves and their doctrine: "We are of God: he that knoweth God, heareth us: he that is not of God, heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." They were either what they professed to be, or presumptuous impostors; and what they said of hearing their doctrine as a test of being *of God* was either true, or they were false witnesses of God; and, as all that we know of Christ is from their writings and those of the evangelists, if theirs be false witness, Christianity itself has nothing to authenticate it.

"My little children," said the venerable apostle, "these things write I unto you, that ye sin not." This is the bearing of all my writings, as well as of all my other labours. Yet, while I warn you against sin, knowing that there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth not, let me remind you that "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Such is the doctrine of the apostle, *an antidote both to presumption and despair*. He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear it.

Let us observe,

I. THE GENERAL CHARGE WHICH CHRISTIANITY GIVES TO ITS ADHERENTS: "These things write I unto you, that ye sin not." This is to repress *presumption*. This is the bearing not only of the writings of John, but of the whole Scriptures: this is the object at which every doctrine and every precept aims.

It may be thought, and has sometimes been said, that "all religions tend to make men better," and, therefore, that this property of the apostle's doctrine has nothing peculiar in it. But this is a gratuitous assumption. All religions do not tend to make men better; but, many of them, much worse. Nay, so far is this assumption from being true, that Christianity is the only religion that, strictly speaking, is opposed to sin. That men of all religions have paid some attention to morals, is true; but, in doing so, they have not been influenced so much by their religion as by the necessity which all men feel of maintaining somewhat of a correct conduct towards one another. As to sin against God, there is no religion but that of the Bible that pays any regard to it. And even Christianity itself, in so far as it is corrupted, loses this property. Every system of religion may be known by this whether it be of God or not. If it delight in calling sin by extenuating names—or represent repentance and good works as sufficient to atone for it—or prescribe ceremonial remedies for allaying the remorse which it produces—it makes light of sin, and is not of God. Every doctrine and precept in the Bible makes much of sin; and this is as much a distinguishing peculiarity of the true religion as any principle that can be named.

Some doctrines are directly of a *warning* nature. Are we taught, for instance, the omniscience and omnipresence of God?—What can be more pungent than such sentiments as these? "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising; thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compasses my path, and my

lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. 'Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.'—"Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there;—if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." Every sentiment here saith to us, "Sin not." Are we taught the *holiness* of God?—It is that we may be holy: "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"—"Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins." Such is the object of all the Divine *precepts* and *threatenings*. Let us seriously read the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, and ask ourselves, What could induce the kindest and best of beings thus strictly to enjoin his will, and thus to scatter his curses against the breach of it? Finally, Such is the object of all the accounts of *justice and judgments* as executed on transgressors. The histories of the flood, of the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah, of the plagues of Egypt and the destruction of the Egyptians in the Red Sea, of the punishments on the rebellious Israelites in the wilderness, of the destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem, first by the Chaldeans, and afterwards by the Romans, all speak one language; all are written to us that we "sin not."

There is another set of Scripture truths which are of a *consolatory* nature; yet they are aimed at the same thing. For what purpose was the Son of God manifested in human nature? Was it not that he might "destroy the works of the devil?" To what are we elected? That we should "be holy, and without blame before him in love." To what are we predestinated? That we might "be conformed to the image of his Son." Why did he give himself for us, but that he "might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works?" Why are we called out of a "state of darkness into his marvellous light, but that we might walk as children of light?" Of what use are the "exceeding great and precious promises" of the Scriptures? Is it not that, having them, we should "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God?" That is not Christianity that does not operate in this way. He that sinneth habitually is of the devil, and hath not seen or known God. Wicked men seek a system of religion which may consist with their lusts; and God, in righteous judgment, often suffers them to find it; but it is not the gospel: the language of the gospel is, "These things are written to you, that ye sin not!"

The Scriptures guard the doctrine of grace, not indeed by limiting its operations to lesser sinners, but by insisting on its mortifying and sanctifying effects. The apostle Paul, notwithstanding all that he had written on justification by faith, exempts none from condemnation; but those that were "in Christ Jesus;" and admits none to be "in Christ Jesus," but those who "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." He still declared, "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die." There is a *universality* pertaining to true holiness which distinguishes it from all that is spurious. We must be "holy in *all manner of conversation*," or there is no real holiness in us. A single "wicked way" will lead to destruction. The certain perseverance of the saints is not that a person, having once believed, whether he depart from God or not, shall be finally saved; but that, God having put his fear in his heart, he shall not be suffered wholly to depart from him. If any man, therefore, depart utterly from God, he ought to conclude that the fear of God was not in him. If the blossom go up as the dust, the root was rot-

tenness. If, in times of temptation, we fall away, it is because we have "no root in ourselves." "If," says the apostle John, "they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." Even our *partial* departures from God must render our state doubtful. When the Galatians doubted the gospel, the apostle stood in doubt of them; declaring he was afraid of them, lest he had "bestowed upon them labour in vain." And had they judged according to evidence, as he did, they must have stood in doubt of themselves. To represent, as some do, that doubts and fears of this kind are the temptations of Satan, or the workings of unbelief, and require to be resisted, as that which is dishonourable to God, is to promote the most dangerous delusion, and to bring the blood of souls upon their own heads. The things which they call the temptations of Satan, may be found to be the dictates of an awakened conscience, which they endeavour to lull asleep. Doubts of the goodness or veracity of God, or of the all-sufficiency or willingness of the Saviour to receive those that come to him, are, indeed, dishonourable to God; but doubts of our own sincerity, founded upon our departures in heart and conduct from him, are so far from being sinful that they are necessary to awaken us to self-examination. Thus the Corinthians, who had sunk into many and great evils, were called upon, not to hold fast the persuasion that, notwithstanding this, their state was safe; but to "examine themselves whether they were in the faith, and to prove their own selves;" and assured that, except indeed they were reprobates, or disapproved of God, *Jesus Christ was in them*—that is, by his word and Spirit, bringing forth fruit.

We proceed to observe,

II. THE SPECIFIC PROVISION FOR THEIR FAULTS AND FAILINGS:—"And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." This is to prevent *despair*.

It is here supposed, that though it is the habitual aim of true Christians not to sin, yet, in this world, they are not free from it. Some have fallen into grievous sins, as we too well know, from Scripture, observation, and, in many instances, from painful experience. Others, who have not fallen so as either to disgrace themselves or the name of Christ, yet have much sin wherewith to reproach themselves; in deeds, or words, or unlawful desires. The petition in the Lord's prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses," shows that we sin, and need forgiveness, as often as we need our daily bread. If any man imagine himself to have arrived to sinless perfection, he must be woefully blind to the spirituality of the Divine law, and to the extent of his obligations. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

Further, It is here suggested that, whatever be our sin, yet if we confess it with a contrite heart, and believe in Jesus who died for sinners, and rose from the dead, and ascended to the Father, he will be our Advocate, and our sins shall be forgiven for his sake. It was in this way that David was forgiven. It is true, Christ had not then died, nor risen, nor ascended to be the Advocate with the Father; but his penitential prayer shows that he believed in him according to the light that he possessed, which might be much greater than we imagine. His prayer to be purged with hyssop, doubtless, alluded to the purgations under the law, by dipping a bunch of hyssop in blood, and sprinkling it upon the unclean; but as none of these ceremonial cleansings were admissible in cases of adultery or murder, he cannot be understood as speaking literally. He must, therefore, have believed in a purgation of which this was only a shadow.

It was in this way that the Israelites were forgiven, when praying with

their hands spread towards the temple. It was not to the building that they directed their prayer, but to him who dwelt therein, between the cherubim, upon the *mercy-seat*. It was to the Lord God of Israel, as thus dwelling upon the *mercy-seat*, that Jonah, at the last extremity, looked and lived: "Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple."

In this way, whatever sins we have committed, we must seek for mercy; and for our encouragement, we are assured of an "Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

But here we must be a little more particular. Here are three parties concerned; the Father, the criminal who has sinned against him, and the Advocate who undertakes his cause. The *Father*, in this case, sustains the character of a Judge: "God the Judge of all." The *criminal* is supposed to stand before the judgment-seat; not, however, in an impenitent state of mind, but like Job when he said, "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further. I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes!" Or like David when he said, "I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me. Against *Thee*, *Thee only*, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest!" Here comes in the *Advocate*. The sinner could not be heard for himself, nor pardoned in his own name; but believing in Christ, *he* undertakes to plead his cause. He had said himself, in effect, Do not condemn me!—To this the Advocate adds, Do not condemn him!

On this part of the subject, we must be still more particular. An advocate, especially one that undertakes the cause of sinners, requires to have an interest with the Judge; to be interested for the sinner; while pleading for him, not to palliate, but condemn his sin; to be fully acquainted with his case; and to have something to plead that shall effectually overbalance his unworthiness. Let us inquire, whether all these qualifications be not found in our "Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

1. *He has the highest interest in the favour of the Judge.* He is his only begotten Son, who dwelleth in his bosom, and who never offended him at any time, but always did that which was pleasing in his sight. So well pleased was the Father with his obedience unto death, that he highly exalted him, giving him "a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand." Well might he say, when on earth, "I knew that thou hearest me always;" for he had, in prophecy, invited him to prefer his request: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Who can doubt the success of a cause in the hands of such an Advocate?

2. *He is deeply interested in favour of the sinner.* If we had to be tried before an earthly tribunal, and wished to engage an advocate, we should certainly prefer one that would so identify himself with us as to be deeply interested in the issue. When, at Horeb, Moses pleaded for Israel to be forgiven, he requested to die rather than not succeed: "Oh," said he, "this people have sinned a great sin,—yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written!" This was the true spirit of an advocate; and he succeeded. But our Advocate has gone further than *requesting* to die; he actually died for us; and his

death "is the propitiation for our sins," on which his advocateship is founded.

3. *While pleading for sinners, he does not palliate, but condemns their sin.* If Moses had attempted to apologize for Israel's idolatry, his interposition must have been rejected. And if it had been possible for Christ himself to have been an Advocate for sin, he could not have been heard. But he was no less averse from sin than the Judge himself. If he was made "in the likeness" of sinful flesh, yet was there no participation of it. Though he descended, and lived among sinners, yet, in respect of character, he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate" from them. While advocating their cause, it was in his own proper character of "Jesus Christ *the righteous.*" It was because of his proceeding on these just and honourable principles that the Father approved and honoured him: "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest iniquity; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."

4. *He is perfectly acquainted with the case of those whose cause he undertakes.* There are cases which, if the advocate had known all, he would not have undertaken; and which, for want of his being in possession of the whole truth, fail in his hands. But our Advocate knows the worst of us. He needs not that any should testify of man; for he knows what is in man. When Simon the Pharisee saw a woman that was a sinner standing at the feet of Jesus, washing them with her tears, wiping them with the hairs of her head, kissing them, and anointing them with ointment, and all this without receiving any repulse from him, he suspected that he was *deceived*, and concluded in his own mind that he could not be that prophet that should come into the world. Had he known her true character, he supposed, he would not have permitted her to touch him! To convince Simon that he was not ignorant of *her* character, he, by answering his private thoughts, proved himself to be fully acquainted with *his*; and proceeded to plead the cause of the penitent sinner, though her sins were many, and to justify himself in receiving and forgiving her.

Our Advocate not only knows all our sins, but *all our wants*; and therefore knows how to provide for them. If previous to the prayer for Peter, it had been referred to him what should be asked on his behalf, having no suspicion of any peculiar temptation being at hand, he might not have been able to say what it was that he most needed. But his Advocate, knowing the temptation that awaited him, framed his plea on his behalf accordingly: "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."

5. *Though he finds no worthiness in the sinner, on which to ground his pleas, but the greatest unworthiness, yet he has that to plead which effectually overbalances it.* It is remarkable that, in that admirable speech of Judah on behalf of Benjamin, he did not fetch his pleas from the innocence of the young man, nor from the possibility of the cup being in his sack without his knowledge, nor from the smallness of his offence; but from his father's love to him, and his own engagement to bring him back, and set him before him! I need not say that on this principle our Advocate has proceeded. The charges against Benjamin were mysterious and doubtful, yet as Judah could not prove his innocence, he admitted his guilt. But our guilt is beyond doubt; in pleading our cause, the Advocate is supposed to rest it on the propitiation in consideration of which our unworthiness is passed over, and our sins are forgiven. The connexion of things is often signified by the order of time in which they occur. Thus the outpouring of the Spirit, that it might appear to be what it was, a fruit of the death of Christ, followed immediately after it; and thus, on his having died, and risen from the dead,

his followers are directed to pray *in his name*. His directing us to pray in his name conveys the same idea, as to the meritorious cause of forgiveness, as his being our Advocate with the Father on the ground of his propitiation.

From the whole, *We are directed to commit our cause to Christ*. We have a cause pending, which, if lost, all is lost with us, and that for ever. We shall not be able to plead it ourselves; for every mouth will be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God. Nor can any one in heaven or earth, besides the Saviour, be heard on our behalf. If we believe in him, we have everlasting life; but if not, we shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on us.

We are also directed, by this subject, *how to obtain relief under the distress to which our numerous sins subject us as we pass through life*. We all have recourse to some expedient or other to relieve our consciences, when oppressed with guilt. Some endeavour to lose the recollection of it among the cares, company, or amusements of the world; others have recourse to ceremonial observances, and are very strict in some things, hoping thereby to obtain forgiveness for others; on some the death and advocateship of Christ have the effect to render them unconcerned, and even to embolden them in their sins. Painful as our burdens are, we had better retain them than get relief in any of these methods. The only way is to come unto God in the spirit of Job, or of David, before referred to, seeking mercy through the propitiation. Thus, while we plead, Do not condemn me, our Advocate will take it up, and add, Do not condemn him!

Finally, From the all-sufficiency of the propitiation *there is no room for despair*. When Jonah was cast into the sea, and swallowed by the fish, still retaining his consciousness, he concluded that all was over with him: "I said I am cast out of thy sight; yet," even in this condition the thought occurred, "I will look again toward thy holy temple." His body was confined, but his mind could glance a thought toward the mercy-seat, whence he had heretofore received relief. He looked and lived. Let this be our determination, whatever be our circumstances or condition. Jesus is "able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

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## XXV.

### THE SORROW ATTENDING WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE.

"And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow."—Eccles. i. 17, 18.

WE have in this book an estimate of human life. Most of the things that are seen under the sun here pass under review; and each, as it passes, is inscribed with vanity.

It may be thought, from the pensive strain of the writer, to be an effusion of melancholy, rather than the result of mature reflection; but it should be considered that no man had greater capacity and opportunity for forming a just judgment; that the book was written at the most mature period of life; and, what is more, that it was written under Divine inspiration.

As *wisdom and knowledge*, in the writings of Solomon, commonly include true religion, so *madness and folly* seem here to be used for irreligion. He studied the nature and effects of both good and evil.

In ascribing "vanity and vexation of spirit" to almost every thing that passed before him, he does not mean that they were in themselves evil, or of little or no value; but that every good had its alloy, or something attached to it which subtracted from it. Thus it was even with *wisdom* and *knowledge*. It is because these were not only good in themselves, but ranked high in the scale of what is estimable, that they are introduced. If the best things pertaining to human life have their alloy, the same must be said of the rest.

In discoursing on the subject, we shall endeavour to show the justness of the remark, and to draw some conclusions from it.

I. LET US ENDEAVOUR TO SHOW THE JUSTNESS OF THE REMARK, OR ITS AGREEMENT WITH UNIVERSAL EXPERIENCE. Knowledge may be distinguished, by its objects, into three parts, or branches: the knowledge of men and things about us—the knowledge of ourselves—and the knowledge of God. Each of these is good, and the practical use of it is wisdom; but each has its alloy, subtracting from the enjoyment which it would otherwise afford.

First, Let us try the justness of the remark in respect of *the knowledge of men and things about us*. None can deny that the thing itself is good and valuable, and the want of it to be regretted as an evil: "That the soul be without knowledge it is not good." It is this which distinguishes men from brutes, and raises some men much higher in the scale of being than others. Minds thus qualified are susceptible of much greater enjoyments than others, and are able to do much more good in their generation than others. The greatest and best things that have been done in the world have been done, in general, not by the ignorant, but by men of understanding. Yet, with all its advantages, there is that attached to it which increaseth sorrow.

1. He that knows the most of mankind will see the most of their *faults* and *defects*, and so be compelled, upon the whole, to think the worst of them; and this, to a good man, must needs be a source of sorrow. I would by no means wish to cherish a spirit of misanthropy. I remember, in a speech delivered in a very respectable assembly, meeting with this sentiment: "I think well of man, but ill of men." On the contrary, I should say, I think ill of man, but well of men, till I see cause to think otherwise. Scripture, observation, and experience concur to justify me in thinking ill of human nature; but as, in our world, there is, through the grace and goodness of God, a good number of upright and benevolent characters, it becomes me to hope the best of every man I meet, till I am obliged, by his conduct or conversation, to form a different judgment; and this I feel to be a principle at a much greater remove from misanthropy than the other.

There are cases in which the more we know of men, the more we shall see reason to esteem them; but this is not true of mankind in general. The longer we live, and the more we are acquainted with them, the more evil we shall see in them. The characters of the greater part of men will not bear scrutinizing. If we look but a little below the surface, whether it be in high life or low life, or even in middle life, we shall see enough to sicken our hearts. Many a favourable opinion, formed under the philanthropic feelings of youth, has been obliged to give way to observation and experience; and many a pleasing dream, into which we have fallen from reading books, has disappeared when we came to read men.

2. He that knows the most of mankind will know most of their *miseries*; and if he be a man of feeling, this must be another source of sorrow. Who can make himself acquainted with the privations and hardships of the afflicted poor without participating of their sorrows? This may be a reason why some who are in opulent circumstances decline visiting them. They



seem to count the cost, not merely what it will require to supply their pecuniary wants, but what they shall lose by a diminution of their pleasure.

If, in addition to the state of the afflicted poor of our own country, we knew the miseries of *slavery*, would it not increase our sorrow? Who, that has only acquainted himself with the facts which have been established during the late parliamentary discussions on the African slave trade, can forbear weeping over the miseries which the avarice of one part of mankind brings upon another? And if, in addition to this, we knew the miseries of *war*, must it not still more increase our sorrow? We hear of great battles, on which depend the fate of kingdoms, and rejoice or are sorrowful as they affect the interests of our country; but did we know all the individual misery produced by the most glorious victory, how different would be our feelings! Did we hear the cries of the wounded, and the groans of the dying; could we know the state of mind in which they died; were we acquainted with the near relations of the dead, the widows and orphans that they have left behind them; alas, were we in the midst of them, we might be reduced to the necessity of trying to get away, and to forget them!

If, leaving these scenes of woe, we turn our eyes to the abodes of *ease and opulence*, we shall not find things as we might expect. How often are men envied, when, if we knew all, we should pity them! We form our estimates of human happiness more by appearances than by realities. We little think how many things are necessary to make us happy, any one of which, if wanting, will render all the rest of little or no account. What are riches, and honours, and amusements to one whose life hangs in doubt, from some threatening disorder which he feels to be preying upon his vitals; or to a mind smitten with melancholy, or corroded with remorse; or to one whose peace is destroyed by domestic feuds, jealousies, or intrigues?

3. He that knows most of the *sentiments* of mankind on everlasting subjects will, if he be a believer in Divine revelation, know most of their *devious and destructive tendency*; and this must be a source of sorrow. There is what is called charity that excites no sorrow on this account; but viewing all religions as nearly alike, all leading to one happy end, it renders the subjects of it quite easy and unconcerned. But *Christian* charity is another thing. It bears good-will to all mankind, but does not think lightly of their alienation from God. He that should doubt whether the sentence passed against a number of traitors was ever designed to be executed, and should persuade them into his way of thinking, might call himself a charitable man; might boast of his own happiness, and the happiness he produced in others; and insist upon it that, by entertaining such views, he did more honour to the government than they who yielded to the gloomy apprehensions of an execution; but if, after all, his opinions should prove *false*, and be found to have originated in his own disloyalty, would not his charity be considered as cruel, deceitful, and destructive? The only difference between this and the charity in question is, that the one goes to destroy men's lives, and the other their souls! *Genuine* charity would have endeavoured to convince them of their guilt, and to persuade them to sue for mercy to their justly offended sovereign. He that can view whole nations of men, who, from time immemorial, have lived "without Christ, having no hope, and without God in the world," and not feel a wish to burst their chains, of whatever religion he may profess to be, must himself be in the same state.

To read the *controversies* of former ages, and those of the present age, even in the *Christian world*, must be depressing to a serious mind. He is either perplexed, and tempted to indulge in scepticism, or, if he feels his

own ground, still he must perceive great numbers wandering in the paths of error; and who, unless God give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, will continue to wander, notwithstanding all that can be said or written to reclaim them. They that have done the most towards bending the mind of man to that of Christ, and inculcating just sentiments of religion, will find, after all their labour, much remaining undone; so much, both of the devious and the defective, that he may retire with the words of the wise man, "That which is crooked cannot be made straight, and that which is wanting cannot be numbered!"

4. He that knows most of *the religious world* will see the most of its *faults* and *imperfections*; and this is another source of sorrow. Among his friends, he will find some will prove false, and others fickle; and, what is worse, many turning their back on Christ, and "walking no more with him." The longer we live in Christian society, and the closer we are connected with it, the more jealousies, envies, evil surmisings, whisperings, and backbitings we shall discover. Those Christians who have to travel to hear the gospel, and only see their fellow Christians once in a week, are apt to consider themselves as under great disadvantages; and, in some respects, they certainly are so; but, in others, the advantage may be on their side. They do not hear so many sermons, but, having to travel, they may be more likely to profit by those which they do hear. They miss much social intercourse; but they also stand aloof from the evils which frequently attend it. On looking round the place on a Lord's day, they see their Christian friends, as we say, in their best dress; knowing just enough to love them and pray for them, and to part with them with affectionate regret; while those who are acquainted with their faults, as well as their excellences, know to the increase of their sorrow.

Once more, He that knows most of the *things of this world* will feel the greatest portion of *disappointment* from them; and this will be a source of sorrow. Riches, honours, and pleasures promise much, and, while inexperienced, we may hope much; but a thorough trial will convince us that happiness is not in them. Even knowledge itself, the treasure of the mind, is not only attained with great labour, but is attended with much painful disappointment. He that makes the greatest researches, as Mr. Poole observes, often finds himself deceived with knowledge falsely so called; often mistakes error for truth, and is perplexed with manifold doubts, from which ignorant men are free.

Secondly, Let us try the justness of the remark in respect of *the knowledge of ourselves*. Self-knowledge is, doubtless, good and of great importance. Without it, whatever else we know, it will turn to but little account; yet this also is accompanied with sorrow. He that knows the most of himself sees most of his own faults and defects. It was by comparing his own mind with the word of God that David exclaimed, "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins." The more we know of ourselves, the worse we shall think of ourselves. We know but little of ourselves at the outset of the Christian life. We see evils in others, and are shocked at them, and are ready to suppose ourselves incapable of any such things; but as the Lord led Israel through the wilderness to humble them, and to prove them, and to know what was in their heart, so he deals with us. We have seen rich men high-minded, and may have thought, if God should give us wealth, how humble and generous we would be with it; we have seen poor men full of envy and discontent, and may have thought, were we in their situation, we would not repine; we have seen men fall in the hour of tempta-

tion, and may have joined in heaping censures upon them. If it please God to try us in these ways, it may be to humble us; and the knowledge that we gain may be accompanied with not a little sorrow.

Thirdly, Let us try the justness of the remark in respect of *the knowledge of God*. No one can suppose but this, in itself, is good, and a source of the highest enjoyment; yet it is no less true that he that increaseth in it increaseth in sorrow.

The more we know of God, the more we shall perceive *our contrariety to him*. If, like Joshua the high priest, we were clothed with filthy garments, yet, while surrounded with darkness, and in company with others like ourselves, we should be, in a manner, insensible of it; but if brought to the light, and introduced to one who was clothed in white raiment, we should feel the disparity. It is thus that not only those who are strangers to Divine revelation, but those who read it without believing it, have no just sense of sin. It was thus that sin, "by the commandment," became to the apostle Paul exceedingly sinful; and that the prophet Isaiah, on beholding the glory of God, exclaimed, "Woe is me! for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"

Beside this, the knowledge of God draws upon us the *hatred*, and frequently the *persecutions, of wicked men*; which, though we may be supported under them, yet, in themselves, must needs be sources of sorrow: "I have given them thy word," said our Lord, in committing his disciples to the Father, "and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

I add, The knowledge of God will, in some cases, draw upon us *the envy of false brethren*. If a good man engage in the work of God from the purest principles, and, by the Divine blessing on his diligence and perseverance, make such progress in useful knowledge as to draw upon himself a portion of public admiration, he may be expected soon to become an object of envy. Men shall rise up who will do their utmost to depreciate and eclipse him. "I considered all travail, and *every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour*. This is also vanity and vexation of spirit."

II. LET US DRAW SOME CONCLUSIONS FROM THE SUBJECT. If things be so, some may think we had better be without knowledge, and be contented to live and die in ignorance. This is not the consequence, however, which the writer wished to have drawn from what he wrote. He says, "That the soul be without knowledge it is not good;" and "wisdom excelleth folly as far as light excelleth darkness." He must, therefore, have judged that, whatever disadvantages attended wisdom and knowledge, the advantages arising from them were far greater. Much of the sorrow arising from a knowledge of ourselves and of God is to be desired, rather than dreaded; and as to that which arises from a knowledge of the evils of the world, and even of the church, it is best to know the truth, though it may give us pain. That exemption from sorrow which arises from ignorance is seldom enviable. To know the evils that are to be found among men is necessary, not only to enable us to guard against them, but to know how to deal with them in religious concerns. If we be ignorant of their faults and defects, we shall be at a loss to carry conviction to their minds, and so to make them feel the need of forgiveness through Jesus Christ. So, to be ignorant of the faults and defects of men professing religion, must be injurious both to them and to ourselves. Without knowing the truth concerning them, we cannot reprove them, and so cannot reclaim them. If those of the house of Chloe had not written to Paul on the state of things at Corinth, it would

have saved him much sorrow, but then what had been the state of the Corinthians? To all appearance they were in the way to ruin; and so a tribe, as it were, would soon have been lacking in Israel. And as to ourselves, by knowing in a certain degree the evils that are to be found, even in the church of Christ, we are better prepared to meet them, and less in danger of being stumbled, or tempted to think the worse of religion, on account of them. By knowing things, in some good degree, as they are, we are enabled to make up our minds. Thus it is that the falls, and even the falling away of some, while it causes much pain, yet does not shake our faith. We learn to think well of religion, let those who profess it prove what they may: "Let God be true, and every man a liar!" And, in knowing the faults and defects even of sincere Christians, we are not led to think ill of them as Christians, or lightly of Christian communion. If a true friend of his country could say,

"England, with all thy faults, I love thee still!"

much more will a true friend of the church of Christ consider Christians, with all their faults, as the excellent of the earth; better than the best of worldly men! And if we love them, it will be in our hearts to live and die with them! Nor is it unnecessary that we should be acquainted with the *miseries* of mankind, whatever sorrow they may occasion: otherwise we cannot sympathize with them, nor relieve them, nor pray for them, nor feel so great an anxiety for the coming of that kingdom whose healing influence shall remove their sorrows.

Three things, however, are taught us by this subject:—

First, *To be moderate in our expectations, as to things pertaining to this life.* If "vexation of spirit" be attached to wisdom and knowledge, what can be expected from less valuable objects? We need but little, nor that little long. The trial made by the wise man, of mirth and pleasure, of building and planting, of the gathering together of silver and gold, &c., is doubtless recorded to teach us that substantial good is not to be found in them. The consequence drawn by the apostle from the brevity of life is designed to moderate both our attachments and our sorrows: "The time is short: it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy as though they possessed not; and they that use this world as not abusing it; for the fashion (or scenery) of this world passeth away."

It may seem, to some, that if we were to feel and act up to this precept it would deprive us of half our enjoyments; but this is a mistake. To be moderate in our expectations is to increase our enjoyment, while the contrary diminishes it. Expectation, raised beyond what truth will support, must be disappointed; and disappointment will embitter that which, if enjoyed in moderation, would have been sweet: "Better is little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure, and trouble therewith."

Secondly, We are taught hereby *to seek the favour of God as the crowning blessing to all our enjoyments.* The vexation of spirit which belongs to the portion of a good man is not as that which attends the wicked. The one is accompanied with a blessing, the other with a curse: "God giveth to a man that is *good in his sight* wisdom, and knowledge, and joy; but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather, and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God." After all the particulars enumerated in the blessing of Joseph, as the precious things of heaven, the dew, and the deep that coucheth beneath, the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and the precious things put forth by the moon, the chief things of the ancient

mountains, the precious things of the lasting hills, the precious things of the earth, and the fulness thereof, the crowning blessing follows—"and the good-will of him that dwelt in the bush!" If this be wanting, all the rest will be unsatisfying. If this be on our heads, our sorrows, whatever they be, will be turned into joy.

Thirdly, We are taught hereby to *aspire after a state in which good will be enjoyed without any mixture of evil as a subtraction from it.* If our wisdom be that of which the fear of the Lord is the beginning, and the object of our knowledge be the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, we shall soon reach that state of holiness and blessedness that is without alloy. "Wisdom, and knowledge, and joy" will then be given us, and all the sources of sorrow which have been enumerated will be dried up. The more we know of the inhabitants of that world, the better we shall think of them, and the more we shall love them. Among all the nations of the saved we shall not find one whose character will not bear scrutinizing. If every heart were as naked to us as ours now are to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do, we should find nothing in them but love. No hypocrisies will be there, nor envies, nor jealousies, nor hard thoughts, nor evil surmisings, to imbitter the cup of joy. No surrounding miseries shall damp our bliss; no error shall throw a mist over our minds, or lead us aside from God. And, what is still more, no imperfections shall mar our services, nor indwelling sins pollute our souls. To this blessed state may we, by all the sorrows of the present life, be led unremittingly to bend our course!

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## XXVI.

### THE MAGNITUDE OF THE HEAVENLY INHERITANCE.

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now: and not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."—Rom. viii. 18—23.

THERE is, in this part of the Epistle, a richness of sentiment and a vast compass of thought. The apostle, having established the great doctrine of justification by faith, dwells here on things connected with it; some of which are designed to guard it against abuse, and others to show its great importance. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation," says he, "to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.—If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.—As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Having thus entered on the privileges of believers, the sacred writer is borne away, as by a mighty tide, with the greatness of his theme. "Heirs of God!" what an inheritance! Such is the tenor of the covenant of grace: "I will be their God, and they shall be my people."—"Joint-heirs with Christ!" what a title! We possess the inheritance not in our own right, but in that of Christ; who, being "heir of all things," looketh down on his conflicting servants, and saith, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit down with me in my throne,

even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." It is true, we must suffer awhile; but if it be "with him," we shall be glorified together.

By "the glory to be revealed in us" is meant, not that glory which we shall receive at death, but the consummation of it at the resurrection. It is the same as that which, in the following verses, is called "the manifestation of the sons of God"—"the glorious liberty of the children of God"—"the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." It is "that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ," for which Christians are taught to look; that *grace* in pursuit of which we are exhorted to "gird up the loins of our minds, to be sober, and hope to the end," and which is to be "brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

On this great inheritance, to which the sons of God are heirs, the apostle enlarges in the words of the text. It is an object of such magnitude, says he, that all the sufferings of the present life are not worthy to be compared with it; of such magnitude as to interest the whole creation; and, finally, of such magnitude that our highest enjoyments do not satisfy us, but we groan earnestly after the full possession of it. To review these three great points is all that I shall attempt.

I. SUCH IS THE MAGNITUDE OF THE GLORY TO BE REVEALED IN US, THAT THE SUFFERINGS OF THE PRESENT TIME ARE NOT WORTHY TO BE COMPARED WITH IT. In speaking of these opposites, the apostle, as by a kind of spiritual arithmetic, seems to place them in opposite columns. The amount of the column of sufferings, if viewed by itself, would appear great. Much evil attends us, both as men and as good men. The misery of man is great upon him; and great are the afflictions which have been endured by the faithful for Christ's sake. For his sake they have been "killed all the day long," and "accounted as sheep for the slaughter." He who entered on this reckoning could not have made light of the sufferings of this present time, for want of an experimental acquaintance with them. In answer to those who depreciated his ministry, he could say, "Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?" Yet the same person assures us that he reckons the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. They may be heavy and tedious, when viewed by themselves; but weighed against a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, they are light and momentary.

It is thus that, in the subject before us, he considers our sufferings as confined to "this present time." The short duration of suffering ordinarily renders it tolerable, even though, for a time, it may be acute; and if succeeded by lasting enjoyment, we consider it unmanly to make much of it; and if it be in the service of a beloved sovereign, and in support of a cause of great importance, and which lies near the heart, it is usually treated as a matter of still less account. Thus it was that the apostle reckoned his sufferings not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed in us.

To say of two things that one of them is not to be compared with the other, is a strong mode of expression. It is in this way that the great God expresses his infinite superiority to the most exalted creatures: "Who in the heavens can be compared unto the Lord? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto Jehovah?" So, when two things of an opposite nature come in succession, and the latter so entirely prevails over the former as to obliterate it, or in a manner to efface the remembrance of it, it may be said of the one that it is not to be compared with the other. Thus the joy that followed the resurrection of Christ was to the sorrow that preceded it: "Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come; but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." Such also will be the joy of the heavenly inheritance, that it will efface from our remembrance the few years of sorrow which have preceded it; so efface them, at least, that we shall never think of them with regret, but as a foil to heighten our bliss.

II. SUCH IS THE MAGNITUDE OF THE GLORY TO BE REVEALED IN US AT THE RESURRECTION, THAT ITS INFLUENCE EXTENDS TO THE WHOLE CREATION. This I take to be generally expressed in the 19th verse: "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." That which follows, in verses 20—22, explains and accounts for it, by showing how the creatures were brought into a state of bondage by the sin of man, and how they shall be liberated from it when he is liberated: "For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

The "creature"—the "whole creation"—and "every creature," are the same thing, and denote, I apprehend, not man, but every creature around him which has been brought under the influence of his revolt. As when Achan sinned, all that pertained to him suffered; so when our first parents sinned, the whole creation, in so far as it was connected with man, partook of the effects. This appears to be meant by the creatures being "made subject to vanity," and coming under "the bondage of corruption."

The creation was brought into this state of bondage, "not willingly," as was the case with man, but by the sovereign will of the Creator. He could have stopped the machinery of the material world, and at once have put an end to the rebellion; but he thought fit to order the laws of nature to keep their course; and as to the abuse that man would make of them, he should be called to account for that another day.

The bondage of the creatures, however, was not to be perpetual: he who subjected them to it subjected them "in hope, because the creature itself also," as well as the sons of God, shall be delivered from its thralldom, and, as it were, participate with them in their glorious liberty. The redemption of our bodies will be the signal of its emancipation from under the effects of sin, and the birth-day, as it were, of a new creation. As by man's apostacy every thing connected with him became, in some way, subservient to evil; so, by the deliverance of the sons of God at the resurrection, they shall be delivered from this servitude, and the whole creation, according to the natural order of things, shall serve and praise the Lord.

But we must inquire more particularly into this "bondage" of the creatures, and into their deliverance from it.

It is true that the ground was literally cursed for man's sake, so as spontaneously to bring forth briars and thorns, rather than fruits; the animals also have literally been subjected to great misery and cruelty: but it is not of a literal bondage, I conceive, that the apostle speaks; nor of a literal deliverance, as some have imagined, by the resurrection of animals; nor of a literal groaning after it. The whole appears to be what rhetoricians call a *prosopopœia*, or a figure of speech in which sentiments and language are given to things as though they were persons. Thus, on the invasion of Sennacherib, the earth is said to mourn and Lebanon to be ashamed; and thus, at the coming of the Messiah, the heavens are called upon to rejoice, and the earth to be glad, the sea to roar, the floods to clap their hands, and the trees of the wood to rejoice.

When God created the heavens and the earth, every thing was made according to its nature and capacity to show forth his glory. Thus "the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard." Thus also heaven and earth are called upon to praise their Maker: "Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light. Praise him, ye heaven of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens.—Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons and all deeps: fire and hail; snow and vapour: stormy wind fulfilling his word; mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars; beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl." Such was the natural order of things established by the Creator: every thing, consciously or unconsciously, furnished its tribute of praise to Him who is over all blessed for ever.

But, by the entrance of sin into the world, the creatures became subservient to it; as, when a rebellion breaks out in an empire, the resources of the country being seized by the rebels are turned to the support of their cause, and against their rightful owner; so every thing which God had created for the accommodation of man, or in any way rendered subservient to his comfort, was turned aside from its original design, and perverted to the purposes of corruption. The Lord complains of the corn, and wine, and oil, and flax, and wool, which he had given to Israel, being prostituted to Baal; and threatens to recover them. Who can count the sacrifices and offerings which have been made of God's creatures to Jupiter, Mars, Venus, Bacchus, and other abominations of the West; or to Bramah, Vishnu, Seeb, Dhoorga, Juggernaut, and other abominations of the East? And though gross idolatry has in many nations been dispelled by the light of the gospel, yet still the bounties of Providence furnished for the accommodation of man are made to serve his lusts. The sun cannot emit his illuminating and fructifying beams but to furnish food for the corrupt propensities of man. The clouds cannot pour down their showers, but the effects of them are made subservient to sin. Rich soils and fruitful seasons become the hotbeds of vice, on which, as in Sodom, men become ripe for destruction at an earlier period than ordinary.

The creatures have not only been subjected to the vanity of serving the idols and lusts of men, but have themselves been turned into gods, and worshipped to the exclusion of the Creator, who is blessed for ever! There is scarcely a creature in heaven or on earth but what has been thus drawn into the service of *corruption*. Not only the sun, and moon, and stars; but gold, and silver, and brass, and wood, and stone, and birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things! And though the light of the gospel has driven



this species of stupidity out of Europe, (which the science of Greece and Rome did not so much as diminish,) yet it is in no want of advocates among her degenerate sons. And they that would be ashamed to plead the cause of gross idolatry, yet in a manner idolize the works of God, by opposing them to his word. The sweet singer of Israel, after celebrating the former, held up the latter as greatly exceeding them. With him the light of nature and that of revelation were in harmony; but unbelievers place them at variance. Nature with them occupies the place of God, and the light imparted by it is admired at the expense of his word. They have no objection to acknowledge a Supreme Being as the author of the machinery of nature, provided he would give up his moral government over them; but the Scriptures are full of hard sayings which they cannot hear! The works of God are silent preachers: in their mouth there is no reproof but what a hard heart can misconstrue into the approbation of the Creator, understanding his bounties as rewards conferred on his virtuous creatures: this, therefore, is the only preaching which many will hear.

In these and a thousand other ways the creatures of God have been subjected to vanity. Had they been possessed of intelligence, they would from the first have risen up against us, rather than have submitted to such bondage. Yes; rather than have been thus forced into the service of sin by the rebel man, they would have conspired together to destroy him from the face of the earth. The sun would have scorched him; the moon with her sickly rays would have smitten him; the stars in their courses would have fought against him; air, earth, fire, water, birds, beasts, and even the stones, would have conspired to rid creation of the being, who, by rebelling against the Creator, had filled it with disorder and misery. And though the creatures are not possessed of intelligence, yet, from a kind of instinctive tendency to vindicate the cause of God and righteousness, they are naturally at war with rebellious man. Were it not so, there would be no need of a covenant to be made on our behalf with the beasts of the field, the fowls of heaven, the creeping things of the ground, and even with the stones.

God in his infinite wisdom saw fit to subject the creatures to this vanity for a season, contrary as it was to their nature; but it is only for a season, and therefore is said to be *in hope*; in the end they that have abused them will, except they repent, be punished, and they themselves be liberated from their hateful yoke. Thus for a season he subjected the seed of Abraham his own servants to serve the Egyptians; but "that nation," says he, "whom they shall serve will I judge; and afterward shall they come out with great substance."

The time fixed for the deliverance of the creatures from the bondage of corruption is that of "the manifestation of the sons of God." Hence they are in a manner identified with them: "The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God;" looking for it as for their own deliverance. The redemption of our bodies from the grave will be the destruction of the last enemy, or, in respect of believers, the termination of the effects of sin; and as the thralldom of the creatures commenced with the commencement of sin, it is fit that it should terminate with its termination. Thus our resurrection will be the signal of emancipation to the creatures, and their emancipation will magnify the glory that shall be revealed in us. Heaven, earth, and seas, and all that in them is, will no longer be worshipped in the place of God, nor compelled to minister to his enemies; but in that renovated state, "wherein dwelleth righteousness," shall exist but to praise and glorify their Creator.

The terms used to express the tendency of the creatures towards this great crisis are very strong. Nature is personified and represented as upon

the utmost stretch of expectation; as groaning and travailing in pain to be delivered. Assuredly that must be a most important object, the accomplishment of which thus interests the whole creation. This object is "the glory that shall be revealed in us—the manifestation of the sons of God—the glorious liberty of the children of God;" and thus it is that the apostle establishes his position—That such is the magnitude of the inheritance of believers, that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with it.

But we must not dismiss this part of the subject without noticing more particularly these descriptions of the heavenly inheritance—"the glory to be revealed in us—the manifestation of the sons of God"—and "the glorious liberty of the children of God." They all refer to the perfecting of salvation through the death of Christ, which is the greatest display of the glory of God that ever has or will be made. This is the last of that series of events which have been carrying on from the beginning of the world, and to the accomplishment of which they have all been subordinate.

"*The glory that shall be revealed in us.*"—There will, doubtless, be a flood of light and joy that will then open to our admiring minds; but the words seem rather to denote *the manifestation of the Divine glory in our salvation* than barely its being *revealed to us*. Thus the Lord Jesus will "come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." The great Physician will appear with his recovered millions, and, in the presence of an assembled universe, will present them to the Father. Thus the glory of God will be revealed to the universe *in our salvation*. All his glorious perfections will be manifested in such a light as they never were by any other of his works, nor by this till it was completed. And that which is revealed to the universe *in us* will not be less, but more, of an enjoyment to us, than if it had been revealed to us only. The joy of the returned captives was not diminished, but increased, by the surrounding nations saying, "The Lord hath done great things for them!"

"*The manifestation of the sons of God.*"—The foregoing description of the heavenly inheritance had respect to God's manifesting *his* glory; this to his manifesting *ours*. We have been familiar with the terms "sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty;" but who has been able to comprehend the magnitude of the blessing? Even an inspired apostle was overwhelmed in thinking of it, and confessed his ignorance: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.—Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is!" Then the importance of being "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ," will be apparent.

The sons of God have here been but little known. Not being distinguished by any thing pertaining to circumstances, or outward condition, and that which has distinguished them being of a still and nontentative nature, they have generally passed through the world without attracting much of its notice, unless it were to despise and persecute them. If they have been acknowledged as pious men, and have escaped the persecutions and reproaches of the wicked, yet, being mostly poor, and undistinguished by brilliancy of talent, they have ordinarily been considered as beneath attention. But, at that day, the Judge of heaven and earth will distinguish them as the sheep that he will place at his right hand, and as the blessed of his Father, whom he will welcome to the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world; while those who have despised and persecuted them shall be sentenced to everlasting punishment.

“*The glorious liberty of the children of God.*”—The children of God have possessed a glorious liberty from their first believing in Christ. The Son then made them free, and they were free indeed! And when the earthly house of their tabernacle is dissolved, and they are received among “the spirits of just men made perfect,” this is a liberty more glorious. But while their bodies are imprisoned in the grave, the deliverance is not complete. They are, as yet, under thralldom. The promise of Christ to raise us up at the last day is yet unfulfilled. They have been delivered from the dominion of sin, and from the existence of it in their minds; but not from its effects. It is reserved for the second coming of Christ, when he will come “without sin *unto salvation*,” to accomplish this. This is the destruction of the *last enemy*; this, therefore, puts an end to the war. In the account of Christ’s second coming, there appears to be an allusion to the blowing of the trumpet of jubilee, and the liberation of captives: “The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the *trump* of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” The resurrection, then, will be to believers a *jubilee*, a day of deliverance. The account of it by the same apostle, in the 15th chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthians, gives us the triumphant song which believers shall sing, standing over the graves in which they have been so long imprisoned: “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!” This is the glorious liberty of the children of God, in which the whole creation shall participate.

III. SUCH IS THE MAGNITUDE OF THE GLORY TO BE REVEALED IN US AT THE RESURRECTION, THAT THOSE CHRISTIANS WHO HAVE POSSESSED THE HIGHEST ENJOYMENTS IN THIS WORLD WERE NOT SATISFIED WITH THEM, BUT GROANED WITHIN THEMSELVES, WAITING FOR THE POSSESSION OF IT. “And not only they, (the creatures,) but ourselves also,—even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”

By “we ourselves” I understand the apostle to mean, not believers in general, but those believers in his own times, who, with himself, possessed so large a measure of grace and peace as habitually to rejoice in the Lord. If we read the first chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, we shall perceive a mighty tide of joy in the minds of these Christians: “And they continued daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people.” They did not merely rejoice *notwithstanding* the persecutions which they met with, but *in* them: “They departed from the presence of the council (where they had been *beaten*) rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.” These good men seem to have found heaven upon earth. They had “the first-fruits of the Spirit,” or those rich communications of the Holy Spirit which, as the first-fruits under the law were the best of the kind, showed what might be expected under the gospel dispensation. The Holy Spirit was imparted to them, not only in a greater degree than usual, but under the peculiar character of the “Spirit of adoption,” by which they were admitted to near communion with God, as children with a father. Nor was this confined to the day of Pentecost, and the times immediately succeeding: forty years after this, Peter could say of the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, “Whom having not

seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet, believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory;" and this, too, at a time when the fiery trial of persecution was coming or come upon them.

But, notwithstanding the spiritual enjoyment possessed by these Christians, they looked forward with earnest desire for the coming of the day of God; not only as those who hastened towards it, but by their hopes and prayers would seem to hasten its approach. Such are the accounts given of them in the New Testament; "Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to *wait for his Son from heaven*, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."—"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly; Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

The enjoyments of the first Christians, instead of abating their desire for the coming of their Lord, appear to have heightened it. The more they possessed of the first-fruits, the more they desired the lump. The fruits of Canaan, brought into the wilderness, were not designed to satisfy Israel, but rather to excite them to go up and possess the land.

It is this ardent desire that is expressed by the terms "groaning within ourselves." The groaning of the creation was in a figure, but this is real. These are those "groanings which cannot be uttered," (verse 26,) and which the Spirit of God excited in the way of hope, and patience, and prayer.

The terms by which the resurrection of believers is expressed, namely, "the adoption," and "the redemption of our body," serve to heighten our ideas of the glorious event. It is observable that the apostle, throughout this description, makes use of what may be called old terms in a new sense. "The glorious liberty of the children of God" was, as we have seen, enjoyed by them, in one sense, from the day that they believed in Jesus; but, in describing this event, a new sense is put upon the same words. The idea of adoption also had long been familiarized to Christians by the apostolic writings; but, as used here, it has a new meaning attached to it. From the day they received the Saviour, they received power to become the sons of God; the Lord Almighty, as by a judicial act and deed, put them among his children; but still, the body being doomed to die because of sin, till this dishonour is wiped away there is something wanting to complete the execution of the deed. Our vile body must be changed, and fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body, ere we can be actually and fully introduced into the heavenly family. We must put on immortality, before we shall be fit company for immortals. We must be made equal to the angels, ere we can associate with angels. Finally, To be completely "the children of God," we must be "the children of the resurrection."

The disparity between Old and New Testament believers was such, that the former were represented as children in a state of minority, kept under tutors and governors till the time appointed of the Father; while the latter are supposed to be come to the possession of their inheritance (Gal. iv. 1—6): how much greater, then, must be the disparity between believers in a mortal and in an immortal state! both are adopted into the family of God; but the one in a much higher sense than the other.

Similar observations might be made on the term *redemption*, as here applied to the resurrection of the body. This term was familiarized to Christians by the apostolic writings. They had "redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins;" but here the word is used in a new sense, denoting the last act of deliverance, even that of the body, from under the thralldom of death and the imprisonment of the grave. It is in reference to this last act of deliverance that Christ is said to be "made unto us

—redemption.” The redemption of our souls by his blood preceded his being made unto us wisdom, or righteousness, or sanctification; but the redemption of our body, as being the last act of deliverance, succeeds them. The body is a part of Christ’s purchase as really as the soul. It is on this principle that the Corinthians were dissuaded from polluting it by fornication: “Ye are not your own, but bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” The resurrection of the body, therefore, is the recovery of the last part of the Redeemer’s purchase, signified by that expressive sentence, so often repeated, “I will raise it up at the last day.”

This is the glory which shall be revealed in us, with which the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared: this is the great crisis of creation, to which all that precedes it tends, as to its last end; and the result to which believers, who have possessed the richest communications of grace in this life, look with earnest expectation.

To conclude, We see here *what a glorious hope the gospel sets before us.* In point of magnitude, crowns and kingdoms are but baubles when compared with it; yet it is not for crowns and kingdoms that the bulk of mankind set at nought the heavenly prize, but for things of still less account. Thirty pieces of silver were, in one case, reckoned of more account than Christ; and in another, a mess of pottage! If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”

Further, We here see *what encouragement there is to pray and labour for the promotion of Christ’s spiritual kingdom in the world.* The glory to be revealed at the resurrection is not to be considered as a solitary event; but rather as the consummation of a series of events which shall have preceded it. Christ, we are told, “must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” The reign of Christ, therefore, is now making progress towards this great crisis; and as it proceeds, it produces, in a degree, the same effects as it will when perfected. As, in proportion to the prevalence of the cause of corruption, the creatures of God are subjected to the vanity of supporting it; so, in proportion as the gospel prevails, and men are freed from the dominion of sin by believing in Christ, the creatures also are emancipated with them; from that time they are used to the glory of God, and not abused to support the cause of his enemies. Thus, in promoting the cause of Christ, we contribute to the deliverance of the creation.

Finally, We must not forget that *the possession of all this glory stands connected with justification by faith in Jesus Christ.* The whole is an inference arising from this doctrine. Whom he thus “justified, them he also glorified.” It is a very serious question, on what ground we rest our acceptance with God. It was at this doctrine that the Jewish nation stumbled and fell. Let their fall be our warning. “The Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law; for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone.”

## XXVII.

[Delivered at the funeral of the Rev. J. Sutcliff, of Olney, June 28, 1814.]

## PRINCIPLES AND PROSPECTS OF A SERVANT OF CHRIST.

“But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”—Jude 20, 21.

I FEEL a difficulty in speaking on this occasion. A long and intimate friendship, cemented by a similarity of views and a co-operation in ministerial and missionary labours, produces a feeling somewhat resembling that of a near relation, who, on such an occasion, instead of speaking, must wish to be indulged in silent grief. But the request of my deceased brother cannot be refused.

In selecting a passage for so solemn an occasion, it was natural for our dear friend to fix on one that should express his *last sentiments* and his *future prospects*. He wished, no doubt, to leave a testimony of his firm persuasion of the truth of those principles which he had believed and taught, and to the hope which they inspired in the prospect of eternity.

The occasion on which the passage is introduced is deserving of our notice. Certain men, of pernicious principles, had crept unawares into the churches, so as to render it necessary for the apostle to write even on “the common salvation,” and to exhort the brethren earnestly to “contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.” Nor was it confined to principles: those who had departed from the faith had also gone far into impure and dissolute conduct; “turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, defiling the flesh, despising dominion, and speaking evil of dignities.” It is no new thing for deviations in Christian doctrine to be followed by those in practice. As truth sanctifies the mind, so error pollutes it. It was to turn the apostasy of these ungodly men to the advantage of the faithful that the apostle addressed them as he did: “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” Having exposed the wicked ways into which these men had turned aside, he points out the good and the right way, and holds up the end to which it leads.

In discoursing on the subject, we shall notice the principles which we have suggested to us, and the prospects which they furnish in respect of a blessed hereafter.

I. Let us offer a few remarks on the principles which are here suggested to us, as constituting true religion. Whatever ideas we have entertained of truth and true religion, it is necessary to bring them to the Scriptures, as to the standard.

1. True evangelical religion is here represented as a building, *the foundation of which is laid in the faith of Christ*: “Building up yourselves on your most holy faith.” Whether it relate to personal or to social religion, this must be the foundation of the fabric, or the whole will fall. Many persons are awakened to some serious concern about futurity, and excited to inquire what they must do to be saved; and, in that state of mind, it is not unusual for them to have recourse to reading and prayer, as a preparation for death. Many preachers, too, will think it sufficient to direct them to the use of these means. But if the death and mediation of Christ be overlooked, it is not reading, or prayer, or any other religious exercise, that will avail us.

Why did John the Baptist, Christ, and his apostles lay the foundation of the gospel kingdom by calling on sinners to "repent and believe the gospel?" Was it not because all other duties, prior to these, were of no account? When some, who followed Christ for loaves, inquired what they must do to work the works of God, his answer was, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent;" plainly intimating that no work, prior to this, could be pleasing to God. The Scriptures direct men to pray, but it is in faith. To the question, "What must I do to be saved?" there is but one answer—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Christ is the door; by him if any man enter in he shall be saved. To direct inquirers to any thing short of this is to direct them to that which, if complied with, will leave them short of salvation. This the Scriptures never do: there is not a direction in the oracles of God but, if truly followed, will lead to everlasting life.

One lays the foundation of his religion in what he calls *reason*; but which in fact is his own reasoning. The same inspired writer who in one sentence commends understanding, in the next warns us against leaning to our own understanding. To strengthen ourselves and one another in this way, is to build up ourselves on our own conceits. Another founds his religion on his *good deeds*. Good deeds undoubtedly form a part of the building, but the foundation is not the place for them. They are not the cause, but the effects of faith. They prepare us for heaven, as meeting us for it, but not as rendering us deserving of it. A third builds his religion on *impressions*. It is not from the death of Christ for sinners or any other gospel truth that he derives his comfort, but from an impulse on his mind that his sins are forgiven, and that he is a favourite of God, which is certainly no where revealed in the Scriptures. We may build ourselves up in this way, but the building will fall. A fourth founds his religion on *faith*, but it is not a holy faith, either in respect of its nature or its effects. It is dead, being alone, or without fruit. The faith on which the first Christians built up themselves included repentance for sin. As when forgiveness is promised to repentance, faith in Christ is supposed; so when justification is promised to believing, repentance is supposed. However distinct they are, as to their nature and objects, they have no separate existence. Hence, in the preaching of John, Christ, and the apostles, they are united; and hence the faith of Christ, supposing a renunciation of every thing opposed to it, and including a cordial acquiescence in the gospel way of salvation through his death, is *most holy*.

These principles your dear deceased pastor has long believed and taught. May you long continue to exemplify their holy influence.

2. That religion which has its foundation in the faith of Christ will increase by "*praying in the Holy Spirit*." As there is no true practical religion without faith in Christ, so there is no true prayer but "in the Holy Spirit." It is true "that men *ought* always to pray, and not to faint," but it is no less true that we know not what to pray for *as we ought*, but as the Spirit helpeth our infirmities: clear proof this, by the way, that that may be man's duty which yet, owing to his depravity, cannot be performed but by Divine grace; and that the Holy Spirit works that in us which God as the Governor of the world requires of us; writing his law upon our hearts, or working in us that which is pleasing in his sight.

The assistance of the Holy Spirit, however, is not that of which we are always sensible. We must not live in the neglect of prayer at any time because we are unconscious of being under Divine influence, but rather, as our Lord directs, pray *for* his Holy Spirit. It is *in* prayer that the Spirit of God ordinarily assists us. Prayers begun in dejection have often ended

in joy and praise: of this many of the Psalms of David furnish us with examples.

One of the sentences uttered by your deceased pastor, when drawing near his end, was, "I WISH I HAD PRAYED MORE." This was one of those weighty sayings which are not unfrequently uttered in view of the solemn realities of eternity. This wish has often recurred to me since his departure, as equally applicable to myself, and with it the resolution of that holy man, President Edwards, "so to live as he would wish he had when he came to die." In reviewing my own life, *I wished I had prayed more than I have for the success of the gospel.* I have seen enough to furnish me with matter of thankfulness, but, had I prayed more, I might have seen more. I wish I had prayed more than I have *for the salvation of those about me*, and who are given me in charge. When the father of the lunatic doubted whether Jesus could do any thing for him, he was told in answer, that, if he could believe, all things were possible. On hearing this he burst into tears, saying, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!" He seems to have understood our Lord as suggesting that, if the child was not healed, it would not be owing to any want of power in him, but to his own unbelief. This might well cause him to weep and exclaim as he did. The thought of his unbelief causing the death of his child was distressing. The same thought has occurred to me as applicable to the neglect of the prayer of faith. Have I not by this guilty negligence been accessory to the destruction of some that are dear to me? And were I equally concerned for the souls of my connexions as he was for the life of his child, should I not weep with him? I wish I had prayed more than I have *for my own soul*: I might then have enjoyed much more communion with God. The gospel affords the same ground for spiritual enjoyment as it did to the first Christians. I wish I had prayed more than I have *in all my undertakings*: I might then have had my steps more directed by God, and attended with fewer deviations from his will. There is no intercourse with God without prayer. It is thus that we walk with God, and have our conversation in heaven.

3. We are given to understand, that by means of building on our most holy faith, and praying in the Holy Spirit, we "*keep ourselves in the love of God.*" The love of God here is to be understood not of his love to us, but of ours to him; as when our Lord told the unbelieving Jews that they had not "the love of God" in them. To keep alive this sacred flame amidst the temptations of the world is in a manner the sum of the Christian life. If this be preserved, every other grace will thrive, and we shall prosper in all that we set our hands to in the service of God. Not only must natural affection to our dearest friends and relations give place to the love of God, but even the love of our Christian brethren must be *on account of their obedience to him*: "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?—Who-soever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

This is a subject into which your dear pastor entered with deep interest, considering it as essential to true religion. He dwelt much in his preaching on the glory of the Divine character and government, as displayed in the law and the gospel, and scrupled not to declare his firm persuasion that all religious affections which disregarded this were spurious, and would prove of no account at the great day. He was persuaded that as sin must be hated *as sin*, or it is not hated at all; so God must be loved *as God*, or he is not loved at all. But to love God as God is to love him for what he *is*, as well as for what he has *done for us*. He had, indeed, no such notion of loving God for his own excellency as should render us indifferent to our own salvation. On the contrary, he considered it as essential to the love of



God to desire his favour as our chief good. But we can no more desire this, irrespective of what he is, than we can desire any other object without considering it as *in itself* desirable. Unless we love God in respect of his character, his favour would be no enjoyment to us.

In these views I am persuaded that our brother was in the right, and that, instead of their being mere metaphysical subtilities, they enter into the essence of true religion. The glory of the gospel consists in an exhibition of the glory of the Divine character. Had it been possible for sin to have been forgiven, and sinners accepted, in a way inconsistent with righteousness, however agreeable it might have been, as furnishing us with the means of escape from wrath, there had been no glory in it, and, had we truly loved God, no satisfaction to our minds.

In judging of what is true or false, right or wrong, the love of God is that to the mind which an ear for music is to harmony, or which a delicate sense of fitness is to our speaking and acting with propriety. It is thus that the apostle represents it in his Epistle to the Philippians: "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent;" or—*in all sense; that ye may try things that differ*. In short, there is no calculating the bearings of this principle: it is the life-blood that flows through all the veins of true religion. Hence the prayer of the apostle: "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God."

It is by building up ourselves on our most holy faith, and praying in the Holy Spirit, that we are supposed to keep alive this heavenly flame. These are the means adapted to that important end; they are to the love of God that which oil is to the fire, tending to feed and to enliven it. It is by a growing acquaintance with the word of God, accompanied with habitual prayer, that the love of God increases and abounds more and more. There are things which are inconsistent with the love of God, such as the love of the world and the indulgence of its lusts: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." But a life of faith and prayer will subdue these weeds, no less than they, when indulged, are known to choke the word of God, and to render it unfruitful. Let the field be but well occupied with good seed, and there will be no room for the weeds: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh."

4. We are taught that, when we have done all, *in looking for eternal life, we must keep our eye singly and solely on the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ*. It was this part of the subject that our brother particularly repeated, as expressive, I doubt not, of both the ground and object of his hope. Every one who knew him can bear testimony that he was a just and holy man, and that it was his great concern, in every station he filled, to maintain good works; but his dependence for acceptance with God was not on them. He looked for eternal life through "the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ." The best characters have always been the most sensible of their own unworthiness, and the furthest from self-righteous boasting. After all their labours in the cause of God, they feel to have been unprofitable servants, as having done only what was their duty to do, and that with so much imperfection as to furnish matter of humiliation and self-abasement. It is true that a servant of God may enjoy a portion of solid satisfaction in reviewing those things which, by the grace of God, he has been enabled to accomplish, and this without any mixture of self-righteous boasting. This was the case with the apostle of the Gentiles. He could say, on the approach of death, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord

the righteous Judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." But if Paul himself had been speaking of the consideration on which he hoped to be accepted and saved, he would, like Jude, have resolved it into "the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ."

You know, brethren, that this is the doctrine which your pastor has preached among you for nearly forty years. It is true he did not so represent the grace of God as to cherish a spirit of slothfulness or wantonness, but, in all his labours, it was his uniform design to direct his hearers, whether they would hear or whether they would forbear, to the only way of salvation marked out in the Holy Scriptures: "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." He preached the doctrine of sovereign grace in such a manner as to *warn* every man against trusting to his own righteousness, and *teach* every man in what way he must be saved, if saved at all, as well as to lead those who have believed in Jesus to ascribe it to the grace of God that they were what they were. And now, having, as I said, for nearly forty years, pointed you to the good and the right way, he has himself walked in it; leaving you and all the world with this sentiment upon his lips—"Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life!"

Let us now proceed to the latter part of the subject; namely,

II. THE PROSPECTS WHICH THESE PRINCIPLES FURNISH AS TO A BLESSED HEREAFTER: "Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

By "the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ" I understand that which is communicated through his death, and with the dispensation of which he is invested, both now and at the day of judgment: "Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.—The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day."

We have already received much of the mercy of Christ. It was mercy that induced him to assume our nature, and undertake our salvation; to give himself an offering and a sacrifice to God for us; to send his Holy Spirit to renew us, when we were dead in sin; to intercede for us at the right hand of God; and to be with us in all our labours and sufferings for his name's sake: but in respect of actual enjoyment, there is much more yet to be expected. The mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ is communicated in greater and greater degrees, till, like rivers terminating in the ocean, it issues in eternal life.

The first exercise of mercy which the Scriptures direct us to look for, on our leaving the body, is *an immediate reception into the presence of Christ, and the society of the spirits of just men made perfect*. "The beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.—Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.—Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.—We are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.—I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.—And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." What this overwhelming tide of mercy will prove we have yet to learn. When the Lord turned again the captivity of Judah, they were like those that dream; the deliverance seemed too great to be real. And thus it may be with believers on their departing from the body, and entering into the joy of their Lord. But of this our dear brother knows more, since his talking

leave of us, than we should be able to discover in a series of years on earth, even though we should make it our constant study. If an inspired apostle could say, "We know not what we shall be," it is vain for us to think of forming an adequate conception of it.

I do not know whether I ought not to reckon under this particular *the glorious progress of Christ's kingdom in this world*. Why should we suspect whether our brethren who rest from their labours be from hence interested in this object? If there be joy in heaven among the angels over one sinner that repenteth, why not among the glorified saints? And if over one sinner, much more over the multitudes that shall be gathered in the latter days from every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.\* There is a sense in which the dead know not any thing: "Their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished, neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun." All this is true, as to the things of this world; but it does not follow that those who die in the Lord have no more a portion in his spiritual kingdom. As well might we infer that their love of him and hatred of evil shall perish. But I ask leave, on this subject, to refer to *A meditation on the nature and progressiveness of the heavenly glory*, contained in a small volume of "Dialogues, Letters, and Essays," published in 1806.†

Another stream of mercy for which we are directed to look will attend the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and consist in *the dead being raised, and the living changed*. "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven,—with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." It has been usual for nations to reserve the most notable acts of grace to the appearance or coronation of their kings, as tending to honour their entrance on the government. And thus both the first and second appearing of Christ are periods which God has distinguished by the most glorious displays of mercy. The former was a jubilee to the Gentile world; and the latter will be the same to the whole creation. As, on the sounding of the jubilee trumpet, the captives were liberated; so, when the trump of God shall sound, the righteous dead shall be raised, and their resurrection will be to the creatures of God the signal of emancipation from under the effects of sin.

View the grave as a long, dark, and comfortless abode, and it is sufficient to appal the stoutest spirit; but take into consideration that here the Lord lay—that he was raised from the dead, that he might be the first-fruits of them that slept—and that of all that the Father gave him he will lose nothing, but will raise it up at the last day—and it will wear a different aspect. Job, when contemplating the grave as a long and dreary habitation, describes it in the most plaintive language: "Man lieth down, and riseth not till the heavens be no more!" But when his views are fixed on the deliverance which he should obtain at that great and glorious day, his complaints are exchanged for triumphs. It is delightful to observe the erection of soul which a believing prospect of the resurrection gave him, after all his depression: "Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! that they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall

\* Such, we know, were the ideas of our dear departed brother; which, as some may remember, he enlarged upon at the Thursday-morning meeting of the Association, held at Kettering, in 1813.

† Published in the third volume of the present edition.—B.

stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." In a strain very similar to this, the apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, describes the victory over death and the grave, representing believers as actually raised from the dead, and as standing upon their graves, looking the conquered enemy in the face, and exclaiming, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." By looking for this part of the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be reconciled to death, even before we meet it.

But there is another stream of mercy beyond this, to which we are directed to look, and which pertains to *the last judgment*. We have an impressive idea given us of this in Paul's prayer for Onesiphorus: "The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; but when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. The Lord grant unto him that he may find *mercy of the Lord in that day.*"

We have needed mercy on many days, and have found it; but that is a day in which we shall need it more than ever. It is a fond notion, entertained by some, that the sins of believers will not be brought into judgment. We are assured, however, that we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one of us shall give an account of himself to God; and that of every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account thereof at the day of judgment. The mercy of the Lord in that day will not consist in connivance; but, as in all other instances, be exercised consistently with righteousness. In our present state of mind, we may wish to have it otherwise. David might wish that the evil he had wrought in secret should be kept secret; but the Lord determined to expose it before the sun. It does not comport with the character of God to conceal the truth, but to make it manifest. If the sins of believers were not brought into judgment, there would be no occasion for the exercise of forgiving mercy. It is from the strictness of the trial, and the awfulness of the sentence to which, if dealt with according to their deserts, they would be exposed in that day, that mercy will be needed. The world shall know their guilt, and their repentance, and the way in which they are forgiven; so as to glorify God, though it be unwillingly, and to feel the justice of their own condemnation. In this view of the last judgment, the manifestation of guilt, and wrath, and mercy will each surpass all our present conceptions.

It is commonly represented, in the Scriptures, that every man will be judged "according to his works;" and true it is, that all our actions and words, and even thoughts, will undergo an impartial scrutiny, and be considered as the test of character. They, for example, who have ministered to Christ's members in their necessities, will be treated as having ministered unto him; and they that have disregarded them, as having disregarded him: but if, by being judged according to our works, were meant that God will proceed with us on the principles of mere justice, giving to every one his due, we should all be condemned: "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared."

Nor will the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, in that day, be confined to the forgiveness of sin: even the *rewards* of that day, though expressive of righteousness and faithfulness, yet have their origin in mercy. The crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give in that day

to all who love his appearing, will not be a reward of debt, but of grace. But for grace, we should have had no good deeds to be rewarded; or if we had, they could no more be named in that day than the good behaviour of a murderer will bear to be alleged as a balance against his crimes. But being accepted in Christ, what is done for him is rewarded for his sake. Hence the crown of glory that shall be bestowed on his appearing is denominated, "the *grace* that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

After this, nothing remains but that *eternal life* into which, as into an ocean, all these streams of mercy flow: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Such was the object of your dear pastor's hope. May such be yours and mine: let our last end be like his!

The separation of a pastor and a people is a serious event. He is gone to give account of his ministry, and his account will include many things pertaining to the people of his charge. Some of them, I trust, will be found to have received the love of the truth, and will be his joy and crown of rejoicing. Could he have uttered his heart to you, his children, it would have been to press upon you a perseverance in the things that you have received and learned. Nay, he did so far utter his heart as to say, to those about him, "If any thing be said as from me, let the last word be, 'As I have loved you, see that ye love one another.'" I doubt not but it has been his endeavour that, after his decease, you might have these things always in your remembrance; and that he was less anxious that you should remember him than them: but I trust you will remember both. Others, I fear, will be found to have sat under his ministry in vain. The word preached has not profited them, not being mixed with faith. It is an affecting case to perish from under a faithful minister; for if he be pure from your blood, on whose head must it be found, but on your own? Let us hope that, if the warning voice of your minister has not been heard before, it may be heard now. His last end furnishes a lesson of instruction, by which he being dead, yet speaketh. You see here, that if a man keep Christ's saying, he will never see death. Death to him is not death, but the introduction to everlasting life. But know also, that he that believeth not the Son will never see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.

I shall conclude with a brief account of our deceased brother; which I give partly from my own knowledge, and partly from the communications of others.

I am aware that some great and good men have imposed silence on these occasions. Without impeaching their motives, I take the liberty to differ from them. It is true that for sinful creatures, as we all are, to heap encomiums on one another, is vain and sinful; yet we may err, on the other hand, by concealing what the grace of God has done for us. In this view one may, on occasion, speak of himself, as did the apostle Paul; and if so, why not of another? David did not withhold a tribute of affection to the memory of his brother Jonathan. Nor did Luke conceal the fruits of faith and love which had appeared in Dorcas. She might have left an injunction that at her decease nothing should be said of her; but the widows *must* weep, and show the garments which she had made for the poor in her lifetime. It is not for us to suppress the feelings of nature, and still less those of grace.

Our deceased brother was born near Halifax, in Yorkshire, on the 9th of August, 1752, O. S. His parents were both of them pious characters, and remarkable for their strict attention to the instruction and government of their children. Of course he would be taught the good and the right way

from his childhood. It does not appear, however, that he was made wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus, till about the sixteenth or seventeenth year of his age. This was under the ministry of his revered friend and father Mr. John Fawcett, pastor of the church meeting at Hepden Bridge. Of this church he became a member, on May 28, 1769. Being of a serious and studious turn of mind, he appeared to his friends to possess gifts suited to the ministry, which was proposed to his consideration. The proposal met with his own wishes, and, being desirous of obtaining all the instruction he could, he went, in January, 1772, to the Bristol Academy, then under the care of Messrs. Hugh and Caleb Evans. Of his conduct in this situation, it is sufficient to say that it procured him the esteem of his tutors to the end of their lives.

In 1774 he left the academy, and, after stopping a short time at different places, in July, 1775, he came to Olney. It was in the spring of the following year, when the Association was held at Olney, that my acquaintance with him commenced; and, from that day to this, all that I have known of him has tended to endear him to me.

I cannot say when it was that he first became acquainted with the writings of *President Edwards*, and other New England divines; but, having read them, he drank deeply into them: particularly into the harmony between the law and the gospel—between the obligations of men to love God with all their hearts and their actual enmity against him—and between the duty of ministers to call on sinners to repent and believe in Christ for salvation, and the necessity of omnipotent grace to render the call effectual. The consequence was, that while he increased in his attachment to the Calvinistic doctrines of human depravity, and of salvation by sovereign and efficacious grace, he rejected, as unscriptural, the *high*, or rather *hyper*, Calvinistic notions of the gospel, which went to set aside the obligations of sinners to every thing spiritually good, and the invitations of the gospel as being addressed to them.\* Hence it was that his preaching was disapproved by a part of his hearers, and that, in the early part of his ministry at Olney, he had to encounter a considerable portion of individual opposition. “By patience, calmness, and prudent perseverance, however,” says one of his friends, “he lived to subdue prejudice; and though his beginning was very unpropitious, from a small and not united interest, he raised it to a large body of people, and a congregation most affectionately attached to him.”

He had a largeness of heart that led him to expect much from the promises of God to the church in the latter days. It was on *his* motion, I believe, that the Association at Nottingham, in the spring of 1784, agreed to set apart an hour on the evening of the first Monday in every month for social prayer for the success of the gospel, and to invite Christians of other denominations to unite with them in it.

It must have been about this time that he became acquainted with *Mr. Carey*, who then resided at Hackleton. Mr. C. had been baptized by Mr. (now Dr.) Ryland, at Northampton, on the 5th of October, 1783, and, after a while, joined the church at Olney, by whom he was sent into the ministry. Without reading any thing material on Christian doctrine, besides the Scripture, he had formed his own system; and, on comparison, he found it to be so near to that of several of the ministers in his neighbourhood as to lay the foundation of a close and lasting friendship between them. But to return to our deceased brother—

\* His views of the gospel may be seen by a small piece, first published in 1783, entitled, *The First Principles of the Oracles of God, represented in a Plain and Familiar Catechism for the Use of Children*. It has gone through several editions.

In all the conversations between the years 1787 and 1792, which led on to the formation of the *Baptist Missionary Society*, and in all the meetings for fasting and prayer, both before and after it was formed, he bore a part. In 1789 he republished President Edwards's "Humble Attempt to promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God's People in Extraordinary Prayer for the Revival of Religion." How much this publication contributed to that tone of feeling which, in the end, determined five or six individuals to venture, though with many fears and misgivings, on an undertaking of such magnitude, I cannot say; but it doubtless had a very considerable influence on it.

In April, 1791, there was a double lecture at Clipstone, and both the sermons, one of which was delivered by brother Sutcliff, bore upon the meditated mission to the heathen. His subject was *Jealousy for God*, from 1 Kings xix. 10. After public worship, Mr. Carey, perceiving the impression that the sermons had made, entreated that something might be resolved on before we parted. Nothing, however, was done but to request brother Carey to revise and print his "Inquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use means for the Conversion of the Heathen." The sermons also were printed at the request of those who heard them.\*

From the formation of the Society, in the autumn of 1792, to the day of his death, our brother's heart and hands have been in the work. On all occasions, and in every way, he was ready to assist to the utmost of his power.

In 1796 he married *Miss Jane Johnstone*, who was previously a member of his church. This connexion appears to have added much to his comfort. For eighteen years they lived together, as fellow helpers to each other in the ways of God; and their separation has been but short. The tomb that received his remains has since been opened to receive hers. He died on the 22d of June, and she on the 3d of September following, possessing the same good hope, through grace, which supported him. A sermon was preached at her interment, by Mr. Geard of Hitchin, from Rom. v. 2, "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

Mr. Sutcliff had been in a declining state of health for several years past. On the 3d of March, 1814, being on a visit at London, he was seized, about the middle of the night, with a violent pain across his breast and arms, attended with great difficulty of breathing. This was succeeded by a dropsy, which, in about three months, issued in his death.

Two or three times, during his affliction, I rode over to see him. The first time he had thoughts of recovering; but, whatever were his thoughts as to this, it seemed to make no difference as to his peace of mind. The last time I visited him was on my way to the annual meeting in London, on the 19th of June. Expecting to see his face no more, I said, on taking leave, "I wish you, my dear brother, an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ!" At this he hesitated; not as doubting his entrance into the kingdom, but as questioning whether the term *abundant* were applicable to him. "That," said he, "is more than I expect. I think I understand the connexion and import of those words—'Add to your faith

\* If he published any other sermons, or any thing else, besides his *Catechism*, and the *Introductory Discourse at the Ordination of Mr. Morgan of Birmingham*, it has escaped my recollection. He, however, wrote several of the Circular Letters of the Northamptonshire Association; namely, that of 1799, *On Providence*; of 1786, *On the Authority and Sanctification of the Lord's Day*; of 1797, *On the Divinity of the Christian Religion*; of 1800, *On the Qualification for Church Fellowship*; of 1803, *On the Lord's Supper*; of 1805, *On the manner of attending to Divine Ordinances*; of 1808, *On Obedience to Positive Institutions*; and of 1813, *On Reading the Word of God*.

virtue—give diligence to make your calling and election sure—for *so* an entrance shall be ministered unto you *abundantly*.' I think the idea is that of a ship coming into harbour with a fair gale and a full tide. If I may but reach the heavenly shore, though it be on a board or broken piece of the ship, I shall be satisfied."

The following letter received from his brother, *Mr. Daniel Sutcliff*, who was with him the last month, will furnish a more particular account of the state of his mind than I am able to give from my own knowledge.

"From the commencement of his illness I found, by his letters,\* that his mind was in general calm and peaceful. 'All,' said he, 'is in the hands of a wise and gracious God. We are the Lord's servants, and he has a right to dispose of us as he pleases, and to lay us aside at any time.' Nearly a month before his end I went to see him—to see the chamber where the good man dies.

"His mind was generally calm and happy; though, as to strong consolation, he said he had it not. When something was mentioned of what he had *done*, in promoting the cause of Christ, he replied, with emotion, 'I look upon it all as nothing; I must enter heaven on the same footing as the converted thief, and shall be glad to take a seat by his side.'

"His evidences for heaven, he said, were a consciousness that he had come to Jesus; and that he felt a union of heart with him, his people, and his cause; and Jesus had said, 'Where I am, there shall my friends be.' The heaven that he hoped for, and which he had in no small degree anticipated, was union and communion with Christ and his people. He said, 'The idea of being for ever separated from him appears to me more dreadful than being plunged into non-existence, or than the greatest possible torture.'

"He often intimated that his views of Divine things were far more vivid and impressive than they had ever been before. He had a greater sense of the depravity of the human heart, and of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, as consisting in disaffection to the character and government of God, than at any former period of his life. He had, he said, an inexpressibly greater sense of the importance of ministers having correct views of the import of the gospel message, and of their stating and urging the same on their hearers, than he had ever had before. He was ready to think, if he could communicate his present views and feelings, they must produce a much greater effect than his preaching had ordinarily done. 'If I were able to preach again,' said he, 'I should say things which I never said before: but God has no need of me; he can raise up men to say them better than I could say them.' He would sometimes say, 'Ministers will never do much good till they begin to *pull sinners out of the fire!*'

"To Mrs. Sutcliff he said, 'My love, I commit you to Jesus. I can trust you with him. Our separation will not be long; and I think I shall often be with you. Read frequently the Book of Psalms, and be much in prayer. I am sorry I have not spent more time in prayer.' At another time he said, 'I wish I had conversed more with the Divine promises: I believe I should have found the advantage of it now.' Others of his expressions were, 'Flesh and heart fail.—All the powers of body and mind are going to pieces.—Shortly this prison of my clay must be dissolved and fall.—Why is his chariot so long a coming? I go to Jesus; let me go—depart in peace—I have seen thy salvation.'

"A day or two before he died, he said, 'If any thing be said of me, let the last word be, *As I have loved you, see that ye love one another.*'

"On the 22d of June, about five in the afternoon, an alteration took

\* They had been used to correspond in short-hand.



place; he began to throw up blood. On perceiving this, he said, 'It is all over; this cannot be borne long.' Mr. Welsh of Newbury\* being present, said, 'You are prepared for the issue.' He replied, 'I think I am: go and pray for me.' About half an hour before his departure, he said, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.—It is come—perhaps a few minutes more—heart and flesh fail—but God—That God is the strength of his people is a truth that I now see as I never saw it in my life.' These were the last words he could be heard to speak.

“‘Life, take thy chance; but oh for such an end!’”

Mr. Daniel Sutcliff adds the following lines, as having been frequently repeated in his illness:

“We walk a narrow path, and rough,  
And we are tired and weak;  
But soon we shall have rest enough  
In those blest courts we seek.

Soon in the chariot of a cloud,  
By flaming angels borne,  
I shall mount up the milky way,  
And back to God return.

I once have tasted Canaan's grapes,  
And now I long to go  
To where my Lord his vineyard keeps,  
And where the clusters grow!”

In saying a few things relative to his character, talents, temper, &c., I would not knowingly deviate in the smallest degree from truth. He possessed the three cardinal virtues, *integrity*, *benevolence*, and *prudence*, in no ordinary degree. To state this is proof sufficient to every one who knew him. He was economical, for the sake of enabling himself to give to them that needed. The cause of God lay near his heart: he denied himself of many things that he might contribute toward promoting it. It was from a willingness to instruct his younger brethren whose minds were toward the mission, that, at the request of the Society, he took several of them under his care: and, in all that he has done for them and others, I am persuaded he saved nothing; but gave his time and talents for the public good.

I have heard him sigh under troubles; but never remember to have seen him weep but from joy, or from sympathy. On his reading or hearing the communications from the East, containing accounts of the success of the gospel, the tears would flow freely from his eyes.

His talents were less splendid than useful. He had not much brilliancy of imagination, but considerable strength of mind, with a judgment greatly improved by application. It was once remarked of him, in my hearing, by a person who had known him from his youth, to this effect—That man is an example of what may be accomplished by diligence and perseverance. When young he was no more than the rest of us; but by reading and thinking he has accumulated a stock of mental riches which few of us possess.—He would not very frequently surprise us with new or original thoughts; but neither would he shock us with any thing devious from truth or good sense. Good Mr. Hall of Arnsby, having heard him soon after his coming to Olney, said familiarly to me, “Brother Sutcliff is a safe man: you never need fear that he will say or do an improper thing.”

He particularly excelled in *practical judgment*. When a question of this nature came before him, he would take a comprehensive view of its bearings, and form his opinion with so much precision as seldom to have occasion to change it. His thoughts on these occasions were prompt, but he

\* Now of Uxbridge.—B.

was slow in uttering them. He generally took time to turn the subject over, and to digest his answer. If he saw others too hasty for coming to a decision, he would pleasantly say, "Let us consult the town-clerk of Ephesus, and do nothing rashly." I have thought for many years that, among our ministers, *Abraham Booth* was the first counsellor, and *John Sutcliff* the second. His advice in conducting the mission was of great importance, and the loss of it must be seriously felt.

It has been said that his *temper* was naturally irritable, and that he with difficulty bore opposition; yet that such was the overbearing influence of religion in his heart that few were aware of it. If it were so, he must have furnished a rare example of the truth of the wise man's remark, "Better is he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." Whatever might have been his natural temper, it is certain that *mildness*, and *patience*, and *gentleness* were prominent features in his character. One of the students who was with him said he never saw him lose his temper but once, and then he immediately retired into his study. It was observed by one of his brethren in the ministry, at an Association, that the promise of Christ, that they who learned of him, who was "meek and lowly in heart, should find rest unto their souls," was more extensively fulfilled in Mr. Sutcliff than in most Christians. He was "swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." Thus it was that he exemplified the exhortation of the apostle, "Giving no offence, that the ministry be not blamed."

There was a gentleness in his *reproofs* that distinguished them. He would rather put the question for consideration than make a direct attack upon a principle or practice. I have heard him repeat Mr. Henry's note, on Prov. xxv. 15, with approbation; "We say, Hard words break no bones; but it seems that soft ones do." A flint may be broken on a cushion, when no impression could be made on it upon an unyielding substance. A young man, who came to be under his care, discovering a considerable portion of self-sufficiency, he gave him a book to read on *self-knowledge*.

He is said never to have hastily formed his *friendships* and acquaintances, and, therefore, rarely had reason to repent of his connexions; while every year's continued intimacy drew them nearer to him; so that he seldom lost his friends: but his friends have lost him!

He had a great thirst for *reading*, which not only led him to accumulate one of the best libraries in this part of the country,\* but to endeavour to draw his people into a habit of reading.

Allowing for a partiality common to men, his judgment of characters was generally correct. Nor was it less candid than correct; he appreciated the good, and if required to speak of the evil, it was with reluctance. His eye was a faithful index to his mind; penetrating, but benignant. His character had much of the decisive, without any thing conceited or overbearing.

In his *person* he was above the ordinary stature, being nearly six feet high. In the earlier stages of life he was thin; but during the last twenty years he gathered flesh, though never so much as to feel it any inconvenience to him. His countenance was grave, but cheerful; and his company always interesting.

I shall conclude with a few extracts of letters concerning him, which I have received since his decease from those who knew him intimately.

"His zeal for the cause of Christ," says one of his congregation, "was uniform and increasingly ardent to the end of his life. One of the last conversations that he had with me, he concluded in these words: 'Farewell! Do your utmost for the cause of Christ. I have done a little, and

\* This library is left, by his will, to the Bradford Baptist Academy, only on condition of the trustees paying £100 to his relations; a sum far short of its value.

am ashamed that I have done no more. I have such views of its importance, that, had I ability, I would spread the gospel through the world.' His knowledge of books was very extensive: he appeared to have a facility in extracting the substance of them in a short time, as a bee extracts the honey from the expanded flower. He possessed an equal facility in knowing men, more especially ministers, and that not confined to his own denomination; so that in a few minutes he could give you an account who they were, what places they had occupied, and what was their general reputation. From this he was many times able to give seasonable advice."

"I believe," says a minister who had been one of his pupils, "I was the first young man placed under the care of our dear deceased father Sutcliff. From my first acquaintance with Divine things, on seeing and hearing him occasionally in my native village, I formed a very high opinion of the general excellence of his character; and the intimate knowledge I had of him, from residing in his family, so far from diminishing my esteem and veneration for him, greatly increased them. His piety was not merely official and public, but personal and habitual. The spirit of devotion rested on him. He was the man of God in all his intercourse. He conducted the worship of his family with singular seriousness, ardour, and constancy, never allowing any thing to interfere with it, except great indisposition. He manifested a parental tenderness and solicitude for the welfare of his pupils, and took a lively interest in their joys or sorrows. I have seen him shed the sympathizing tear over them in the hour of affliction. Such was the kindness and gentleness of his deportment, that they could freely impart their minds to him; but while his affectionate spirit invited their confidence, the gravity of his manner and the commanding influence of his general character effectually prevented any improper freedoms being taken with him. Such, too, were the sentiments with which he was regarded among his people; they loved and venerated him. He heard the sermons of his younger brethren with great candour, and if he saw them timid and embarrassed on public occasions, would take an opportunity of speaking a kind and encouraging word to them, and aim to inspire them with a proper degree of confidence. He was singularly regular and punctual in fulfilling his engagements, whether in preaching or visiting, not only in attending, but in being there at the time; and earnestly inculcated it on his pupils, if they wished to command respect. He endeavoured to preserve and promote the order and regularity of Christian families where he visited. I never saw him out of temper but once, and that was produced by want of punctuality in another person. I often regret that I did not profit more by his instructions and example. He has many times, by his judicious counsel, been 'the guide of my youth.' His name and his memory will ever be dear to me. My father! my father!"

"I have just heard," says another who had some years since been his pupil, "of the death of Mr. Sutcliff. It has returned upon me, whether alone or in company. Such an event may well do so. In him I saw bright lines of resemblance to our Lord and Master, such as are seldom, very seldom, to be met with in poor mortals. Such amiableness of manners, so much of the meekness and gentleness of Christ, of sound judgment and of warm affection, we seldom see united. While memory holds her place, his name and manner will be cherished by me with pleasing melancholy, not without anticipations of meeting him in another and better world."

"The memory of Mr. Sutcliff," says another, who had been his pupil, and who was present at his death, "will live in my warmest affections while I possess the powers of recollection. It seems impossible that I should

ever forget such a friend, or speak of him without blessing God that I ever knew him. I am grieved that he is gone, yet grateful that he was continued with us long enough for me to receive his instructions, and to witness his example. You have heard some of his dying sentiments. As his address to me may be considered as his dying advice to the young men who were under his tuition, I communicate it, leaving it to your discretion what use to make of it. About three in the morning of the day on which he died, like Israel, he strengthened himself, and sat up on his bed. Calling me to him, he, in the most affectionate manner, took hold of my hand, and expressed himself as follows:—‘Preach as you will wish you had when you come to die. It is one thing to preach, and another to do it as a dying man. I am glad you are settled where you are. I think you may say, I dwell among my own people. I am glad we ever knew one another. Spiritual unions are sweet. I have fled to Jesus: to his cross I am united. The Lord bless you, and make you a blessing!’”

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## XXVIII.

[Preached at Maze Pond, London, June 29th, 1800.]

### PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE PHILIPPIANS.

“And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.”—Phil. i. 9—11.

IT is pleasant to review the history of the first plantation of this church, and compare it with its state at the time this Epistle was written. You recollect Paul's journey to Philippi in company with Silas. You recollect how he first preached the gospel by the river-side, and how the Lord opened the heart of Lydia, and she attended unto the things which Paul spoke. You recollect what an uproar was raised in the city, and how all were stirred up to persecute them. The mob did their part, the magistrates did their part, and God did his part. The apostles being thrown into prison, in the midst of pain and affliction, burst forth into a song of praise at midnight. You recollect the sequel of the story: how the jailer and his household were by these means effectually converted, brought to embrace the gospel of Jesus, and were baptized in his name. We hear no more of them in the history of the New Testament; but by this Epistle we see this small family of the jailer—for as to Lydia, probably she, and her household likewise, being natives of Thyatira, had left the city); but this single family of Christians had by this time so increased, that a Christian church was planted, properly organized with her bishops and deacons; and such was their progress in Christianity, that the apostle tells us, that always in every prayer of his he made request for them with joy, which shows that true religion so operated at Philippi as to give joy to the apostle's heart, and we know how that must be.

The apostles rejoiced, as John says, when their children walked in the truth, and we may thence infer that the Christians at Philippi were eminent for their walk in the truth. Eminent, however, as they were—(and there is not, that I recollect, a single reflection on them in all this Epistle, which is very singular, and very different from those at Corinth, and Galatia, and several other places)—eminent, however, as they were, Paul did not con-

sider them as having reached the mark. "This I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more." The best and most amiable societies of individuals in this world are holy but in part; they need stirring up, and provoking yet more and more.

I think I need say nothing to prove that the prayer of the apostle on behalf of the believers at Philippi is applicable to other churches, and other congregations. You all know that what was written to them was addressed to the church in all succeeding ages. I shall, therefore, drop the character of the Philippians, and let me suppose that this prayer is applicable to the church meeting in this place—to all the believers in Jesus Christ who assemble here. "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent;" or, as the margin renders it, that ye may try things that differ; "that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the praise and glory of God." Brethren, I am sure that there is no prayer that I or any other could offer up on your behalf that would be better and more desirable.

In attempting to illustrate the subject, we shall notice particularly three things:—The objects for which the apostle prays—the medium through which all these excellences are to be communicated, namely, by Jesus Christ—and the end to which they were directed; "to the praise and glory of God."

Let us notice, in the first place, the objects for which the apostle prays for these primitive Christians: "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment," and so on. In general, it may be proper to remark, that some of the things for which the apostle prays are the root, and others the branches. He prays that your love may abound, that it may abound in knowledge, that it may abound in all judgment, that ye may approve things that are excellent. I apprehend the abounding, and that in knowledge and in all judgment, is the root; and that the approving of things that are excellent, and the being sincere and without offence till the day of Christ, and filled with the fruits of righteousness, are all the branches.

But, more particularly, the first thing that the apostle holds up as an object of desire is the abounding of love. Love is one of the first principles of all religion; shall I say it is the essence of all true religion? It is the cement of the moral world. It is that by which God proposes to govern all holy intelligences. It is, as our expositor, Mr. Henry, remarks, "the law of Christ's kingdom, the lesson of his school, and the livery of his family." It is the law of Christ's kingdom; for "this command I give unto you, that ye love one another." It is the lesson of his school; for "ye are taught of God to love one another." It is the livery of his family; for "by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love on to another." Love, however, as here spoken of, is not to be taken for every thing that may bear that name. Natural affection may be denominated love; but this is not it. Party attachment may be called love; but this is not it. Christian love, how shall I distinguish it? By what medium shall I distinguish Christian love from every thing else that bears the name? I know of no better criterion than this: The object of it is holy: for it is the love of that in the Divine character, or in the human character, or in things, which is holy. It is the love of the holy God—it is the love of holy ways—it is the love of holy men—it is the love of a holy gospel—it is the love of a holy religion—it is that distinguishing quality in all objects, persons, or things which attracts; and it is this which distinguishes Christian love from

all other; and it is this which the apostle prays the Philippians might abound in yet more and more. He takes it for granted that they possessed love, and he only prays that they might abound in it. And may I take it for granted on behalf of you, my hearers, this morning, that you love the Lord, that you love the Saviour, that you love the gospel, that you love your fellow Christians? If I take it for granted, I do not wish or recommend that you should. It may be proper for you to examine yourselves on this head; but, however, taking it for granted that love exists in your hearts towards these objects, still there is reason to pray that this love may abound yet more and more. There are none of us so abounding in love, but that there is great reason for increase. Your affection towards God, towards Christians, and towards all men, is faint in comparison of what it is fit and proper it should be.

But notice, secondly, he prays not only that love might abound, but that it might abound in knowledge. Knowledge is a necessary accompaniment of love, and that for two reasons; to feed it and to regulate it. It is by the knowledge of God, it is by the knowledge of Divine truth, it is by drinking deeply into the gospel of Jesus Christ, that love is fed. The knowledge of Divine truth is that to the mind which food is to the body; it nourishes it and keeps it alive. We cannot love an unknown being; we cannot love an unknown gospel; we cannot so much as love one another to any effect, but in proportion as we know one another. It is necessary, therefore, that we read and pray, and hear and labour, to cultivate the knowledge of God. Grace and peace are multiplied by the knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ our Lord. If we love the Lord Jesus Christ in any degree, the more we know him, the better we shall love him; and consequently our love will be perfected in glory, because there we shall see him as he is, and then we shall be like him. The more our minds are expanded, and we drink deeply into evangelical truth, the more our hearts will burn with holy affections towards him. "I pray, therefore," says the apostle, "that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment." Christian love is not a blind attachment; it is not that commotion of the affections which tumultuates towards some object, we know not why or wherefore: but solid Christian love is accompanied with knowledge; it has reason for its governor; it is truly rational in all its operations. The Christian, therefore, is enabled to give a reason of the love that is in him, as well as the hope that is in him, with meekness and fear. But this is not all; knowledge is a necessary companion of love, to regulate it, as well as to feed and inspire it. Love without knowledge is not good; it is in danger of running into innumerable improprieties and irregularities: it was this kind of love which made Peter declare that his Master should never die. There was love; but it was without knowledge, and the Lord Jesus rebuked him for it. It was this species of love, without knowledge, that made the disciples so extremely unwilling for him to go without them. Says our Saviour, "If ye loved me," he means, if ye loved me with a wise love, "ye would rejoice that I go to my Father, for my Father is greater than I;" that is, the glory that I shall possess with my Father is greater than the glory I possess in this present state of humiliation: so that it was like one Christian saying to another—like a dying Christian saying to a surviving friend—"Why weep ye at my departure? if ye loved me properly, ye would rejoice that I go to my Father; for the glory that I am going to possess is far greater than the glory I at present share.—The love of the disciples, therefore, was a sort of interpreted hatred, (not intentional certainly,) and our Lord would not own it for love. Let your love, therefore, abound with knowledge.

We might apply it to many more things; to the love which you bear one towards another in church fellowship, or to the love you bear one towards

another in your families. If your love be without knowledge, it will operate in a way of screening one another from faithful discipline, in a way of blinding you to each other's faults; but if your love be accompanied with knowledge, it will operate aright: it will seek the good of the person, while it abhors his evil conduct. The love of a parent that is unaccompanied with knowledge degenerates into foolish fondness, and is in danger of ruining the object of it. "This, therefore, I pray, that your love," whether it be to God or to one another, or to those with whom you are connected, "may abound in knowledge."

But, to go on a step further, the apostle prays not only that it may abound in knowledge, but "*in all judgment.*" This is still more. There is a difference between knowledge and judgment; knowledge is more of the speculative, judgment more of the practical. Judgment is knowledge ripened into maturity; knowledge, as I may say, collects the evidences, and judgment sums them up and passes a decision. A man may possess much knowledge, but little judgment. We have known characters who have been very learned, have read many books, have seen many things, have had large acquaintance, and yet had no talents at associating the particulars, so as to form a solid and practical judgment of things. This I speak even of temporal and natural things. That which the apostle here calls judgment is in the margin called sense; that ye may abound in all sense; and wherefore? Because the judgment of which he speaks is that which arises very much from a holy sense of right and wrong; it is a compound of the feelings of the heart. That which is here called judgment, or sense, is that to a christian which a delicate sense of propriety is to a well-educated mind. You know what this is; it is something different from mere learning; it is different from mere knowledge; it is that quick sensibility which promptly, and, as I may say, instinctively, determines the right from the wrong, the good from the evil; it dictates the path of propriety in the twinkling of an eye. This is what we call a delicate sense of propriety in common life; and that which this is to a natural man, such is a holy tenderness of heart, such is a holy tenderness of conscience, to a good man. This is what he means in the next phrase, "That ye may approve things that are excellent," or, as the margin renders it, that ye may try things that differ. As a delicate sense of propriety enables a man in the common concerns of life to try things that differ; that is, he judges of propriety and impropriety by an immediate instinct, as I may say; so he that possesses a holy tenderness of heart, and a holy tenderness of conscience, tries instinctively those things which differ; chooses the good and rejects the evil. Perhaps you may ask, what things are they that differ, to which the apostle may here refer, and which such a holy judgment tends to distinguish? I answer, things earthly, and things heavenly; things true, and things false; things good, and things evil. Now all these things are continually passing before us, perpetually presenting themselves to our choice, to our practical judgment, as I may say, and we must decide upon them every day and every hour. Every hour you must decide either in favour of things heavenly or things earthly. Oh that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment, that you may try things that differ, and prefer the excellent! Choose heavenly things in preference to earthly, as your portion. Things true and things false are continually presenting themselves before your eyes or your ears: false doctrine as well as true doctrine is continually soliciting your attention. In books, in sermons, in company, and in conversation, you are continually hearing of false doctrine; atheistical, or some corruption of the pure doctrine of the text. Here is the beauty of things—to have such a holy sense maintained in our souls as in a moment

to see which is false that you may reject it, and the truth that you may imbibe it. Things good and things evil are also continually passing before your eyes; the temptations and snares of the world are continually soliciting you; gold sparkles in your eyes, sensual pleasure is continually presenting itself and soliciting your affection, and God himself deigns to stoop and ask your heart, and he says, "Set your affections on things which are above, and not on things below." How happy you and I, if we possess that spiritual judgment, that Divine sense, to abhor the one, and embrace the other! This is that holy judgment which the apostle prays for on behalf of the primitive Christians, and which is accompanied with nearness of communion with God.

I must pass on: I see here are several other things which the apostle supposes will be the fruit of this, and which he also specifies and prays for—"that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ." Sincerity is one of the prominent features of genuine Christianity. That holy love, that heavenly knowledge, that spiritual judgment, of which we have been speaking, will give you a single eye, and you will be a sincere Christian. You will have one object in view through life. You will leave others to deal in dark intrigue, duplicity, and underhand practices, and you will have one object through life, to glorify him in body and in spirit whose you are. Sincerity particularly respects our approaches to God, our professions before men, and our dealings with the world. Oh that we may be all sincere in these! In your approaches before God, dread the thought of disguising or appearing under a mask in his house. Study to approach God with your hearts; for nothing but truth will stand before him. Let us be equally so in our professions when we converse with one another. Do not let us be anxious to be thought highly of one by another. Beware of that spirit which aspires only to retain a character among men—a name in the church of God; but rather be concerned to be sincere, "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." If you look round the world, you will see that the great concern of mankind is to *appear* to be; but make it your concern to *be*. There is a great difference between a good man and a mere professor. The one is concerned to *be* what he professes, the other only to *appear* to be. What an awful difference! And, I may add, let sincerity distinguish us in all our worldly dealings. Religion is not a matter to be cooped up in a closet, nor yet in a place of worship. It must be carried out into the world—into our dealings. The object of the apostle's prayer is, that we may be men of honour, and that we may be sincere in all our dealings. Oh what a blessed world would it be if every man acted on this principle in all his dealings with men! "And without offence," says he, "until the day of Christ." I think this means that we should cultivate an inoffensive spirit, that is, the spirit of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, we all know, was not of a turbulent, discontented spirit: he did not deal in such sort of censures as were only adapted to provoke. He dealt in censures, but they were aimed at the good of the party, whatever his condition. The apostles and the primitive Christians studied an inoffensive conduct. They endeavoured to live peaceably with all men, and they submitted to many injuries rather than give offence, rather than throw a stumbling-block in the way of unbelievers. Christians, be it your care to study an inoffensive life. There is a great deal of what is called faithfulness by many people that is very far from deserving that name, and is the mere exercise of corrupt passion. Under what passes by the name of an honest bluntness, some persons will be always giving offence—unnecessary offence, and thereby cause the name of Jesus Christ to be evil spoken of. Give no offence to Jew or Gentile, nor to the church of the living God.

Finally, he prays that this may not merely be the exercise of a day, a week, a month, a year, but "till the day of Christ." A thought has occurred



to me that has pained me upon this clause. We have seen characters who have promised fair, who have been affectionate, who have been shining characters, and yet have not continued without offence "till the day of Christ." Towards the latter period of life, if they have not turned back and walked no more with him, still they have given offence; their misconduct has undone all the little good that they have done in the former part of their lives. These things ought to make us fear and tremble, and pray not only that we may be without offence, but that we may be without offence "till the day of Christ," till the Lord and Bridegroom shall call us to himself.

But I proposed just to notice, and it must be briefly, the medium through which all these excellences are communicated, and this is by Jesus Christ. Methinks all holiness is communicated through Jesus Christ in two ways. Jesus Christ is the medium through which the Holy Spirit is given; for God would never have sent his Holy Spirit, any more than he would have given us any other spiritual blessings, but out of regard to Jesus Christ, who is the medium through whom all are communicated. But this is not all—Jesus Christ is the medium of all holiness as revealed in the gospel. It is by a knowledge of and faith in him that we come to the excellences here described. It is by preaching Jesus Christ that these fruits are cultivated, and it is by being acquainted with Jesus Christ—it is by our learning and drinking into the doctrine of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Scriptures—that all these fruits will abound in you. Read, therefore, learn, and be concerned to drink deeply into the system of the gospel of Jesus Christ, into the doctrine of the text. It is not only proper that ministers should resolve to "know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified;" but, private Christians, also make this the grand central point of all your conduct and all your pursuit; that "you may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." This is the only stock upon which this sort of fruit will grow. You cannot graft holiness upon any other stock than that of faith in Jesus Christ. All the labour and all the toil that may be bestowed by education, example, or any other means you can use, will amount to nothing as to the production of these fruits, unless it be by faith in Jesus Christ, and intimate acquaintance with him.

Lastly, Notice the end to which all is to be directed: "To the glory and praise of God." This is carrying up the subject where it should be carried—to the throne of God himself. This is the great end to which all things are directed by God himself, and should be directed by us, "to the glory and praise of God." The glory of God, let me notice, is either essential or manifestative. The essential glory of God respects what God is in himself, and which he is irrespective of what we think of him, or what we do. All that you or I can do, all that angels in heaven can do, all that the church in glory in connexion with them can do to all eternity, cannot add one gleam of glory to his essential character; and all the iniquity of man upon earth, and all the ferocity, enmity, and duplicity of man, cannot diminish it in the least degree. It is irrespective and independent of what any creature can think or can do. But it is not thus with respect to the glory of God manifestatively. No: in that respect we may dishonour God, or we may honour God; that is, in other words, we may raise him in the esteem of others. God should be raised in the esteem of those around us, or in our own esteem, and this is the way in which creatures are said to honour God, by raising him or giving him the just glory due to his name in all our own thoughts, and communicating such sentiments of him to those around us. Keep this end in view. Glorify Him to whom glory is due. Glorify Him to whom be glory for evermore. Amen.

## XXIX.

[Preached at the Baptist meeting, Devonshire Square, London, June 26, 1796.]

## THE PEACE OF GOD.

“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”—Phil. iv. 7.

READ this passage in connexion with the three foregoing verses: “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

Peace, it will be allowed, is an inestimable jewel. No man that has been at all acquainted with the calamities of war, the distresses of domestic confusion, or the horrors of a guilty conscience, can dissent from this proposition. Under such circumstances, how often has the heart yielded a sigh on the desirableness of the blessing of peace! But if peace, in the general, be so desirable, what must be said of the peace of God, which passeth all understanding! Peace among men is very desirable: it is healing to the human heart—it is transporting to the human breast—to see the bloody sword sheathed in its scabbard. It is pleasing to see amity and concord prevail, and old friends meet that have been separated, perhaps by jealousy and misunderstanding; but all this is only between man and man. The peace of God exceeds every thing of this sort as much as God’s ways are above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts. As much as the heavens are above the earth, so much is peace with him greater than peace with each other. It is on this subject that we shall now discourse.

Could the apostle have pointed to a blessing of greater value than this: “The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ.”

In discoursing on this subject, we shall, First, Ask in what this peace consists—Secondly, Endeavour to justify the apostle’s encomium on it—Thirdly, Consider its great use in the Christian life—Lastly, Inquire by what means it is to be attained.

I. LET US TRY TO ASCERTAIN WHAT IT IS—What is this invaluable jewel? What is this peace of God? Depend upon it, it is something valuable, or rather something invaluable, or our Lord Jesus Christ would not have singled it out as his last bequest, at the time he was about to leave his disconsolate disciples, and when his heart was overflowing with tenderness for them. He left them one great blessing. What was it? Not crowns—not kingdoms—No. It was something far superior to these: “My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your hearts be troubled.”

The word which is here rendered “the peace of God” signifies oneness—union—being gathered into one—reconciliation. It is the blessedness of being in a state of reconciliation with God. I should suppose it may include the following ideas:—

1. *That sweet tranquillity of soul which arises from a well-grounded persuasion of being accepted by God.* This is what the apostle means when he says, “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.”—Being accepted through the righteousness of the Redeemer, we have peace with God. I need not inform you that, in our native state, we are all at war with God,

and God with us. Sin is the great enemy. It has separated great friends. God and man, you know, were once great friends; but sin separated those chief friends, and drew a veil of separation between them. Man became an enemy to God, and God to man. God in the character of a righteous Governor was required—his own rectitude required him—to be an enemy to man. For he hateth all the workers of iniquity: but, through the mediation of the Son of God, atonement is made—the blood of the cross heals the breach, and opens the way of communion. God declares himself well pleased with his dear Son; and every poor sinner who sues for mercy in his name finds relief. The past is forgiven—is forgotten; the soul is justified through the redemption of Jesus Christ.—The effect of all this is sweet peace.

Who can estimate the sweetness of that enjoyment which arises from a well-grounded persuasion that God is my Father? To be permitted to say, I am an heir of blessing: I am no longer under the law, but under grace: I am no longer an alien, but a son or daughter: the blessings of the gospel are to be made my own.—Where such are the persuasions, there is the peace of God.

2. The peace of God, I should think, includes *that sweet satisfaction which possesses the mind from a view of God sitting at the helm of the universe, and having the management of all our concerns.* We are like people who are sailing on the ocean in a storm. This troubled ocean casts up mire and dirt, and we are continually subject to tempests; and were it not for the consideration that we have a pilot at the helm—a God who has the turbulent ocean under his control—were it not for the consideration that the cares of the world were under his direction, what peace could we enjoy? Let me ask you, thinking Christians, when you consider the temper of the world—when you see man hating his fellow man, and see them combining against one another by thousands—when you see the enmity of the heart to be such that there is hardly any rational hope of peace under the sun, what would quiet your heart but the consideration that God reigns, and “that the inhabitants of the earth are but as grasshoppers”—that he “maketh the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder thereof he doth restrain?” The thought that Jesus Christ is Head over all things to his church, and that all shall contribute to the spread of the gospel, begets that peace in the mind that enabled the psalmist to sing, in the midst of tumult and confusion, “Though the mountains be cast into the depths of the sea, there is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God.” There is a source of consolation to the children of God to which others are strangers. God will help his people, and that right early.

3. It is necessary *that we should feel some degree of peace in our own consciences.* We cannot experience the peace of God, and joy in the Holy Ghost, unless we have the testimony of our own consciences that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world. Enoch had the peace of God, when he had this testimony—that he pleased God. By the history which we have of him, which is very short, it appears that he pleased very few people. He was a thundering preacher in his day—the object of the ill-will of his hearers; but he had the testimony that he had pleased his God.

That Christian, or that minister, who enjoys a solid, well-grounded persuasion that he possesses the favour of Jesus Christ, whose confidence is in him who sits at the helm of the universe, who walks with God and has the testimony of a good conscience, possesses the peace of God.

II. We proceed to JUSTIFY THE APOSTLE'S ENCOMIUM. He tells us that “it passeth knowledge.” It is a very strong expression; but I apprehend

it is literally true—it is no hyperbole. Some have interpreted it, that it passeth the understanding of carnal men. This is very true; but that is not a thousandth part of the truth. It is of such value that the understandings of neither men nor angels are capable of appreciating its worth; the peace of God none can fully estimate. None but God himself can know its real worth. We estimate most things by *contrast*: so the worth of national peace is best known by those who see the effects of war; so the worth of domestic peace is best known by those who suffer by domestic feuds; so the value of peace with God cannot be known in any tolerable degree but by those who experience the horrors of a guilty conscience. Go, then, if you would know the value of the peace of God, look at the case of a man who is borne down by worldly sorrow, and who is a stranger to God. Go, visit a poor man, on whom the Lord hath poured out much trouble and distress, under which he almost sinks, and yet he is a stranger to God. He has no refuge to which he can flee in the hour of distress. From this you will judge, in some degree, what a blessed thing it is to have the peace of God. This it was which made our Lord say, “I send you forth like sheep among wolves;” but I give you that which shall be a balance to every load: “into whatsoever house he enter, say, Peace be to this house.” Would you know something of the value of this blessing?—go to the room of a poor sinner whose eyes are opened, whose conscience is awake, but who is without God, in a dying hour. Did you never visit a dying sinner, and take notice of him when he did not expect that he had an hour to live? Did you never see with what a frightened countenance he views you? Oh! that pale face! that frightened countenance!—that mind that looks upon the past with bitter regret, as gone for ever, that looks on that which is to come with horror and dismay! Did you never know such a case? You might know many such cases—they are not rare. There you might learn something of the value of the peace of God; there a man would give a thousand worlds, if they were all his own, for a well-grounded hope that his sins were forgiven; there he that once despised religion, the man that has joked and derided serious people, is alarmed, and wishes that those very people whom he once derided would come and pray with him. Who can estimate the value of the peace of God? If you can tell the worth of the salvation of a soul—if you can estimate the pains of the damned in hell—if you can reckon the loss of an immortal creature—then can you tell the value of the peace of God. If you can calculate the worth of celestial enjoyments—all the pleasures resulting from God’s favour—then you may calculate the value of the peace of God.

That which endears this blessing to us is not only the importance of it, but *the medium through which it comes*. The text says—“through Christ Jesus.” Do not you think, for example, that the parcel of ground which Jacob gave to Joseph his son was endeared to Joseph because it was the dying bequest of his beloved father? No doubt it was; that was the singular portion he gave to his son Joseph: and what made it still more valuable was that his father had wrested it from the Amorites: “Which I took out of the hand of the Amorites with my sword and with my bow.”—And the peace of God must be endeared, because it was obtained by the shedding of Christ’s blood. How it will enhance its value to the people of God that it was the price of blood—the blood of the Lamb! Heaven itself would not be a thousandth part so pleasant to us if it had not been obtained in this way. It was obtained by the shedding of Christ’s blood! But we pass on to consider,

III. THE GREAT USE OF PEACE IN THE CHRISTIAN CONFLICT: “The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds.”

The word here translated "*keep*" is very expressive: it is a military term, and alludes to soldiers that are in a besieged town; or rather to soldiers that come in aid of others that are besieged. So the peace of God is that to a believer's heart and mind which a relieving army is to those who are besieged. The heart and mind are supposed to be besieged by the temptations of the present world, and in danger of being taken; and the peace of God, like a reinforcement thrown in, affords relief, and prevents their being obliged to give up the contest. This word might perhaps be expressed by the term *fortified*,—"the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall *fortify* your hearts and minds." The terms *heart* and *mind* comprehend the whole soul; the one is put for the affections, the other for the judgment—the peace of God serves as a relief, a fortification for both. Let us here be a little more particular.

There is one set of temptations which assail the heart, another the mind; and the peace of God serves to fortify our souls against them both.

1. Let us inquire *what are those temptations which assail the heart?* In times of persecution, the wrath, enmity, and outrage of a wicked world were such as assailed the heart. It must have been trying to the feelings of the primitive Christians, and all others who have lived in times of persecution. As for our parts, we have so long enjoyed religious peace that we can scarcely realize the scene. But only consider that those who were persecuted were men like you and me, and their property was, perhaps, obtained by the sweat of their brow—and it was hard to have that wrested from them by fines and imprisonment. They had families. It was hard to be torn flesh from flesh—bone from bone. Perhaps the tears of the wives and children might say, "Spare him for our sakes!" It was cruel—it must needs come close to the heart—they had the feelings of men. Nothing but the peace of God could fortify them. "Behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves." If they throw you into dungeons—if they deprive you of the honest fruits of your industry—of your friends—your liberty—if they deprive you of all these, they shall not deprive you of one thing—the peace of God! This you shall be able to carry with you into the darkest dungeons, and it shall cause you to sing praises to God at midnight.

There is another set of temptations which assail the heart—these are the allurements of the world. The former were in the days of yore principally—these in our times. The world seems to be friendly to us; its pleasures melt resistance. It sometimes captivates the heart; and I know not but enemies of this description are more dangerous to Christians than the others. Many have stood in the hour of persecution—they could fight like Samson against thousands when the Philistines set on them; but when the smiles of a Delilah come upon them, they, like him, would fall. There is nothing so good an antidote to this as the peace of God in the heart. But peace in the heart does not include carnal ease. I grant that this is no friend, but an enemy. Peace and union with God are the best fortification of the heart against the allurements of sense. Not all the terrors of Sinai, nor the curses of the law, are so good a preservative as the peace of God in the heart—and why so? It affords superior pleasure to that of the world. It rises infinitely above it. You know very well that when a superior light shines forth it eclipses an inferior one; so, when the sun shines forth, the smaller lights, the moon and stars, hide their heads—they are lost. The peace of God affords a so much superior pleasure in the soul as to overcome flesh and sense. Thus it is that faith overcomes. You have often read that expressive passage—"Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?" Faith penetrates futurity; it rends the veil and pierces into an unknown world; it

fixes its eye on eternity, and these little words disappear—the heart becomes dead to the pleasures of sense. It was thus that Moses, “seeing him that was invisible,” became dead to the pleasures of the Egyptian court. It is not, then, very difficult to perceive how the peace of God—a solid, well-grounded peace, communion with God through our Lord Jesus Christ—tends to make a man dead to the world through the cross of Christ.

Again, There is a third temptation with which the heart is assailed, and this is, The sorrows of the world. The losses, the bereaving losses, trials, and disappointments, which befall the children of God, which on some occasions are so complicated, so heavy, and so lasting, that the heart is in danger of yielding to despondency. “Oh that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together! For now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea; therefore my words are swallowed up;” that is, I want words to express my grief—to express that intolerable grief that rankles in my bosom. My heart is in danger of yielding to despondency. Nothing but the peace of God can now preserve it. The thought that God rules and overrules all—that whatever befalls us is under his appointment—that every evil is overruled by him for our good. Such thoughts as these, which constitute the peace of God, bear up the soul, and keep it from sinking under all the loads of distress by which it is burdened.

Once more,—There is another temptation; and that is, despair under a load of guilt. I do not know but this may be the heaviest of all. When guilt is fixed on the conscience, and fixed with such strong chains that it becomes impossible for us to break them, the temptation to sink into despair becomes very great. O how many wretched souls, under a consciousness of guilt, are swallowed up in desperation! It was thus that Cain was swallowed up—“My punishment is greater than I can bear.” It was thus that Judas was swallowed up—“I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood;” and, in his despair, he went and hanged himself. Such a load of guilt as this is greater than a poor sinner can bear. But there is that which will bear us up—the peace of God will keep, will sustain, will fortify the heart, even under this load.

Here is the difference between a good man, when he falls into sin, and a bad man. When Saul rebelled against God, and God expressed his displeasure against him, he sunk into despair! When David sinned against God, and God by Nathan had reproved him for his sin, he flew into the arms of Divine Mercy. “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.” A view of the Divine goodness bore him up. Though at a great distance from God, yet some faint gleam of the mercy of God preserved him from despair. It is true the waves of sin rolled over him; but the mercy of God was like a rope held out to him, by the laying hold on which he was saved. “Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice. Let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.”

What phrase, what terms, could the apostle have used that could be more expressive?—“The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds”—shall support you under afflictions, and afford relief under the impressions of a guilty conscience. But we pass on.

2. *The mind also is assailed by various temptations and difficulties.* The peace of God is a fortification to the mind as well as the heart. The mind is expressive of the intellectual part of man. The temptations to which the mind is exposed are, chiefly, pernicious principles and distracting cares.

The *pernicious principles* that are circulated in the world are like so many poisoned arrows aimed at the heart, and we need to be as much fortified against these as against any others which I have mentioned. God has thought fit to try his people by suffering them to go forth. It must needs be that there must be scoffers walking after their own ungodly lusts. There must be infidels who should ridicule the Bible and those that profess its doctrines. These are so many fans by which God thoroughly purges his floor, which is composed, methinks, of grain and chaff. There are many professors who are merely chaff; and these pernicious principles—these scoffs—these jeers, that are uttered against the gospel, are like so many blasts of wind by which the chaff is blown away, while the grain shall stand and withstand.

God permits pernicious principles, under the name of Christianity, to go forth. There must needs be heresies among you—these are poisoned arrows that are aimed at the mind, the judgment, and, if they stick, the poison of them very soon infects the whole frame; for that which once fixes on the judgment presently affects the whole soul—the whole man. Here we need, therefore, to be particularly fortified—we need the arm of God to keep us. One of the seven churches is commended because it had kept the faith; and therefore God says, “I also will keep you in the hour of temptation.” Keep right with God—keep close to God—keep conversant with the gospel of peace—walk close to the God of peace, and these arrows shall not touch you. You shall be secure from every fiery dart.

To these I would add *distracting cares*. For as the mind is in danger of being pierced and tainted with pernicious principles, it is equally liable to be hurt and interrupted by distracting cares. The mind, or the judgment, is in man like one who sits at the helm of a ship—it is that superior thing which governs and controls all other things. The mind has the reins of the soul in its hand, and the apostle says, “In patience possess ye your souls.” But when distracting cares come upon us, the mind is in danger of being swept away from the helm—the mind, if once confounded, is in great danger. But I may say, as I said before, the peace of God—that sweet peace which arises from communion with God—is the best preservative. Let that once get possession, and you will ride out the storm, and enjoy serenity amidst all the tumultuous scenes which are passing before your eyes.

III. THE MEANS BY WHICH THIS INESTIMABLE BLESSING IS TO BE OBTAINED. You have only to look at the preceding context. You may observe there are three things pointed out by which it is to be obtained. One is, that we should feel an *habitual joy in God*: “Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice.” Oh what a blessed art is this, to be able to rejoice in God, come what will! The primitive Christians had learned this heavenly art of not being moved by any of the vicissitudes of fortune: “They rejoiced always.” If persecutions broke out against them, they rejoiced that they were thought worthy to suffer—so, come what will, they would rejoice. They were like the industrious bee, who extracts honey from every opening flower. Be it to others sweet or bitter, it is all alike to him. Such is Christianity; and if we entered into it, it would teach us to rejoice in God, whatever befalls us; though there should be no fruit on our vine, or no flock in our folds, yet we should rejoice in God. Cultivate this spirit, and then the peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds. You will be armed with this armour of God, and will be able successfully to defend yourself against any enemy.

The next thing recommended is “*moderation*.” Do not be concerned at either the smiles or the frowns of this world. If providence smiles upon you,

do not be elated: be moderate in your attachments. Or if she frown upon you, do not be immoderately cast down. It is not the smiles of providence that can make you, nor her frowns that can unmake you. Your possessions are in another state. You have not hazarded all your substance in one vessel, I hope. The man of the world may be greatly interested, because, if one vessel sink, all his treasures are lost; but your chief treasures are embarked on board another vessel—one that cannot sink. You may cultivate a noble independence. "The Lord is at hand." Time is passing away, and then all those little things which now distract men's minds will distract them no longer. The Lord is about to descend from heaven, and all these little things will disappear. Let your moderation be seen by all about you. If this spirit be cultivated by you, you will be fortified against every evil. You will have a better armour than Ahab had in the day of battle—nothing can pierce it.—But,

Lastly, We are here recommended to cultivate a noble *indifference respecting things in this state*, and to commit them to God. "Be careful for nothing." The apostle does not here mean that we are to care for nothing—that we are not to be contriving schemes, but that we are to divest ourselves of that kind of distracting care which unfits us for religion. Be careful in this way for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God, with resignation to his will, and the peace of God will most assuredly keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge of Christ Jesus. Amen.

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### XXX.

[Delivered at Carter-lane Meeting-house, London, March 24, 1800.]

#### REMEDY FOR MENTAL DEJECTION.

"O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar."—Ps. xlii. 6.

WHEN the apostle John was in great affliction and tribulation, banished from his brethren into the Isle of Patmos, he was consoled with a view of the saints in glory—he was shown in vision the appearance of characters dressed in white robes, and with palms in their hands—and beholding such a glorious appearance, he was asked, by an attendant angel, "Who are these, and whence came they?" as much as to say, Doubtless, considering your present afflicted state, you reckon these to be very happy beings—all pure, all glorious. The apostle replied, "Sir, thou knowest." His attendant angel answered, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb:" which was in effect saying, Those whom you now behold in the greatest glory, were a little while ago in the same state that you are now; and you, who are now in a state of tribulation, shall shortly be in the state in which they are, dressed in white robes, and with palms of victory in your hands. Some such an idea as this, my brethren, is afforded us when we read the Psalms of David. David is now in that state which John beheld, clothed in white robes, and with palms of victory in his hands; but David a little while ago was passing this life in great tribulation. See the picture of his heart drawn in this Psalm: "O my God, my soul is cast down within me." Here is the character of a man who is now in triumph, that was, here, well attended on every side: "O my God, my soul is cast down within me." What



a cheering lesson does this afford us under present trials and present dejections of mind—to anticipate the period when our trials shall end in triumph, when they shall terminate in crowns of immortality!

Two thoughts suggest themselves from this interesting and affecting passage: First, That while we live in this world, through a variety of causes we are subject to have our souls cast down within us. Secondly, That under such depressions and dejections, one of the best remedies perhaps which the Scriptures exhibit is, to remember God from past times, places, and deliverances in which he has appeared on our behalf. “O my God,” says the Psalmist, “my soul is cast down within me;” therefore I will betake me to this remedy—a remedy which I suppose he had often found efficacious—“I will remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.” I do not know that we have any certain account, in Scripture, what those places particularly referred to were. They might be places and times in which God had appeared for his servant David, when heretofore he had experienced great difficulties, great temptations, great afflictions, and in which signal deliverances had been wrought out on his behalf. He might refer to times and places of remarkable interpositions, in which God had appeared on behalf of himself or his forefathers, or on behalf of others with whom he had been acquainted. But let us advert to the two ideas that I apprehend are conveyed to us in the passage.

First, That while we live in this world of sin and misery, through a variety of causes, we must expect to have our souls cast down within us.

God does not see fit that we should pass through life in a state of ecstasy or uninterrupted joy—uninterrupted joy is reserved for Heaven—you and I at present are not fitted for uninterrupted joy—sorrow and dejection of heart are as necessary for us in the present state as any thing can be. When the apostle addressed himself to the primitive Christians, he said, “If need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:” there is a necessity for dejection and various complicated trials; as great a necessity as there is for ballast in the ship in order to preserve it from being overset. The Lord knows our present follies, our fickleness, the propensity we have to be elevated by a series of uninterrupted prosperity; he knows our proneness to forget HIM; that we should not frequently repair to his throne if he were not to furnish us with errands; and if he were not to impress something deep, something that would lay hold of our hearts, we should not repair to him in real earnest; and therefore he so orders things that, from a variety of causes, we should frequently have occasion to say, “O my God, my soul is cast down within me.”

Let me mention a few cases in which this language will fit our lips.

There are cases, in the first place, in which the hand of the Lord goeth out against us;—I say the hand of the Lord, for if we do not view the hand of God in the ills that befall us, we are strangely deficient, we fall under the threatenings of those who eye not the operations of his hand. Shall there be evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it? Shall there be evil in a family, and the Lord hath not done it? Shall there be evil on an individual, and the Lord hath not done it? David frequently beheld the hand of God in that which befell him; he met with a great deal of unjust and unkind treatment from men; Saul, without any just cause, persecuted him, hunted him like a partridge on the mountains; but David had these thoughts: If the Lord have stirred up the people against me, let him accept an offering; perhaps it is God’s hand. I doubt not but that David was very inquisitive under the very cruel persecution of Saul, whether there was not some wickedness in his heart which this was designed to correct, whether this was not the hand of the Lord stretched out against him. Men might mean

it for evil, but God intended it, perhaps, for a correction: if it be the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good. In a later period of his life you see the same spirit, when his own son rose up against him and sought his life. And when Shimei cursed him, and cast dust at him while he passed along weeping, he said, in answer to those who would have cut off Shimei's head, "Let him alone, the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David." It is of great use to us under the afflicting dispensations of God to view his hand. There is nothing that will tend so much to bring us to repentance; there is nothing that will thus tend to produce reconciliation to his will; for if we love God, we shall take every thing well at his hand. If we only eye the instrument, we may be quarrelling with the instrument, we may be complaining for ever of second causes; but if we eye our heavenly Father's hand, we shall also hearken to his admonition when, in the exercise of his sovereignty, he says, "Be still, and know that I am God." It is consistent under the hand of God, however, to feel dejection. He lays his hand on us on purpose that we may feel it, that we may feel and profit by the affliction. A sensible state of mind, under the afflicting dispensations of Providence, is the most desirable effect. God requires that we do not murmur under his hand, but not that we do not mourn under it; we may go to him and say, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me." We may mourn; and while we mourn we shall be humbled—we shall be submissive—we shall be reconciled. We may shed tears of submission to his will, but we must not murmur; we must say, with one of old, "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil also?"

Again, there are times in which God withholds all sensible communion with us, and yet we shall not be so left to ourselves as not to feel the loss of his presence. Whenever these two things meet together, then the language of the Psalmist will fit our case, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me." There is such a thing as to lose all sensible communion with God, and yet not to be insensible and careless under it, stupid, buried in the cares of the world, lost to all sensibility; this is the worst of all states of mind, this is the most of all to be dreaded. If you or I are in that state that we can go into our closet and perform a round of duties, and come away without any communion with God, and yet be easy, that is the worst of all states. If we are in such a condition as that we can come to the house of God and hear a sermon, and go home and enjoy nothing of God in it, and yet be easy, woe unto us, we are in the most perilous of all situations; we may consider it as some awful warning, we may expect that God is about to give us up to some outward open fall, or to embrace some erroneous principles that will be destructive of our best interests. But there is such a thing as to have lost all sensible communion with God, and yet not to have lost a desire after its return: know you not what this means? My friends, we read of the children of Israel, in the time of the Psalmist, that they lamented after the Lord. Know you not what it is to enter your closets, and not find freedom with God there? when a veil seems to be drawn between God and your spirits, and you are ready to say, with one of old, "I was as a beast before thee," groaning from the sorrow of your heart; and yet you cannot recover that sweet communion with God which in former seasons you have been wont to enjoy: know you not what this means? Know you not what it is to come to the house of God, and though you cannot enjoy communion with Him under the ministry of the word, nor in the administration of the public ordinances, yet you cannot be easy without it, you go home in the situation in which David was as described in the 51st Psalm, saying, "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me; restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold

me with thy free Spirit? This, my dear friends, is the very spirit that will utter such an exclamation as that in my text, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me." Know you not what it is to retire from the ordinances of God unsatisfied, unblessed, and so dejected that you can enjoy no pleasure in any thing? In the society of the godly you have no delight; you seem like one by yourself when in their company; you feel as though you were an intruder and had no business there, as if every eye was upon you, as if you did not belong to that holy and happy society; you therefore hesitate whether you have any right to communicate with them at the table of your Lord—gloom overspreads your spirit. Is this the state of your mind? Such language will suit your case, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me."

Let me mention another case; not only that in which the hand of God has gone out against us, not only that in which we have lost all sensible communion with our heavenly Father, but that in which a load of guilt lies on the conscience, which we know not how to get rid of. A deep sense of guilt and shame may press upon the conscience, in connexion with an earnest desire to return to God: there is such a thing. David, in the 38th Psalm, describes that state of mind. I reckon that Psalm to have been written after his fall, and prior to, or at least to describe the state of his mind prior to, his recovery. Let us just turn to it, and read a passage or two. I think it describes the state of a person who has sinned and not repented, who has brought darkness and dejection on his soul, and yet has never been able to recover the lost joys of God's salvation—"O Lord," says he, "rebuke me not in thy wrath:" it shows that he was under the rebuke of God—"neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore. There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over mine head; as an heavy burden, they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink, and are corrupt, because of my foolishness. I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long." Here is the difference between a backsliding Christian and a backsliding hypocrite. A hypocrite is one who has not the truth of religion in him, who can revolt from God without feeling any concern, unless it be for the consequences. But if a good man act as David did, there will be no rest in his bones by reason of his sin, no soundness in his flesh because of God's anger. During that period in which his soul is at a distance from God, he will be wretched; there will be no peace, or comfort, or satisfaction to his troubled spirit; his language will be, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me." Grace, real grace, where it is in a man's heart, cannot be dormant. We have heard of a distinction between grace in the habit and grace in the exercise, and there is some truth in it; but there is no such thing as grace in the habit without some exercise, for if so, we should be utterly dead in trespasses and sins. The life of Jesus, if manifested in our mortal flesh, will operate in some way. In the case of David it operated in dejection, darkness, shame, and confusion of face.

But I mention a fourth case, in which this language will fit our lips; and that is, when God seems to withhold his blessing from our labours. This may be particularly applicable to us as ministers; not however wholly so, for every Christian is engaged as a labourer in God's vineyard, and must be concerned to do good in his own way,—as a parent to his children, as a neighbour to those that live near him. Now, if God seem to withhold his blessing from our attempts on our children, our neighbours, our congregations; if all our prayers be unanswered; if our admonitions seem not to penetrate; if we labour in vain and spend our strength for nought, from

month to month and year to year; can the heart of a good man do other than say, in the language of the Psalmist, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me?" I am sure many a faithful servant of Jesus Christ, who has laboured in the Christian ministry with little success, has sighed forth such a prayer many a time. Oh, could you follow your minister into his closet; could you follow the faithful servants of Jesus Christ into their retirements; could you hear their heavy groans, from the fear lest all that they have said should be of no effect; perhaps you might feel rather differently from what you do. This, we can assure you, is the language of every faithful servant of Jesus Christ, when he sees his labours apparently of no avail, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me." The love which he bears to God, the concern which he has for the souls of his people, his solicitude for their eternal salvation, must deject him, if he sees no apparent fruits from his labours. If, while he warns, you do not take the warning; if, while he invites, you seem all enamoured of the trifles and follies of the world; if, while he proclaims the joyful tidings of salvation, you are wholly uninterested in the divine message; and, while he denounces in the most awful language the threatenings of coming wrath, you appear heedless and unconcerned about it, how will he retire, and, appealing to the searcher of hearts and the author of his message, exclaim, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me!"

Finally, there may be cases, there are cases, in which all these distresses combine together; in which the hand of God goeth out against us—in which communion with God is withheld—in which guilt depresses the heart—in which a divine blessing is withheld from all we do; and when these combine together, methinks they form a load from which the Christian can find no relief, but by giving vent to his sorrows in the language of my text, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me."

But I proceed to the second idea that our text suggests: that under the various depressions which we meet with in the present state, one very important remedy is, the remembrance of those times and places and circumstances in which God hath, heretofore, wrought for us deliverance. "O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar." I wish it in general to be remarked, that that which was the source of the Psalmist's comfort was not the time, was not the place, was not merely his own experience, but God: "I will remember *thee*." He does not say, "Therefore will I remember Jordan, therefore will I remember Mizar, therefore will I remember the land of the Hermonites; no: Therefore will I remember *Thee* from them. God must be the object in which our faith and hope and joy must centre. All those times, places, and past deliverances, were made use of by the Psalmist as means of leading him to God; and this is the proper use to be made of past experience, of past interpositions of Providence on our behalf. What, I would ask, can be a better remedy, when under adverse dispensations, than to recur to such deliverances—"therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar"—to remember divine interpositions in times past? This was the way in which the patriarchs derived consolation. When Jacob was in sorrow with his uncle Laban, and met with many troubles, many discouragements, God appeared to him, we are told, and said, "I am the God of Bethel;" I am the God that appeared unto thee in the way that thou wentest. Now do not you suppose that this would tend abundantly to cheer Jacob's distressed heart, to call to his remembrance all that grace and goodness that appeared to him at Bethel,—at Bethel, where he had the vision of the ladder, whose top reached to heaven, and of the angels of God ascending and

descending upon it—at Bethel, where the Almighty said, “I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac; and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land, for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.” Ah! that was sweet. Well, and twenty years afterwards God appeared to him and said, “I am the God of Bethel;” that was leading Jacob to remember him from Bethel, to remember him in connexion with past promises and past supports. We should not make a god of our past experience, but we should make it the mean of leading us to God. Jacob did this. When he returned from Padan-aram, you recollect well, I dare say, what a strait he was put to by the coming out of Esau with four hundred men with him, and it looks as if Esau had a bad design. There is little doubt but that the old grudge rankled in his heart. He had been thinking for twenty long years that, if he came back into that country, he would revenge the quarrel. And now Jacob hears of his coming, with wives and flocks and herds, and with four hundred men, against him; what means had Jacob recourse to? Poor soul! his heart was dejected within him—he was exceedingly depressed; “I am afraid,” said he, “lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children.” He was deeply affected; and what measure had he recourse to under his trial? He took the very method which a good man should take: he betook himself to prayer, and we are told how he pleaded with God on that occasion. “And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord, which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee; and thou saidst, I will surely do thee good.” Now this was looking back to Hermon, and to Jordan, to the hill Mizar, and remembering God there; this was making use of past experiences under present trials. This was pleading the divine faithfulness, and resting his soul and all his concerns on him. Jacob pleaded to good purpose, and from hence he obtained the name of Israel; for he had power with God, and prevailed. Oh, that we may do likewise under all our adversities! Does God lay his hand on us? Do mountains appear in our way insurmountable; let us, like Jacob, remember him from Bethel; and say, He that hath delivered doth deliver, and, we trust, will deliver. Let us bless Him for all that is past, and confide in him for all that is to come. Well, and suppose your dejection arise from a want of communion with God, suppose it to be of a spiritual nature; methinks the remembrance of past experience even here, of past manifestations of divine goodness in your behalf, will lead you again, in the exercise of humble prayer, to seek your spiritual supplies from the same fountain. I hate that way of resting on past experiences which consists in quieting the conscience under present carnality, that can make us easy without God in the world; what some people have called a life of faith, but which is in reality the death, rather than the life, of that principle. A life of faith does not consist in being satisfied that we are safe, be we in whatever state we may; but if we repair to the throne of grace or the ordinances of God, and cannot enjoy consolation, and if our souls lament like Israel after the Lord, we may get good by remembering past experiences, or rather by remembering God under them. The church at Ephesus was exhorted to remember how she had heard, and how she had received the word of God. O dejected Christian! do thou also remember how thou hast heard; call to recollection thy former sorrows, thy former hopes, thy former joys, thy former confidences, not in order to seek comfort without a renewal of them, but with a view to rekindle, if it be possible, the lost flame; to recall the former joys, the former hopes, the former confi-

dences, that the things may be revived which are ready to die; this will do thy soul good under all thy dejections. This will be to remember God from Hermon, and from Jordan, from the hill Mizar.

I will only add, by way of conclusion, there is one place which David could not mention, but which you and I can; and which it will do our souls more good to remember than either Jordan, or the land of the Hermonites, or the hill Mizar, or all other places put together; and that is Calvary? Is thy soul cast down within thee? Remember him from Gethsemane and Calvary; and if that be not a relief, nothing can be. I will venture to say there is no trial that can befall you or me in providence or grace, but what a remembrance of God from Calvary will dissipate it. Is thy soul dejected with providential depressions? think of Jesus. What are thy afflictions in comparison of his, who bore thy griefs, and carried thy sorrows? Is thy soul depressed with a load of guilt, and art thou banished from communion with God? remember him on whom was laid the iniquity of us all, and who exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Does guilt depress thy heart, and shame cover thy face? "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world;" remember him from Calvary, and this shall be the healing of thy heart. A view of the cross of Jesus, as Bunyan remarks, unburdened his conscience. A view of the cross of Jesus will prove a balm for every malady—a relief under all thy sorrows.

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### XXXI.

[Delivered at Maze Pond, London, May 23, 1802.]

#### THE WORK OF PATIENCE.

"Let patience have her perfect work that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."—James i. 4.

We sometimes speak of the troubles of the present state, and are ready to sink under the complicated afflictions in our lot; but it might be useful to us to recollect the disparity between us and the primitive Christians. Compare your lot, my brethren, with that of people who have been harassed, persecuted from city to city, finding no certain resting-place, their lives ever in danger, their dearest friends at variance with them—and all this on account of their attachment to Christ—the father set against the son, the tenderest of natural ties almost dissolved, on account of an adherence to Christ and the gospel:—think of those, and then ask, "What are my afflictions? The world to me has been a quiet habitation, in comparison to that which it has been to them; the persecutions which heretofore raged have been, in a great measure, laid asleep." And yet we may notice, that the apostle admonishes the Christians in those times to take well whatever God should lay upon them; "to be patient, yea, to let patience have its perfect work;" instead of despairing under present trials, to "count it all joy when they fell into divers temptations."

Let me have your attention, my brethren, while I attempt,

I. To offer a few explanatory remarks upon the exhortation, "Let patience have her perfect work;" and,

II. To point out the influence which patience thus working has upon the Christian character, rendering it "perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

I. Let us then inquire, first, into the meaning of the exhortation. Every

term the apostle makes use of seems to be full of meaning, and it becomes us to endeavour fully to enter into it. Here, three or four questions seem to present themselves to us for answer. 1. What is patience? 2. What is the work of patience? 3. What is the perfect work of patience? and, 4. What is denoted, by our letting patience have its perfect work?

1. What is patience? we ask. The word so rendered, I believe, signifies rightly, to bear up under, as a man that carries a burden, or a cross if you please, and yet makes progress; goes on notwithstanding the load that lies upon him. In other words, patience is that grace, in the exercise of which we quietly endure present ills in hope of future deliverance. Perhaps we shall form a still clearer and more forcible idea of it by contrasting it with a few things that bear some resemblance to it. There is a species of quiescence that arises from mere fatality, or a consideration that things cannot be altered. This was the patience of the ancient heathens, and must be the patience of modern heathens. Men who have nothing better to hope for can draw their sources of submission from no higher principle. Cicero, and several of the great names of antiquity, when they lost their children, are represented as composing and quieting themselves from nothing but merely the consideration that it could not be altered: we must submit to fate. But this, my brethren, is the patience of despair, while the disposition here recommended is the patience of hope; and how great the difference between the patience which heathenism can produce, and the patience which is the effect of the gospel!

Again, there is a sort of quiescence of mind arising from insensibility, and this in every age and in every country. There are persons who are not greatly affected with their trials, and who are thought to be very patient under them; but the truth is, it is the mere effect of insensibility or stupidity. This is not gospel patience. Gospel patience does not extinguish the feelings, but governs them: it supposes the sensibilities of the soul to be most alive; it comports with the tenderest sensibilities, the most refined feelings. All that gospel patience aims at is, to govern, to direct, to keep those feelings in submission to God. Thus it is beautifully expressed by our Saviour himself, "In patience possess ye your souls." The soul sometimes becomes like an ungoverned steed; but patience holds the reins and preserves it in awe, and so subjects all the feelings and sensibilities of the mind to a right direction. This is the patience of the gospel.

2. But I pass on to inquire, What is the work of patience? It is supposed that patience works; for though it be a passive grace, or its principal exercise consists in suffering rather than in acting, yet it is connected with activity. Hence the scriptures speak of "patient continuance in well-doing." It is not to lie under a load of sorrow, and make no movement; it is to follow Christ though we have a cross to carry; it is that kind of sensation which is connected with a perseverance in well-doing. What is the work of patience? Patience is not only represented as operative, but we are informed what it is that it works: "Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope." If we would look, then, for the work of patience, we must go into the variety of difficulties and trials with which Providence afflicts the children of men, the children of God. There we shall find patience working; there we shall see the work of patience in the path of affliction, persecution, and the like.

That tribulation which affords occasion for patience may be distinguished into three general kinds: the visitations of God; and there the work of patience consists in bowing in submission;—the injurious treatment of men; and there patience consists in rendering, not evil for evil, but good for evil;—and lastly, the suspension of expected blessings; and there

patience consists in quietly waiting for God's mercy. Here, then, you will find the work of patience. Are you visited by the afflicting hand of God? Does God afflict you in your person? Does he diminish you in your circumstances? Does he bereave you of your children and dear friends? Does he inflict wound upon wound, and stroke upon stroke? Here is the work of patience. Imitate the example of that godly man who said, in the deepest of his afflictions, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Are you exposed to unkind treatment from your fellow-sinners? It is possible: though you are not exposed to legal persecutions for the sake of the gospel; though you cannot be haled to prison, and have your lot in a dark and noisome dungeon; though you cannot be dragged to the stake; yet there are many ways in which you may be called to suffer for Christ's sake. Ungodly relations, ungodly neighbours, ungodly connexions, may cause you to feel the weight of their resentment and malignity in a variety of ways; and here, it is your business and mine, as Christians, to let "patience have its perfect work," to beware that we render not evil for evil, to beware that our spirits are not overset by these things, and that we yield not to the temptation of rendering vengeance, which is the prerogative of God. Or it may be, that you have conceived the hope of some desired good, and have been in expectation of it; and it may be, that God suspends this expected good, holds it back from you; and "hope deferred," as the wise man says, "maketh the heart sick." Here the work of patience is to preserve you from despondency; to keep your head, as it were, above water; to guard you from hard thoughts of God: and such was its work in the afflicted church in her captivity, when she said, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause," until he "bring forth judgment unto victory." I will wait patiently for God's mercy.

3. But a third question presents itself, What is the perfect work of patience? I apprehend, this term expresses the degree of it. It denotes, that patience not only be strong but habitual; that patience be not interrupted in its work, and that it hold out unto the end. Patience is often interrupted in its work by the intervention of fits of despondency, seasons of discontent, times in which we are apt to lose the possession of our souls under the afflictive dispensations of God. Job was very patient to a certain degree, but it did not last to the end; it had not "its perfect work." We hear the same lips which once said, "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil also?" cursing the day that he was born, and the hour in which he was brought forth. This was a sad interruption, and affords a melancholy proof of the depravity of the best of men. Under the resentment of our fellow-creatures, our fellow-christians, there is great danger that after having exerted great patience, and kindness, and meekness, and after having rendered much good for evil, in some unguarded moment passion or resentment will take the place of Christian meekness. Yes, some who have borne evil nobly for a time, have yet permitted passion and resentment to get the better of their sober judgment. Let your patience be habitual and uniform; let there be perseverance even to the end; there is need to pray for grace, and great grace, that we may, by perseverance in well-doing, go on till we lay hold of immortality; patiently endure to the end. Thus it was with the holy martyrs of Jesus; their patience lasted to the end; in patience, fortitude, and expected triumph in the cause of Jesus, they possessed their souls. But why do I speak of the martyrs of Jesus? It were enough to look to Jesus himself. He was a perfect pattern. "Behold the Lamb of God." See him meekly enduring affliction, enduring the indignities and cruelties of his most inveterate enemies, and the promised good



still withheld. See him exercising patience. It may be said in its completest sense to have had its perfect work in him: it was wanting in nothing. He never slackened in the exercise of this grace; not once did he complain; not once did he exercise violent resentment: he "endured the cross, despising the shame;" and this in consequence of the joy that was set before him, and on which his eye was constantly fixed. He knew that he should "see of the travail of his soul, and should be satisfied." Oh! that we may be enabled to keep the example of our Lord always before our eyes.

Patience must have its perfect work in this life, if it has it at all; for this is the only world in which it is to work. There are graces that shall live and operate in the bright world above, but patience does all here. There will be no occasion for it in the blessed state above. There will be no visitations from God to try us; no more shall he hide his face from us; no more shall he chasten the beloved of his soul. Neither shall men nor devils be able to put our patience to the proof. Their injuries, their resentments, their persecutions, shall be removed far away. Nor will there be any waiting for an expected good. No more sickness of heart on account of hope deferred, for there the crown is in possession. Patience is the vessel, the use of which is to bear us over this stormy ocean; but when we shall ride in this bark into the haven of everlasting rest, we shall not need it any further.

4. Once more, we ask, What is denoted by the exhortation, "Let patience have her perfect work?" This kind of language intimates that we are exceedingly prone to make objections; that we are very apt to hinder the operation of patience; and this is the case particularly in these ways. We are unwilling to take the cross; nay, we are naturally studious to avoid it. Indeed, we are not called upon to choose affliction; but when the path of duty lies through suffering, we may by our own folly, bring trouble on ourselves by going out of our way to avoid the latter. God requires that we should take up the cross when he lays it in our way; but alas! how often do we go out of our way to miss it; and leave the path of duty, in order to shun trouble! Aye, here this exhortation looks us in the face. "Let patience have its perfect work." Let not your anxiety to avoid trouble lead you into sin. The path of sin will assuredly bring a heavier cross than you are trying to avoid. Do not dispute with Providence. Take these troubles, and bear them in the strength of the grace that God will grant to you.

Again, this exhortation appears to apply, when we are under any particular trials that exercise our patience, and when we are solicitous to get rid of them. The heart not only wishes to avoid this and that trial; but when it comes, we are too apt to show the spirit of Ephraim, we try to shake it off, to escape from a difficulty, being much more solicitous to get rid of trouble than of sin; much more desirous of being delivered from affliction, than that it should be sanctified, and leave a blessing behind it. That is the spirit of Ephraim, of "a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke." Christian, you may lay your account, that if you feel thus, your trouble will be continued as it was with Ephraim, till he said, "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned." Or, if God should suffer you to shake off your burden before it has produced its proper effect, the loss of it will be your heaviest curse. God may suffer you to escape from a trouble, and yet give you one which is far worse. He may be saying, "Let him get rid of his sorrows; but there shall be a blast on his prosperity—there shall be a curse on his delights." Oh, tremble, lest you should wish to shake off these loads before they have answered their purpose, and be more solicitous to get rid of the sin than of the trial. All this seems to be implied in the exhortation.

I hope the solution of these four questions,—What is patience? What is

the work of patience? What is the perfect work of patience? and, What is it to let it have its perfect work?—may serve to throw some light on the exhortation.

II. I proceed, secondly, to remark the influence of patience on the Christian character; for this is supposed. "Let it have its perfect work; that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." There seems to be a beautiful correspondence noticed by the apostle, between the perfect work of patience and the perfect character of the Christian: Let it have its perfect work, and it will perfect you. I scarcely need remark, that perfection here is not to be taken absolutely, but comparatively. There is no absolute perfection in the present world. It is rather a perfection of parts than of degrees. The child that has all its limbs is taken to be a perfect child; but this is not a perfection of degrees, for there is still room for its growth to a perfect man. In heaven we shall arrive at the perfect stature of a man; there will be perfection in degrees. But there is a perfection of character, comparatively speaking, in the present world; and this it is which the perfect work of patience has a tendency to produce. The perfection to which I allude, is a uniformity of character, a conformity to the divine will. The apostle himself explains what he means, "entire, wanting nothing." That is the very idea he wishes to give here. Now, where there is a want of uniformity in the Christian character, we cannot be said to be "entire, wanting nothing." There is much wanting indeed in us all, but there is a great deficiency in many characters in point of conformity. For example, we often see characters that are distinguished by their natural generosity; they are ready to come forward on all occasions in works of mercy and generosity; and in this point of view they are estimable characters; but perhaps they are woefully deficient in spiritual-mindedness. Aye, my friends, do not rest satisfied: there is a want of being "perfect and entire" in our character; there is something greatly defective there. If we could follow you into your closets, how should we find you with reference to secret religion? Do not the walls of your apartments bear witness against you, notwithstanding your amiable deportment? If so, there is a most lamentable deficiency.

Again, you will see another of an opposite description, apparently devout, full of devotion, ready on all occasions to enter into what appears spiritual conversation; but look to another part of his character, and he is wretchedly avaricious, shut up to the feelings of humanity, scarcely possessed of common compassion to his fellow-creatures, or sympathy to his fellow-Christians. His pity consists of expressions, "Be ye warmed, and be ye clothed;" but not of that which costs him anything. Is this a perfect character? In the apostle's words, is this being "perfect and entire, wanting nothing?" Alas! the want of compassion to our fellow-creatures is represented as rendering our devotions suspicious; for how dwells the love of God in that man who feels not the love of his fellow-creatures? Thus we might go on and find a number of religious characters in the world, who resemble these in one respect or another, and with regard to whom there is a want of uniformity of character: they are zealous, but it is a zeal not according to knowledge; or they are very knowing, very intelligent, very much employed in speculation; they are very faithful in telling every one of his faults, but have scarcely any sympathy or compassion for those that fall; or they are very compassionate towards those who are guilty of a fault, but have no faithfulness. Here lies the matter, to unite these things. It is this which constitutes a character "perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

It remains only to show how the perfect work of patience is supposed to produce this end. Thousands could bear witness of the truth of this. That man who has borne afflictions with patience, who has borne injuries with

forbearance and meekness of spirit; who has borne up under the cross God has laid upon him;—*that* is the man who has grown in grace, *that* is the uniform character. Show me the most eminent Christian amongst your acquaintance, the most devout, and at the same time the most benevolent; the most faithful, and at the same time the most compassionate; the most zealous for Christ, and yet one whose zeal is accompanied with the largest degree of spiritual knowledge. Show me the man who has the greatest portion of noble qualities, and that will be the man who has gone through the greatest trials. Here is the perfect work of patience. It is the bearing of these trials, and the exercise of patience under them, that fills up the vacancies in Christian character; and hence it is that old age is represented as bearing some of the choicest fruits: “They shall bring forth fruit even to old age.” Do not you know some such aged Christian, who, as his body bows under the weight of age, has a soul which appears almost to bow under its weight of fruit—like a tree in the heavenly Eden—like a shock of corn fully ripe? It seems to be fit company but for the heavenly society to which it is going. God grant that this may be the object of each heart! May all our means of grace, prayer, reading, and so on, be tending to this! Thus shall we be fitted for usefulness here, and meetened for the inheritance of the saints above.

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### XXXII.

[Delivered at Eagle Street, London, Wednesday Evening, June 18th, 1800.]

FROM NOTES TAKEN BY W. B. GURNEY, ESQ.

#### THE CONDUCT OF DAVID IN TROUBLE.

“I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.”—Ps. xl. 1, 2, 3.

WERE it not for the Psalms of David we might be at a great loss in ascertaining the feelings, the experiences, the joys, the sorrows, the hopes, the fears of the Old Testament believers; we might be tempted to suppose that our own fears and depressions were singular; but God having directed them to record the various conflicts of their minds, we find it to be as mirrors held up to us, as face answering to face in water, so the heart of the Christian to that of the ancient believer. In this impressive passage there are three or four things which require our attention:

First, The situation of the Psalmist,—he was in a horrible pit, sinking in the miry clay.

Secondly, His conduct under it,—he cried unto the Lord, he waited patiently for him.

Thirdly, The answer, or his deliverance from it,—he says, “the Lord inclined to me, and heard my cry, he brought me out of the horrible pit, he set my feet upon a rock, he established my goings, he put a new song in my mouth,” and so on.

Lastly, The use that should be made of it to those who shall hear of it,—many shall see, and fear, and trust in the Lord.

Let us notice in the first place, The situation of the Psalmist: he expresses it as being in a horrible pit, sinking in the miry clay; and we may

not be able to ascertain what particular evil or trial it was with which he was exercised. It might be something of a temporal nature—we know he was often afflicted and surrounded by affliction, through the persecutions of Saul; health failed, and heart failed, and he was ready on some occasions to sink into the lowest dejection, and this might be one; or it might be something mental—it might be some exercise that preyed upon his heart, that eat up his enjoyments, and sunk his spirit into despondency. We often find him complaining of this sort of exercises, and in this psalm, particularly the twelfth verse, he tells us, that innumerable evils have compassed him about, and that his iniquities had taken hold upon him, so that he was not able to look up. He said, they were more numerous than the hairs of his head, and that his heart failed him—it might be one or the other, or it might be both united. God often visits and afflicts the mind with a complication of ills. Whatever it was, there can be no doubt it was something that pressed his heart into the greatest degree of dejection, into a state of despondency, bordering on despair. Nothing short of this could answer to the phrase, a horrible pit. No doubt the allusion is to some such state as that of the prophet Jeremiah, who was thrown into a dungeon, where he sunk in the mire, and had no standing; but that was literal, this is metaphorical. The horrible pit of David was a mental dejection under some heavy trial that sunk him upon the borders of despair.

I may mention two or three circumstances which will answer to the character here given of his affliction.

First, A sense of sin without a believing view of the mercy of God in Jesus Christ—that would do it. The mind generally thinks, or fixes upon one object at once; and therefore, if the attention be turned to the magnitude of our own sin, to the great evil of it, and to the wrath of God as revealed from heaven against it,—if it dwells upon that subject, and overlooks the mercy of God revealed in the gospel, it will produce that effect which will answer to the sinking into a horrible pit, into the miry clay. Guilt naturally works despair—guilt will dig, as I may say, a horrible pit; and if we be not rescued from it by a believing view of the gospel, and the sanctifying influences of the blood of Christ, we shall go on to sink deeper and deeper still. Again: a state of suspense respecting the reality of our religion, a state of painful uncertainty respecting our interest in the Saviour,—that will produce it. The mind impressed with the importance of eternal things, and at the same time hanging in painful suspense respecting its interest in the Saviour, must be in great pain. Nothing but insensibility, nothing but stupidity can render us easy while in that state of suspense, with respect to an interest in the Saviour; if, therefore, all be doubt and uncertainty with us; if we can ascertain nothing by looking to former experiences; if we can ascertain nothing from present consciousness; if we can lay hold of nothing by way of hope in looking forward, the mind revolts, and sinks into itself, pores upon its wretchedness, sinks into despondency as into a horrible pit, as into the miry clay. Once more: the dark and intricate providences of God surrounding us will sometimes produce the same effect; when the hand of God appears to be stretched out against us; when he covers us as with a cloud in his anger; when he hedges our way as with hewn stones, and there seems to be no passage for extrication, the mind under such circumstances is apt to sink under its own weight, to sink under the pressure of the Divine hand, and to write bitter things against itself; so much are we the subjects of sense—so much are we apt to be governed by sensible appearances rather than by faith in the promises, the invisible realities of God's word, that we are extremely prone to judge of the disposition of God towards us by his providences; that is, that if God's

hand be stretched out against us we are apt to interpret that his heart cannot be in favour of us. The church, when under the trying, afflicting hand of God, thus expressed herself, "Surely against me is he turned,"—and why this dark conclusion? why sink into this horrible pit? The answer is, he turneth his hand against me all the day. God's hand is often through the weakness of our faith interpreted as the index of his heart, whereas it is not so; it was not just reasoning in the church to infer that God was turned against her because his hand was turned against her all the day; for he frequently turns his hand against us, when his heart is for us, nevertheless, so weak is our faith, so susceptible are our feelings, that we are apt to sink under such impressions, and so to sink into a horrible pit, and as into the miry clay. I have mentioned these three different cases: The case of a person under a sense of sin, but without any believing prospect of the gospel way of salvation; the case of a person in painful suspense respecting his interest in Jesus; and the case of a person surrounded and depressed by afflicting providences. I mention these three cases, each of which will account for the language of the Psalmist, and to which it may be applicable, but which it was that David was under I cannot particularly determine. I proceed however,

Secondly, To remark the spirit and conduct of the Psalmist in this situation. And here we may remark one thing that is implied, and another that is expressed,—It is implied that he prayed under it, for he speaks of the Lord hearing him cry; nay, it is intimated that he cried under his affliction; it is also intimated that he waited patiently the Lord's time for his deliverance.

I do not know, my brethren, what better direction we can wish for, under any circumstances which may attend us. Let us again particularly notice it,—"I cried unto the Lord," says he, "and he heard my cry." We cannot help here remarking the great advantage of religion, true religion; to have a God to repair to, a God to cry unto, under all oppressions of mind and circumstances. Wicked men have their horrible pits as well as good men. It is not peculiar to Christians, or to good men, to sink in distress; but it is peculiar to them to cry to God under such dispensations; there is the advantage, the unspeakable advantage, of true religion. The heroes of antiquity, the great men of Greece and Rome, had their troubles, and they had their remedy—but a horrible remedy it was. It was customary with them, in the turbulent times in which they lived, to carry poison about them, in order that, if their troubles should increase upon them too heavily, they might put an end to their lives; and to this horrible refuge they frequently repaired; and to the same refuge we have seen men repair in our own times. Oh, what a thing it is to sink in a horrible pit, and to have no God to repair to, or no heart to cry to him. Christian, dost thou sink in a horrible pit? It may be so, but think of the example of the Psalmist,—he cried to the Lord under all his troubles; and this was the conduct of Jeremiah, he cried to the Lord out of his dungeon, and the Lord heard him. Jonah also was in a horrible pit; he sunk not only in the waters of the sea—not only was he swallowed up by the monstrous fish, but almost sinking into desperation, as it respected his life, yet he cried unto the Lord. One could hardly suppose he cried to the Lord for temporal deliverance, because that seemed beyond all reach, beyond all hope; but he cried to the Lord, and looked towards his holy temple. I dare say he thought of what Solomon had said in his prayer when he dedicated the temple. "O Lord God," says he, "when any of thy people Israel shall be in distress, and shall pray unto thee, looking towards this house, hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place." Encouraged by this, the prophet, the disobedient prophet,

though loaded with shame, guilt, and depondency, though cast out not only by heathens from the ship, but to all appearance by heaven from the world, and sinking into the belly of the fish, which to him was as the belly of hell, with that dreadful load upon his heart, yet, says he, I will look towards thine holy temple. Oh, what a blessedness it is to good men under all their depressions to have a God to cry to as David had! It is worthy of notice that there are circumstances in life in which we are encompassed "around, our way is hedged in, and there seems no escape," as Jeremiah expressed it, "thou hast compassed my ways as with hewn stones," as a prisoner encompassed with four stone walls, which were inaccessible, from which there was no escape, and through which no light could shine. "Thou hast compassed me as with hewn stones." Yes, there are circumstances in which every avenue of escape seems to be hedged up and shut out; but there is one way that neither hell nor earth can shut up, and that is the way out. To a Christian there is always one way open, and that was the way that was open to the Israelites: when they came to the Red Sea, there was a mountain on their right hand, and sea on their left; Pharaoh's army was behind them, and every way seemed to be blocked up; but there was one way open, Moses and Israel cried to the Lord, and the Lord heard them, and delivered them. Never let us forget this in every state of affliction, to lift up our hands and our eyes to heaven. But this is not the whole of the spirit of the Psalmist under his affliction; he not only cried, but he waited, and waited patiently. It seems, then, that God did not deliver him at once, no,—the Lord that answers the prayers of his servants does not always answer them at the instant of their supplication,—he sees proper to exercise our faith, our patience, our submission to his will. It is written, "Let patience have her perfect work;" and it is worthy of notice that this is the only world in which patience will have any exercise. In the world to come there will be no occasion for patience, it is a grace therefore that must do its all here; and therefore it is said, "Let patience have her perfect work," she must do all for God, and all for us that she will do, in the present state; and for this reason God frequently times his deliverances and his blessings so as to draw forth our patience and submission to his will.

We may also notice the nature of patience from this circumstance,—it does not consist in a stoical apathy, it is consistent with the liveliest sensation, it is consistent with the acutest feelings, and with the most ardent desires to God for deliverance. The Psalmist, you see, was crying to the Lord, and at the same time was waiting patiently. My brethren, the patience of infidels, the patience of worldly wicked men is no other than a sort of hardened apathy, an endeavour to stupify their feelings, striving to place themselves in such circumstances that they may forget their misery. But this is not consistent with Christian patience, no, it is not consistent with those lively feelings, those quick sensations, which the Christian feels. The gospel teaches us to refrain from murmuring, to sit submissive under the hand of God, and to be like that Lamb which was led to the slaughter,—the Lamb of God, who, when in the garden of Gethsemane, said, "If it be possible let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, not my will but thine be done." But, let us notice,

Thirdly, His deliverance from it. He tells us that the Lord inclined to him and heard him, that he brought him out of this horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and set his feet upon a rock, that he established his goings, and put a new song into his mouth. Oh, what a concatenation of blessings are here! Oh, what a string, as I may say, of heavenly blessings, are here offered! and one cannot help remarking, that God often reserves the richest blessings for those seasons of our lives when we most stand in need of them.

God frequently confers the blessings of his grace in a cluster,—yes, in clusters, but it is not when we do not need them; it is when we most need them, it is in the mount of the Lord that these things are usually bestowed; yes, many of the Lord's servants have been ready to bear witness that in the seasons of their keenest distress they have had the greatest enjoyments. One would think it almost worth while to sink into a horrible pit if we could always have such a cluster of blessings as are connected with it, that God would bring us out, and set our feet upon a rock, and establish our goings, and put a new song in our mouth, even praises to our God. But mind the process, it is a charming one. David tells us that he inclined to him, and he heard his cry. I suppose we cannot tell when God hears our prayers but by his answering them. It is true, when we find freedom to wrestle with him, we are assured by his word that he hears us, and so we believe it; but I reckon, when David says, he heard my cry, he means that the Lord heard his petition, answered him, and delivered him, whatever was the particular trial under which he laboured; if it was on account of the sin he had committed, if that horrible pit means guilt, remorse, and despondency of mind, on this account, then, I suppose, he delivered him, by directing his mind to the mercy of God through the mediator, by directing his soul to that which was the only remedy for this disease, and that would be answering his cry. Or, if it were darkness, and doubt, and painful suspense with regard to his interest in the Saviour, it would be by clearing up his doubts and his darkness, and giving him to see his interest in the Lord God with clearness. He answered me, he heard my cry, he brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay. I reckon, this intends that God had extricated him from his affliction, if mental, by turning it into joy, or, if providential—if it respected his external circumstances, by giving a favourable turn to his temporal affairs, which the providence of God frequently does. And when he tells us that the Lord set his feet upon a rock, I reckon that means, that he led his mind to fix, and rest himself upon the Lord. God was ever the Psalmist's rock, and he is ours,—it is by our faith and hope being fixed upon him, it is by a believing view of his promises, of his wisdom, of his all-sufficiency, it is by the mind regaling itself in God being every thing to us, that we need dependence upon his all-sufficiency, it is by this that our feet are set upon a rock, and thus it is that our goings are established; and under these circumstances he put a new song into the Psalmist's mouth. I reckon this to mean, that he gave him fresh occasion for praise. Every fresh mercy, my brethren, furnishes ground for a new song. There is no necessity for supposing that all his mercies have become old, or insipid, or uninteresting; but every new deliverance, and every new view of mercy furnished him with a new song of praise; and in fact, we shall never find the redeeming love of God through Jesus Christ become old to us. Heaven itself will be a state where our faith shall stand immovable as upon a rock, and will be accompanied with a new song, a song which shall never, never cease, and never weary us. How applicable is this cluster of blessings which God bestowed upon the Psalmist, to his treatment of many and many a poor sinner amongst us? How applicable is it, particularly to the Christian, in his early stages of experience. Knowest thou not the time when guilt sunk thee low, when despair took hold upon thee, when thou wast sinking as in the miry clay, when thou thoughtest all would be over with thee, and destruction would shortly be thy portion? Canst thou not recollect, either by hearing or by reading, or by reflection, that thy mind was some how led to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world,—how thy mind was led to fix upon Jesus as the rock of ages; and that by this means a new song was put into thy mouth, and thy mourning was turned into joy, and thy painful

sorrows into songs of praise. Nor is it confined to the earliest exercises of Christian experience. How applicable is it to Christians under various dispositions of mind. During the pilgrimage of life, under what difficulties are you placed in consequence of the weight that God is pleased to lay upon you; and then you know what it is to retire and pour out your hearts before him; and know you not what it is to be delivered from that painful and dark state of mind, and have your heart filled with rejoicing in the Lord. Such seasons occur perhaps not very frequently, but they do occur; and they are like a Bethel—they are periods in which we remember the Lord; and we are ready during the rest of our pilgrimage to worship God as the God of Bethel, the God that appeared for me at this time, and that time, and the other time. To this may be added, how applicable under the various pressures of intricate providences; how often has God, after trying and exercising the patience of his servants, after having called forth their graces into exercise, and called them to glorify him for a while in the fire of affliction, how has he turned their sorrows into rejoicing, how has he put a different face upon their affairs by some unexpected turn which all the wit of man could never have effected, and yet, by some little incident which we never could have contrived, or possibly have foreseen, things have turned about, the cloud, though dark, has strangely and imperceptibly dispersed, and sorrow has been turned into joy; the feet that a short time back were sinking into miry clay, have been brought out and fixed as upon a solid rock; and the soul that was once mourning, and poring over its miseries, is now occupied in singing the high praises of God,—a new song is put into its mouth of praise to our God. Oh, Christian, trust in the Lord under all thy depressions, and under all thy griefs.

I only add a word or two more upon the effect which all this should produce upon spectators. Many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in the Lord. Well, methinks this exercise of David has been recorded in the scripture for the wisest of purposes. Many have seen and feared, and been encouraged in similar circumstances to put their trust in the Lord; and, indeed, the exercises of God's servants, and his interposing mercy on their behalf, have had an effect upon spectators to this day. When you see a good man brought into the furnace of affliction it may well make you fear and tremble—you may fear that the Lord will bring you into the same affliction, for none of us are exempt; all our present peace, and present comforts hang, as I may say, or are suspended, upon a thousand tender strings, and if any one of them should break, our minds are divested of peace, and sink in wretchedness. When you see a single string of any of your acquaintance broken, and the sorrows with which they are visited, it may well make you fear and tremble, and make you sensible of God's mercy towards you; but it will also have this effect through the operations of the Spirit of God, if you properly improve it, it will have the effect of leading you to trust in the Lord. Do you sink in deep mire? Are you plunged, from whatever cause, as into a horrible pit? You are thereby taught by the example of the Psalmist to put your trust in God; from his example take comfort, and charm your griefs to rest. Oh that we could learn more from the example of God's servants under all the ills of life, to commit our way to him, to live to him under every situation to which he calls us! There is no circumstance or situation into which the Lord calls us but for the purpose of glorifying him,—he gives us an opportunity then to honour him, which, perhaps, we shall never again possess; thus, we should consider all events as affording us an opportunity of honouring him by rejoicing in temptations, and counting it all joy when we fall into divers afflictions.

I leave what has been said to the Lord's blessing.



## XXXIII.

[Preached at Eagle st., London, March 26, 1800.]

## ALL THINGS WORKING TOGETHER FOR GOOD.

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”—Rom. viii. 28.

GODLINESS, we are told, has the promise of the life which now is, as well as of that which is to come. Does this mean that godly persons are distinguished by their wealth, by their prosperity, by their exemption from the common trials and afflictions of men? No: it rather means, that, though they have those things which are common to men, yet they have the peace of God along with them; and what is still of greater importance (if greater it can be), they have them as blessings bearing their souls to God and glory, or, as the idea is conveyed to us in the text, “all things working together for their good.” You will admit, my hearers, that this is a very comprehensive subject, and I assure you that I have no hope of being able to do it justice. However, some things may be hinted, and some things I shall attempt, first, by way of expounding the passage, trying to come at the meaning of it; and secondly, in confirming the leading truths which we are here taught.

Let us endeavour, in the first place, to expound the passage, or to offer a few remarks, that we may ascertain the extent and force of the expressions here used. I think there are four things supposed in this language. It is supposed that all things are *working*, that all things *work in concert* or *together*, that all things *work together for good*, and lastly, that this good is restricted to *them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose*. Let us review these important ideas.

It is supposed, in the first place, that all things are *working*. It is an affecting idea, an affecting truth, that nothing stands still; all things, as the wise man expresses it, are “full of labour, man cannot utter it.” Every thing in the natural, in the political, and in the moral world is in motion. All things in the natural world are working: the sun rises and the sun goes down; the winds whirl about continually; the clouds are gathering and anon dispersing; the heavenly bodies are incessantly in motion; the waters are continually evaporating from the ocean and returning again to it:—all things are full of labour. It is the same in the political world: kingdoms are rising and falling; changes are continually taking place; some are prospering, and towering to the summit of what is called worldly glory, and others are gradually dwindling into insignificance; the potsherds of the earth are dashing one against another; the whole world is like one great sea, the waters of which are in constant motion. It is the same in the moral world: all things are working—man works, God works, angels work, devils work, sin works, righteousness works, error works, truth works:—“all things are full of labour, man cannot utter it.” Human affairs are subject to incessant fluctuation; there is no standing still. Man may be insensible, but he does not remain stationary. Like the stupid prophet, he may be asleep at the bottom of the ship; but, though asleep, the tempest hurries him along, and he is fast hastening to his final abode, to the consummation of all things.

Remark, secondly, not only do all things work, but all things “work together,” work in concert. God, who by his almighty power puts all things in motion, and keeps them in motion, by his wisdom causes them to act in

harmony. This harmony may not be visible to us; the movements of things may appear to resemble the movements of a tumultuous mob; but, in the eye of Him that sits upon the circle of the heavens and manages all affairs, they are the motions of a well disciplined army. We cannot see the whole compass of things, but God knows how to organize and order things in themselves most discordant. Moses's prayers and Balaam's curses, Pharaoh's cruelty and Israel's groans, were but so many links in the chain of events to accomplish their deliverance. Yes, the treachery of Judas Iscariot, the cruelty of the scribes and priests, the hypocrisy of Pilate, the entire wicked system of the enemies of Christ, together with all the gracious ends to be accomplished by it, formed but one harmonious whole in the mind of God, and those events were but so many wheels composing one grand and glorious machine. "All things work together."

But remark, thirdly, not only do all things "work" and "work together," but they "work together for good." He, whose power puts all things in motion, whose wisdom causes them to work in concert, by his goodness overrules them to operate beneficially. His love and mercy give the finishing touch, causing this harmonious working to terminate in the good of all those who "love him, and are the called according to his purpose." But it may be asked, How does this accord with fact? I reply, Though things work for good, it may not always be a *perceived* good; you must not lay your account that every event that shall befall you will work for such a good as you may at once perceive. You may never perceive it while in this world. It may form part of the bliss of heaven to observe the good which a thousand ills have eventually wrought. "What thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter." God gives us proof enough to convince us that it may be so; and he has given us his promise assuring us that it is so; but we must wait, in many cases, till we arrive at glory, to see how it is so.

It may not always be an *immediate* good. God may bring things about, but then he will take his own time. Much of the divine wisdom is exercised in timing of things. He proceeds towards us in all wisdom and prudence. Now prudence in men greatly consists in timing their affairs; and the prudence of God consists in doing every thing at that time when it is ripe, and when it comes with the best effect. The movements of Providence are frequently like the circuit of a comet—they fetch a large compass, but come round at last. Meanwhile, it is well ordered to try our faith, to exercise our patience, till all things come to a right issue. It was twenty-two years that Joseph was banished from his father; years before that God had told him, Surely I will do thee good. Did it look like it when the bloody garment was brought to the broken-hearted patriarch? Did this look as if he meant surely to do him good? Yet we know it was so; the time came when the patriarch subscribed to it himself, and acknowledged it was enough. Oh, my brethren, have patience; God's works, being great works, must be accomplished in his own way. We often see, even in this world, that the most painful events issue in the most pleasant ones. We have found the roughest road sometimes lead to the most delightful plain; God has caused the storm to be changed into a calm, and filled our mouth with joy and gladness, contrary to all our fears, even in the present state. But whether he gives us present relief or not, whether he causes all things to work together for our temporal good or not, if they work together for our spiritual advantage, this is far, this is infinitely greater.

But I remark, once more, what is here promised or declared is restricted to them that love God. I shall not enlarge here; you plainly perceive that the description given of a true Christian is, that he loves God; that he loves the true character of God; that he loves God for being what he is—a glorious

being. The character of God fits his mind, fits his heart. You see also, that it is here supposed that those who are truly *godly* people are the *called* of God, implying that they were once, like others, in a state of distance from him—an awful moral distance—alienated, without hope, without God in the world; but that God by his Holy Spirit hath “called them from darkness to light, and translated them from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of his dear Son.” You perceive, also, it is here implied, that whosoever loves God, and whosoever is called of God, it is in consequence of his eternal purpose. Vocation is an effect of election; “whom he did predestinate, he called;” whosoever, therefore, is called of God, it is according to his eternal purpose, for no new thought can arise in the all-comprehending mind of Jehovah; whatsoever he doth in time he intended from all eternity. These hints I drop merely as expository, and only add, it is a very serious thought, that the blessing suggested in the text is restricted. It is hereby implied that all things do not work together for the good of those who love not God; it is implied, for aught I know, that all things work together for their hurt. Some of you, perhaps, though prospered in the world, may nevertheless be cursed in basket and in store. With all your fulness, with all your ease and affluence, and with all your opulence and dignity, if you love not God, and are not the called according to his purpose, the curse of Jehovah stands against you, and all the threatenings of God lie upon you, and every thing in the course of Providence is working together against you. Prosperity operates to your injury; it is not a propitious gale, but like the windy, stormy tempest, acting on a ship which is in a wrong direction, it only wafts you the faster to the gulf of destruction.

Having dropped a few things then by way of exposition of the passage, let us attempt to confirm its leading sentiment—that “all things work together for good to them who love God, and are the called according to his purpose.” I cannot enumerate every particular comprehended in this extensive mode of speaking. I might prove that all temporal blessings work for good. When God prospers you in the world, if you love him, your prosperity is a blessing and not a curse. I might prove that all ordinances work for good, and that is a great thing: every sermon that we hear bears us either nearer to, or farther from, God; it never leaves us where it found us; it is either a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death: it is a matter of vast importance that divine ordinances should work together for our good. I might prove that all the changes and vicissitudes in nations, all the changes of war, persecution, and the like, which have befallen or may befall the church of God, shall work together for its ultimate good, for I make no doubt that it will finally prove to have been so. I might prove that the wickedness of the wicked, the wrath of man, evil as it is, shall work together for good to them that love God and are the called according to his purpose. I might go further, I might prove that sin itself is overruled for the good of them that love God. However that truth may be liable to abuse, it is a truth; and it is a decisive proof that we love God when our faults and falls do work our good. If our past faults and falls do not work our good, that is, if they do not humble us, if they do not make us more cautious, more humble, more dependent; if they do not operate in this way, it affords a strong proof that we have not the love of God in us. But although I say I might undertake to prove all these particulars, they are not what I mean to dwell upon; I intend this evening chiefly to confine your attention to one idea, and that is, that the adverse providences of God, the ills of life—which form the bitter part of the cup which God has been pleased to allot us, and which is so ungrateful to us—that these all, under

the wise and gracious administration of our heavenly Father, do actually work together for our good.

I have suggested already that if our spiritual good be promoted, this is of far greater account than our temporal prosperity; worldly riches are of so little account in the eye of God, that he generally throws them away upon his worst enemies; he opens the stores of the world upon the basest of mankind. Nebuchadnezzar, that great heathen prince, acknowledged that kingdoms themselves were thus bestowed; which shows that God does not estimate that good at any high rate; but when he speaks of spiritual good, mark how he estimates it: "Thus saith the Lord, heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; where is the house that ye build me? and where is the place of my rest? All these things hath mine hand made, and all these things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word." What is this but saying God will overlook heaven and earth to spy out the broken and the contrite heart? which shows that he values spiritual good, real grace, true penitence and purity of heart, as of greater account than all creation together. Now if afflictions tend to the producing spiritual good to them that love God, if this can be proved, the grand point that I undertook to prove is accomplished.

Let me observe then, if the trials, the adverse events of life, make us more humble, is not that good? If they furnish us with matter for importunate prayer, is not that good? If they render the truths and promises of God more seasonable and precious to us, is not that good? If they increase our stock of Christian experience, is not that good? If they wean us from earth and promote heavenly-mindedness, is not that good? If they fit us for greater usefulness one to another, is not that good? Finally, if they "work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," is not that good?

Well, let us attempt to prove then that such are the effects which even the adverse events of life, in the hands of the divine Spirit, produce in us, if we love God, and are the called according to his purpose.

Is it not a fact that the trying and adverse events that befall the godly have ever been known to operate in a way of humility? God humbles us by this means. Man is a poor proud creature, little cause as he has to be so, and it is not possible that he should be truly humble, but by the humbling hand of God. Perhaps Job was as modest, as upright, as humble a man as we should expect to find, if not much more so; and yet, when God's hand came to be laid upon him by a succession of trials, how different did he feel to what he had ever done before: "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes: once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further." It is by something that lays hold on us that our hearts are appalled, and our spirits brought down. Jeremiah says, "The wormwood and the gall my soul hath still in remembrance." If the remembrance of it, probably several years afterwards, would humble him before God, what must the endurance of it have done?

Again, it is by this means, in the second place, that we are furnished with matter for importunate prayer. God has invited us to a throne of grace, and he knows that unless he furnishes us with arguments we should not come in real earnest; our prayers would be little better than formality, if the Lord were not by a series of afflicting events to furnish us with pleas. "Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he will sustain thee." Reflect upon thy own experience. Christian, would you have been furnished with those importunate pleas with God, with which you have been furnished, had not your hearts been depressed by a series of affliction? Look back to those

periods of life in which you have enjoyed most communion with God, has it not been when the loads and trials of life have pressed the heaviest upon you?

Again, if the adverse events of life endear the Scriptures to us, if they render the truths and promises of God more interesting to our souls, does not that produce good? It is not at all a matter of surprise that we cannot understand the Scripture without affliction; how should we understand them to purpose, unless we are led through those trials which the sacred writers were under when they wrote them? I will venture to say that you cannot understand the language of a friend under agonizing distresses, if you never were in that situation. There are certain circumstances and situations in life, which act on the divine word like a good light upon a painting, enabling us to view the truths and the promises of God to the greatest advantage. Thus the Lord leads us through all the varieties of life, even its bitterest scenes, in order that we may appreciate the precious truths of his word. He suffers us to thirst, that we may drink more deeply of the fountain of living waters; he suffers us to hunger, that we may eat the bread of life with a keener appetite. There is, doubtless, a pleasure in thinking of the promises of God at almost any time; but oh, what a difference! For example: show a man, a good man, in the hour of prosperity, in ease and affluence, show him this precious word, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the floods, they shall not overflow thee: when thou passest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee;" a passage, of which it is cheering to think at any time; but oh, when the water-spouts of God's wrath seem to be going over him, when he feels himself sinking in deep waters, then to realize such a truth as this, is as a word in season, as cold water to the thirsty soul. "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him." This is a sentiment which a good man will profess and will value even in the midst of worldly prosperity; but realize this truth in the circumstances under which it was uttered, when the church was in captivity, when her country was lost, her temple lost, her city in ruins, her liberty gone, and she was led captive to be a slave in a foreign land; it was then that she experienced the Lord to be her portion; as though she should say, There is one portion left of which Babel cannot deprive me—"The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him." It is pleasant, I may add, it is pleasant, to think of the Lord as "ever living," of the doctrine of the resurrection and of eternal life, at any time; but oh, how interesting do these truths appear, amidst changing scenes and dying friends, when we have nothing but death around us, when mortality is sweeping away this and that and the other dear friend, and threatening to dissolve every tender tie of nature; when all seems to be hung in mournful attire, and wrapt in sepulchral gloom. Oh, how interesting then are such truths as these: "The Lord liveth, and blessed be my Rock;" and again, "Although after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God;" and "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Poor Job—his family dead, his children swept away at a stroke, his friends worse than dead, for they were living adversaries to him, his own life brought near to the grave, yet, in the midst of all this, he could say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Oh, the joyful truth of a resurrection, of a glorious immortality, of a living Redeemer, is ballast against all the ills of life and the fear of death. Thus, then, if afflictions render Scripture truths and Scripture promises doubly interesting to us, surely they may be said to work for our good.

Again, fourthly. If they tend to enlarge the stock of our experience, is not that good? Well, they do so.

It is tribulation that worketh patience, and patience experience; and we have no other experience, comparatively, of the faithfulness, of the grace, of the goodness of God, but in times of some sort of trial. Show me an experienced Christian, and I will show you a tried one; show me a man that has seen, and known, and proved all things, that is able to speak a word in season to them that are weary, and I will show you a man that has gone, as we say, through all weathers; one that has experienced the smiles and frowns of men, yea, and the smiles and frowns of God too; a man that may have had his hopes raised high and then dashed in confusion and disappointment to the ground, and that repeatedly; a man that has been led by a rough, though a right way, to the city of habitation. Christian, experienced, tried Christian, hast thou got a stock of experimental knowledge? It may have cost you many a pang; many a time your heart may have been wrung with anguish; many a sleepless night you may have passed, watering your couch with your tears; but let me ask you, after all, do you think much of the cost? Oh, a little Christian experience, solid experience, of the mercy, the goodness, the grace, the faithfulness of God, is worth a great expense. No, no; you do not think much of any trial you have gone through, do you? You do not wish it to be otherwise than it has been, do you? God has hereby taught you what you would never otherwise have known. I call him an experienced Christian, not who thinks himself very deep, (generally those who think themselves very deep Christians are, in reality, very shallow ones,) but who is humble, serious, wise, grave, ready to speak a word in season to them that are weary. Oh, such Christians are blessings to society, their trials and afflictions are not blessings to themselves alone, but to all who are connected with them. I add,

In the fifth place, if the adverse events of life wean us from the world, and render us more heavenly-minded, is not that good? And is it not so? Oh, what earthly-minded creatures are we! Nor is it without a succession of adverse events, painful to endure, that our hearts are ordinarily weaned from the world; God is pleased thus to exercise us, to weary us, as it were, of present things, in order that we may lift up our eyes and seek for the rest that is above. There is a beautiful passage in the writings of Moses referring to Israel: "As the eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, beareth them on her wings, so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange God with him." It is said of the eagle that, in order to teach her young ones to fly when the proper time comes for it, she stirs up the nest, that is, makes it rough and hard, and unpleasant to them, so that they may have no inducement to continue in it; having first stirred up the nest, she takes them up in the air and bears them upon her own wings, and so exercises them. Thus, as far as the comparison may be extended, the Lord did by Israel. Egypt was Israel's nest, and he stirred it up, that is, he suffered Pharaoh's persecution and oppression to be so rough and so hard, that Israel, like the young eagles, could not stay in the nest. Had not God thus stirred up the nest, by permitting these ills to befall Israel, they would never have been induced to leave Egypt. Similar to this are the dealings of God with his people now. He stirs up our nest; if it were always suffered to be soft, if it were always a nest of feathers, so to speak, we should never desire, we should scarcely be willing, to quit it; but God, by stirring it up, and rendering it hard and unpleasant to us, makes us willing to leave it, and enables us by his grace to soar towards himself and heaven—to the rest that remains for the people of God.

Again, if the adverse events in life fit us for greater usefulness one to another, is not that working for good? And they do so. It is an interesting thought, that the afflictions of ministers are described in the Scriptures

as generally sent them for the people's good. St. Paul speaks of the afflictions that befell him and his brethren as designed to qualify them to comfort others with the same comfort wherewith they themselves were comforted of God. Our Lord Jesus Christ himself was afflicted for our sakes. He was tempted in all points like unto his brethren, that "he might be able to succour them that are tempted." The Captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering. He would not have been perfectly suited to be our Saviour, he would not have been fully prepared to sympathize and feel for us as a compassionate High Priest, if he had not suffered. Oh! if the Saviour himself must be made perfect through suffering, much more may it be said of his servants. Perhaps the greatest qualifications, the best instruction, the most useful learning, that any Christian minister can attain, without any disparagement of other kinds of learning, is that which is attained in the school of affliction; it is by this he becomes able to feel, to sympathize, and to speak a word in season to them that are weary.

Finally, if all these things work out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, is not that good? Well, they do this. Present bitters will render future sweets still sweeter. Heaven would not be that to us which it will be, were we not prepared by the chequered scenes of life for its enjoyments. Canaan would not have been so pleasant a rest, had Israel gone immediately to it without the circuitous course through the wilderness. God gives us every good by way of contrast; we should not enjoy our food, if strangers to hunger; nor the waters of life, if we were not athirst; we should not know the pleasures of rest, if strangers to toil; nor the joys of the upper world, if strangers to the sorrows of the present. God is thus, by present bitters, preparing us for future sweets; he is now qualifying us, by endowing us with a relish that shall give a zest to those pleasures which are at his right hand for evermore.

I only add, the one thing needful for the enjoyment of all this blessedness is, that "we love God, and are the called according to his purpose." Every thing turns upon this hinge. This, then, is the main thing to which our attention should be directed. Are we the friends of God? If we are, come sickness, come health, come life, come death, come what will, it shall be well with us; but if we are strangers to this blessedness, if any of you, my hearers, love not God, look to it; all things work together against you. Heaven, earth, the sea, all nature, all providences, ordinances, mercies, judgments—all "work together" for your ill, and will conspire to sink you as a mighty millstone into the sea of perdition.

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#### XXXIV.

[Delivered at Maze Pond Meeting-house, London, Sunday, June 19th, 1796.]

#### THE CHRISTIAN'S PREPARATION FOR FUTURE GLORY.

"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."—1 Pet. i. 13.

WHILE Paul was a minister of the uncircumcision, Peter, and James, and John were ministers of the circumcision. Their Epistles are addressed principally to the converted Jews. James addresses principally the twelve tribes scattered abroad, and I suppose this Epistle is addressed to the same description of people, "the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia,

Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. The twelve tribes were scattered by the Assyrian captivity, and we hear but little more of them. However it affords us pleasure that Christ found a number of them out,—it affords a solemn pleasure that Ephraim, as the ten tribes are called, as well as Judah, should return in Christ,—that a number of them should be found amongst the followers of the Lamb; but they were scattered up and down the earth it should seem, and, now they had embraced the gospel, were subjected to great persecutions for its sake. It was with a view to stimulate and support their hearts that this Epistle was written. The apostle, in the chapter I have read, holds up before them the hope of the gospel, “whom,” says he, “not having seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” and though you are now for a season, if need be, in heaviness, yet there is an inheritance laid up for you, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. What motives, my brethren, are these to support a persecuted and afflicted people? It is in continuation of the same strain that he uses the words which I first read, “wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

The little time that we have to improve, will be taken up, first, in trying to explain and illustrate the apostle’s exhortation. Next, in considering the glorious motives that he holds up to enforce or to encourage compliance with it—the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The admonition which the apostle here gives, or the exhortation which is here addressed to the believing Jews or the believing Israelites, I need not say, is applicable to us in this present state of affliction; though we may not be subjected to the same persecutions as they were, yet there is a kind of tribulation to which we are exposed, and must be exposed, in the present state. The first part of his exhortation consists in this expression, “gird up the loins of your mind.” Girding up our loins is a very expressive term. It alludes to the customs of the east, where they wore long loose garments hanging down to the feet, and, consequently, whenever they found it necessary to engage in any kind of activity, they were obliged to gird up those garments—thus when they ran they girded themselves. So you read of Elijah, that he ran to Jezreel before the chariot of Ahab, girded as the men that went upon a journey used to gird themselves. Thus Israel were commanded, on the night that they departed from Egypt, to have their loins girt and their staves in their hands, ready to march. So, likewise, when they engaged in war, they had their loins girt, in order that their garments might not fall and interrupt them. The spirit of the passage then is, be in a posture of activity—we have our journey to pass—we have our conflicts to engage in—we have our race to run, and we ought to gird up the loins of our mind. Perhaps this expressive sentence may include at least these ideas. Do not faint in the day of adversity. Gird up the loins of your mind—the mind is in danger of losing its strength under present afflictions, under painful events, under heavy persecutions or adverse providences—the mind is, as it were, apt, like the loins, to wax feeble. To gird up the loins of the mind is to cultivate a spirit of fortitude, firmness, and perseverance. Gird up the loins of your mind under all the adversities of life—under all the difficulties that you have to meet with; do not faint under present afflictions, but keep the crown of immortality in view, and, when you are in danger under some circumstances of being disheartened and sinking into despondency and discouragement, there is reason, from time to time afresh as it were, to gird up the loins of the mind—to look before us, rather than



to faint by the way. Some of you may be far advanced in life, and the thought of drawing near to the borders of eternity excites a sigh where men are destitute of the hope of the gospel. It must do so; but even in the case of the Christian sometimes, it throws a damp upon all your present enjoyments and cuts you down; but look forward—gird up the loins of your mind—rather press forward in your journey than shrink back at the approach of its end—rather grasp at the crown that is before you than sink into despondency on account of having to cross the ford of death—gird up the loins of your mind, your salvation is nearer than when you believed.

I think also the terms denote a spirit of disengagedness from the present world, as a man that shall gird up his loins is supposed to stand ready to march at a moment's warning. When Israel had this command, it was a kind of signal for them to be disengaged from Egypt, and ready to march and leave it behind. For us to have this command, is to stand in a sort disengaged from the present world and all its concerns, and to be ready at a moment's call to quit the stage. I do not mean by this, that we are to be unemployed in life, but that there is a danger lest, amidst the necessary duties of life, the heart should not be fixed upon God, nor fixed upon the crown of immortality before us.

The next branch of the apostolic exhortation is "be sober." Sobriety is the opposite of intemperance, the opposite of intoxication. Intemperance or intoxication is of two kinds, sensual and mental. To be sober undoubtedly stands opposed to sensual indulgence, as is intimated in the next verse, "as obedient children, not fashioning yourself according to the former lusts in your ignorance." At all events, Christians should stand aloof from sensual pursuits; it is mean—it is degrading—it is unworthy a man to roll in intemperance—to place your happiness in that which is common to the meanest of the brute creation. It is degrading to man, and much more to a Christian, to place his happiness in eating or drinking, or any sensual enjoyments whatever. Christians are called to be sober, to be temperate even in the enjoyment of lawful pleasures. Nor is sensual intemperance the only kind of intemperance against which we are here guarded. The mind is in danger of being intoxicated as well as the body. The mind may be intemperately fixed upon things of this life, and we may be drunken with the cares of this life, and so that day come upon us unawares. Be sober. Sober in what? in the pursuits of wealth—in the pursuit of honours; be sober in all your plans and in all your pursuits. There is a kind of chastisedness of spirit that becomes a Christian; it requires that the soul of man in the present state be held in, as it were, with bit and bridle. We are apt to go to extremes in our pursuits, and, when once we have formed our plans, to pursue them with such ardour and eagerness, even plans of a worldly nature, as to intoxicate our minds in them. Beware that we be sober—sober in our plans—sober in our pursuits, and sober while we are viewing the great events that are passing in the world.

The last branch is expressed in these words, "and hope to the end." Hope is the great stimulus of human life,—the great support of the heart under the various pressures which it sustains. Without it a man would sink in all his pursuits, and, without it, a good man would not be able to persevere. Hope is that which buoys up the heart, and it is here put, I suppose, in opposition to despondency. "Hope to the end." There may be periods in which you may be under temptation to relinquish your hope—sometimes owing to the great pressure of outward ills—sometimes to the length of them—I imagine more the latter than the former. Afflictions very frequently are more trying owing to their duration than to their greatness. A heavy affliction—a sharp affliction may be borne, if it be but

short; but, where there is a lesser affliction, if it be continued without intermission, the mind desponds, the heart sinks through the continuation of it; our business is then to hope to the end. As we must expect a number of ills of various kinds to attend us through life, hope is given us to counteract them, and to preserve us from despondency to the close of life. Blessed be God, there is an end to all the ills of life—there is an end to persecutions—there is an end to temptations—there is an end to afflictions—they do not last forever, and God has graciously given us hope as an anchor to the soul to preserve us till we arrive safe in the desired haven.

But now we will pass on to the glorious object that the apostle holds up as an encouragement to these things, “hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” This I think is held up before us as the great object of a Christian’s hope. What are we to hope for? the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Our hopes you see are not to terminate upon any thing in this life. It is true we are apt to rest here. When we are afflicted in one quarter, we are ready to say, well, I hope such an affliction will be removed—I hope things will be better by and by—I hope that the sun of prosperity will shine and succeed to the dark cloud of adversity. I hope if I have had bad success in trade this year, I shall have better the next. Remember these objects of hope are accompanied with vast uncertainty. The great object of a Christian’s hope should be the grace that is brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. And what is this? Let us look seriously at it. Something, I think, of what it is may be learned from the context. It is, I answer, in general, for substance the same thing which we here in part partake of. That which is the great object of our hope is the same in nature, though far greater in degree, of which we participate in the present life. This is intimated in the ninth verse, “receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.” The apostle supposes that Christians already receive the end of their faith—that is, that they already partake of heaven—that they already have a foretaste of the grace that is to be brought unto them at the revelation of Jesus Christ. What is heaven? To be sure we do not know as to its degree, but we can judge in some sort what it is as to its nature. It is the same that we have already received. We have received the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls. John in the Revelations gives us various ideas of heaven. The Son of God thus addressed the churches, “to him that overcometh will I give;” what? “a white stone”—“a new name”—“a crown.” Well, and what is this? but what we already participate; the forgiveness of our sins—a name and a place in the house of God, better than that of sons and daughters. Of what do we participate already, but of the fruit of the tree of life, that grows in the midst of the paradise of God? It was promised that they should be clothed in white garments; and are we not already clothed upon with the righteousness of the saints? In short, the joys of heaven will consist in loving and praising the Lamb, and exploring the system of redemption, and that is the chief of the joy of the present state. Christians not only shall come, but are come to Mount Zion—to the city of the living God—to an innumerable company of angels. We are already associated with the blessed above. The church militant and triumphant are not two churches, but one church—are not two families, but one family. We read so, “of whom,” speaking of God, “the whole family in heaven and earth are named—it is one family with God as the father—one and the same family—one under him. A part of them reside here and another part there, but it is all one society.” Ye are come, therefore, if ye are believers in Jesus, to Mount Zion—to the city of the living God—to the society of

holy angels, for they themselves have acknowledged I am your brother and companion in the testimony of Jesus—they are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation.

But further, the object of our hope is not only the same for substance with that which we already possess, only greater in degree, but it is the same salvation of which you read in the tenth verse, which the prophets inquired diligently after, and which the angels desired to look into; that is the grace, the very same grace which the prophets sought diligently after, and which the angels desired to look into—that is the grace that is reserved for us, and that should be brought forth to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. The theme of redemption which gradually broke forth, which was the object of prophecy, which was the theme into which angels penetrated with unceasing and eager desire; that shall be the theme of the blessed above; that is the grace that shall be brought forth unto us at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Thus much we learn from the context. Now, from the passage itself, this glorious object of our hope is called grace. Sometimes that term stands distinguished from glory, but here it is used in a larger sense, and includes all that we have here and all that we shall have hereafter. It intimates that the bliss of another world will be of mere grace—of sovereign and free favour, for which we shall be indebted to God alone. This grace is supposed to be brought unto us at the last day, at the revelation of Jesus Christ. The second coming of Jesus Christ is called a revelation of him, because he will then no longer be concealed—no longer be hid in obscurity—he will no longer veil his glory, but appear in all his greatness and grandeur, and at that day the portion of Christians is represented as being brought unto them. We have enjoyed much grace in the heart. God has brought forth grace and mercy to us under many a trying hour here. He has put forth his helping hand in many difficulties, but the great beauty, as I may call it, of our inheritance is yet in reserve—it is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. At present we are not in a state of preparedness for our inheritance—nor is our inheritance altogether in a state of preparedness for us. We are not prepared for heaven yet. We are like children in a state of minority, who, if they were put in possession of their estates would not understand how to use them. We must be fitted for it—we must be prepared—a series of afflictive trials prepare the mind for enjoyment—light afflictions must work a weight of glory. Neither is our inheritance in a state of preparation completely so for us yet. Christ told his apostles, I go to prepare a place for you. The Scriptures teach us that we shall not fully be satisfied till the morning of the resurrection. Even when we die and go to God our bliss will not be complete till the morning of the resurrection. “Then shall I be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.” And all this is reasonable, because that which will constitute our heaven will chiefly be the exploring of the great system of redemption. But the system of redemption will not be completed till the morning of the resurrection. Hence it is that we cannot see it to full advantage, till such time as it is complete. Were a glorious piece of machinery carrying on—were you to enter and see one wheel lie here, another there, another in this place, and another in that—and were you to be inquisitive and ask the mechanic, of what use, pray sir, is this? to what purpose is this, and this, and this? probably he would cut short your inquiry by answering, have patience till the whole machine is finished, then you will see the use of every part. It is thus with a thousand present events. We do not see the use of those events at present, but when that grace shall be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ, the whole glorious machine will be completed, and then we shall perceive the

use of every part, and therefore it will be, I take it, in a great degree, that the bliss of heaven perhaps will be ten thousand fold augmented from that period to what it ever was or could be before.

But let us inquire a little more particularly, what is that grace that shall be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Perhaps it may consist in three or four things—the first of these, according to the Scripture account of it, will consist in respect of the body. That is one part of the grace that shall be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ—a glorious Jubilee—liberty to all those captives that have lain long slumbering in the dust. So the Scripture tells us, “the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first.” That shall be the first act in this divine drama. The resurrection of the body, and in that it is represented as being in answer to the sound of the trumpet. That alludes, I take it, to the trumpet of Jubilee amongst the Jews. Every fifty years they had a year of general deliverance, in which all the captives were free, all the debts were paid, and every man restored to his former inheritance. You may easily conceive at the approach of the year of Jubilee, it would raise an ardent hope in the breasts of the captives when the last or forty-ninth year was entered upon—how cheerful would be their countenances when the last month came, the last week, the last day, every man would feel himself in a sense delivered—at length the sun sets, and at the next rising of the sun, you hear perhaps ten thousand trumpets blow through every quarter of the land, liberty to the captives—the opening of the prison to them that are bound. Such was the acceptable year of the Lord, and at this instant every prison door flew open—every captive lost his chains. Now I take it to be in allusion to this fact; it is said, the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout—a shout! Yes, all heaven—the souls of the redeemed—an innumerable company of angels—each of the holy intelligences in God’s universe will be united in one general voice, and shout throughout the universe, that shall rend the ground. The Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God that shall blow deliverance, and the dead in Christ shall rise. This is one part, and a glorious part. Oh, how many excellent characters have been committed to the dust with weeping eyes—with the weeping eyes of their dear relations and Christian friends. How many eyes have been closed and laid down in the dust, not to awake till the heavens are no more. But now they all wake—now joy sparkles in ten thousand thousand eyes—now we recognize our dear departed friends—now the dominion of death is ended—now death and mortality are abolished, and this mortal puts on immortality, and this corruption puts on incorruption, and death is swallowed up in victory. Oh Christian, this is the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ!

But now the next act in this divine drama, according to the Scripture account of the matter, is this—a general union with all the godly, quick and dead, and that with the Lord Jesus Christ at their head. So you read in the Thessalonians, following that passage before mentioned. 1 Thessalonians, iv. 17, “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” Now then, the second act, in this drama, I say, is a general union of all the godly, quick and dead—the prophets and patriarchs, with the apostles and martyrs, and all the godly in every age and period of time, shall all form one general whole—one church of the first-born. The armies of God that have been scattered abroad shall now form a glorious junction, with their Redeemer and commander at their head. A

glorious whole will this be. This it appears will be then the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. But I must mention,

The third act, in this divine drama, is our acquittal at the bar of heaven—our acquittal at the judgment-seat of Christ, and this is no small part of the grace that shall be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. That is a very expressive sentence—the Lord grant that ye may obtain mercy at that day. My brethren, we have often obtained mercy in this world, but to obtain mercy in that day—to be acquitted at the judgment-seat of Christ—to find the Judge to be our friend—to be absolved of all our offences, and more than absolved, approved in a great degree—approved in so far as we have followed the Lamb in the present state—to hear him thus address us, “come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” This will be the grace that shall be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

And then, lastly, for I can go no farther, an abundant entrance will be ministered unto us into God's everlasting kingdom. I wish I had both a discernment of mind and an opportunity to investigate the vast fulness that there is in these terms. An abundant entrance shall be ministered unto you into God's everlasting kingdom. I think the terms express not only that the Christian shall enter the kingdom of God, but that he shall enter as we should say with a high hand—not steal in—not enter one at a time and scarcely dare be seen, but rather like a company that shall march in with their colours flying—with their banners displayed—with their Commander at their head, entering in with all the pomp of God—with the approbation of the Judge of the universe—with the shouts of heaven and earth—with the welcome of the Lord of glory—yes, with the welcome of all holy intelligences—this is that abundant entrance that will be ministered unto us at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

Brethren, put these three or four thoughts together,—a resurrection from the dead—a union with Christ and all holy intelligences—an acquittal at the bar of God—an acquittal at the judgment-seat of Christ, and an abundant entrance into God's everlasting kingdom. Is not this enough to make an object of hope? Put all these together. Is not this enough to stimulate us to gird up the loins of our minds? Do not let us faint under a few present difficulties and burdens. Gird up the loins of your minds—be sober in the present state—hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Oh, our enjoyment of God there will obliterate the remembrance of all our former sorrows. Yes, a moment's communion with God there will annihilate the misery of ten thousand years. Be not therefore distressed under present difficulties, but gird up—press forward—hope a little longer, and God will put you in possession of that blessed immortality.

## XXXV.

[Delivered in London, on behalf of the Widows' Fund, 27th March, 1800.]

## THE CHARACTERISTICS OF PURE RELIGION.

“Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”—James i. 27.

RELIGION has, in all ages, occupied a considerable portion of man's attention—and it is fit it should: it is fit that, in a world created by divine power and supported by divine goodness, God should be worshipped; and man is the only creature on the face of the earth that can worship him: it is fit, therefore, that he should be, as some have expressed it, the High Priest of the creation, to offer up the grateful tribute of praise from all his works. Hence religion of some sort has been found in every age, or nearly so, and every nation. Atheism seems to be unknown, unless it be in individuals; and even their sincerity may be a matter of question. Atheism, however, has, in almost every age and nation, been considered with abhorrence; and it is fit it should. But though this general testimony be borne to religion, it is a melancholy fact that, owing to human depravity, the religion of God has been greatly corrupted, greatly debased from its pure original; the religion, as it has been called, of heathenism, is little if any thing else than a corruption. The religion instituted by God himself among the Jews degenerated, in their hands, into little other than formality and hypocrisy; it is true there were godly individuals among them, but religion, in the hands of the great body of the people, was greatly debased. The same causes produced the same effects under the Gospel; no sooner did the religion of Jesus Christ, all spotless as it was, fall into the hands of men, more especially of corrupt minds, than it became debased and corrupted. Yes: even in the apostles' own times this was the case; and the apostles, inspired as they were, could not preserve the churches from the infection. Some, with whom Paul was acquainted, laboured much to corrupt the doctrine of Christ, and he set himself against them; others with whom James was more particularly acquainted, corrupted the pure practice of Christ and the church, and James laboured to set himself against them. They were mere speculatists that James wrote against; men who had got a sort of religion in theory, but which was uninfluential; they talked much of faith, but could say to their poor brethren, Be ye warmed, be ye filled. Their religion is compared, for its transitory effects, to a man that shall see his natural face in a glass, and who goeth away and straightway forgetteth what manner of person he was. James did not mean to depreciate the importance of faith in Christ, any more than Paul; but he meant to insist on some of the essential fruits of it: “Show me thy faith,” says he, “without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works.” I think I must offer a remark or two, before I enter into the subject, explanatory of the passage, “Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father,” and so forth.

We may remark, first, that what the apostle here speaks is not to be considered as a definition of religion, including the whole of it, but as a declaration of some of its essential branches. The apostle does not mean to tell us that the whole of true religion consists in visiting the fatherless and the widow, nor even in keeping ourselves unspotted from the world. If this were considered as a perfect definition of religion, as including the whole of it, we should find it deficient and inconsistent with other parts of Scripture. Here is nothing said of repentance towards God, nor of faith

towards our Lord Jesus Christ—nothing of the knowledge of God—nothing said of the love of God—nothing of the fear of God—nothing of obedience to the institutions of Jesus Christ—nothing of various other religious duties which the Scriptures especially inculcate: but, understanding the passage as a definition of some of the essential parts of religion, and some of its first fruits, there is a fitness in the language. It was suitable and desirable that the apostle should insist on those fruits, to such persons and at such a time, when they substituted theory in the place of practice.

We remark, in the second place, that, by the epithets which the apostle uses, “pure, undefiled,” and the like, it is implied that there is such a thing as spurious religion—that there is such a thing as a something that shall go by the name of religion, which is not pure, which is not undefiled, which will not bear the test of the eye of God, which will not be found to be undefiled before God and the Father; and, what is more, it is implied, that whatsoever is called by the name of religion, if it operate not in the way of compassion and nonconformity to this world, is not that religion which will bear the test of the last day. Compassion to the necessities of the poor, and a nonconformity to the present world, are the great marks of that religion which will bear the divine scrutiny.

But we pass on; and let us, in discoursing on the subject, first notice those things wherein pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is said to consist.

Secondly, show that this has been and still continues to be, a distinguishing characteristic of true religion.

Let us consider, in the first place, the things wherein pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is said to consist. In visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and in keeping ourselves unspotted from the world. Visiting the fatherless and the widows in their affliction—This is the exercise which immediately calls for our attention. The fatherless and widow, my brethren, are represented in the Scriptures as the objects of Heaven’s peculiar care—God is pleased to represent himself as the Father of the fatherless and the Husband of the widow. He is pleased to represent himself as the avenger of the fatherless and the widow. Beware, says Jesus, that thou oppress not the fatherless and the widow, for if they cry to me—which intimates that the oppressed must cry to some one—they must cry for help somewhere to be redressed; and if they cry to me I will hear them, and will avenge their wrongs. Thus the Lord assumes the character of Patron, Friend, and Avenger, of the fatherless and the widow. If this be the case, it must follow that to partake of that disposition, that compassionate disposition that loves to visit them, to participate of their griefs, to alleviate their sorrows—is to be of the mind of God; and it must be pure and undefiled religion: it is the very essence of true religion to be of God’s mind. This was the object, you know, of our Lord’s prayer in the 17th of John: “That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee.” I entreat they may be one in us. God was the friend of the fatherless and the widow—Jesus was the friend of the fatherless and the widow; and he prays that we may be one, or of the same mind and the same spirit; and this is the essence, I say, of pure and undefiled religion.

Again: the fatherless and widow, we may remark, are, perhaps, more than any other persons, exposed to oppression and hardship; they have no spirit, they have no power to resist the encroachments of the mighty, and, generally speaking, are overrun,—trodden under foot. Often have I witnessed myself the fatherless and the widow trodden down like children in a crowd, even where there was no particular ill-will against them, where

there was no special malignity or design to do them harm; yet they were like, as I have said, little children in a crowd which overlooked them, and so trod on them without knowing scarcely who they were. Thus it is with the fatherless and widow in a vast variety of situations. Now, if they are in this unprotected state, and subject to grief, and oppression, and hardship, it becomes especially our duty and our honour to espouse their cause—to feel for them—to visit them in their affliction—to know their wants—to alleviate their sorrows. A sturdy beggar will meet you at every corner of the street, and din your ears with his wants; but the fatherless and the widow are pining, and, perhaps, half perishing, in their lonely habitations—go visit, go search, go find them out. “The cause that I knew not,” said an excellent man, “I searched out.” Yes; to visit the fatherless and the widow is, therefore, to visit those that are most exposed to oppression, that are least under protection.

But once more: the fatherless and the widow are objects of compassion at all times, but especially in times of affliction; “to visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction.” Ah! that is a time of affliction, when, bereaved of their only earthly friend, when the man that has felt, that has cared, that has laboured, that has wept with them, is now no more—has gone to his long home, to his Father’s house! Is not that, think you, a time of affliction, when the house, the garden, the spot that knew him will know him no more? Is not that a time of affliction, when he no longer stands by, to take his children by the hand, and to provide their food? It is. Visit them in this their season of affliction.

The hand of God is often added, too, to this bereaving stroke; many a destitute family is left exposed to trials and afflictions—peculiarly so. While under the visitations of God, let them enjoy your assistance; go and alleviate their griefs; and if to all this you know of any oppression or hardship, if you know of any that have not been kind or attentive, any who have been unkind or unjust to them, visit them, counsel them, relieve them; be a friend and a helper to those who have no other helper.

I may remark, in the last place, the apostle seems to lay stress on the visiting them; “to visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction.” There is such a thing as a sort of proud, unfeeling generosity: I have seen many a haughty man stand with an air of consequence at his own door, and give a penny, perhaps, at the solicitation of a clamorous beggar, who would never go and search out the abodes of the wretched, who would never find out deserving cases. I have known haughty characters who take pride in giving away, at their own house, when waited on there, who would not go into the abodes of the wretched, who would not deign to enter the door of the fatherless and widow; but the love of Christ cures this little pride—“the love of Christ constraineth us.” Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father makes us feel brotherly love to the poor and needy, and feel so on a footing with them as to enter into their habitations, and mingle our tears, mingle our souls with theirs; and there is a luxury in so doing, to which those who are strangers to pure religion must needs be strangers. Though it may not immediately relate to the specific object on which I now address you, yet I will, in the first place, say, as to visiting the fatherless and widow in general, these trying times, I am sure, render it seasonable. There is, likewise, in visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction, great advantage—it is the best exercise; and, when done from principle, is a wonderful evidence of the purity of true religion—it is the very method that our Lord Jesus Christ had; he always took occasion to visit the wretched, and to relieve their outward wants, as the means of doing their souls good. This was his con-



stant plan—to go about to do good to people's bodies, taking occasion to do good also to their souls. It is worthy of notice, that all his miracles—all, however, that occur to my memory—were not only works of power, but of mercy; and herein they are distinguished from all those mock miracles and legendary stories which have been handed down to us from former ages: they were worthy of God—they were worthy of Him whose name was love—they were worthy of a Saviour whose soul was made of compassion. He went about doing good—healing all manner of diseases—visiting the fatherless and widow. We may copy that example in some degree: we cannot work miracles, but we may do good to the bodies of men as a mean of doing good to their souls. Much has been said of late years of communicating the gospel all around us through our towns and villages, and the like; it has appeared to me one important mean is, for serious, godly people to visit the sick as much as lies in them, and, by communicating, be it little or much, you ingratiate yourselves into their esteem, so that a word on their everlasting concerns can scarcely be other than well received; and that is the time that the conscience, if ever, is tender, by eternity being in prospect. A word of counsel, a word of prayer, a word of serious advice, becomes a word in season. Visit the fatherless and widow in their afflictions; hereby you may have larger opportunities of communicating the gospel of Jesus Christ. On this principle, I have admired those societies which have been established in London particularly. Visiting societies, only let them be conducted by wise, prudent, holy persons, and they may be, in the hands of God, a blessing to thousands.

To this may be added, that visiting the fatherless and widow in their affliction may do not only others good, but do ourselves good; it is the way to cultivate the life and the power of religion in our own souls. If a man never sees the distresses of his fellow-creatures, and fellow-christians, his heart will be comparatively hardened against them; it is by mingling tears with them—it is by hearing the tale of human woe, and dropping a tear of compassion, and communicating a little, or according to your ability, to their relief, that your own soul becomes gradually softened and assimilated into a spirit of tender compassion; it is by these means that the love of Christ and the spirit of Christ will be gradually predominant in our minds. A man may sit at home, and enjoy his house and its various accommodations, or he may amuse himself in his garden, or wherever he pleases: but, if he never visits the habitations of the needy, the springs of sensibility will be almost dried up. It is by seeing, feeling, mingling souls and views, that we become one—that we feel one for another, and become blessings one to another.

To this I may add that, by visiting the fatherless and widow in their afflictions, you have an opportunity put into your hands of mingling your kindness—of mingling your pecuniary kindness—with a tender feeling and compassionate expression of regard; and you do not know, if you never particularly noticed it, you do not know what a difference this makes. A guinea given with a frown is not of the value that a shilling is, given with a tear of friendship and brotherly love. A guinea communicated with a haughty frown, methinks, is enough almost to break the heart of those that receive it. No; go and carry it, and feel and communicate your heart as well as your property; hereby you will get good to your own souls, and will do good to the souls, as well as the circumstances, of those you relieve.

Finally, there are many who can only visit; there are many whose circumstances are themselves low, and in whose power it is not to do much towards the relief of the poor and needy in a pecuniary way. Perhaps I hear you say, I know a poor widow and fatherless family that are shamefully

ill-treated, that are turned out of their little business which they had to maintain them; or that are oppressed by such and such an one. Ah, if I were a magistrate I would redress that widow's case!—but you are not a magistrate. Well, but if I were wealthy I would relieve them:—but it may be you are not wealthy. Very well, if you can do nothing more, visit, counsel them; nay, if you but go there, and only join your tears with them, it will do them good; and if you pray with them it will do them good: you may, perhaps, ease many an aching heart. Yes: visit them, though your circumstances may be such as will scarcely admit of any thing more.

But I ought to notice that the apostle unites with this, keeping ourselves unspotted from the world. Very likely in that day, as well as this, there was a sort of hectoring generosity—I mean a something which went by the name of generosity—which was accompanied with profligacy; we know there is such a thing, and that a great number of profligates pride themselves on their generosity. Do not, therefore, such characters deceive themselves? Their generosity is not pure and undefiled religion, nothing of the kind. Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father must operate, not only in compassion, but in a way of purity—not only in a way of tenderness, I mean, but in nonconformity to the amusements, follies, and pursuits of this world. Look closely, my dear friends, look closely at this rule. I deem it to be of importance to insist on it in all places, but, perhaps, in no place more than in the city where opulence rises to such a height. To keep ourselves unspotted from the world may be a great thing in any place—perhaps more in London than in most places; here the tide runs higher, and flows with greater strength. Beware that you be not led away by the customs, follies, and amusements of this vain and wicked world. That man who engages in the chase of fashion, that man who engages in a sort of race with the world, or whose habit it is to keep up with the world in all sorts of appearances, let him take care lest he lose his soul; he is not in the race that is likely to win the immortal prize. Pure religion will lead us to be pilgrims and strangers upon the earth, to stand aloof, to get on one side from the current of worldly custom. You must consider yourselves, brethren, like men that are rowing against the tide. Now would any wise man, professedly rowing against the tide, get into the middle of the stream? And yet all Christians are professedly rowing against the tide; we are professedly going one way, and the world another; and shall we ever think to make progress by getting into the midst of the stream? No such thing; wherefore be as pilgrims and strangers on earth, pure and undefiled. Religion will teach us to keep ourselves unspotted from the customs and follies of this world.

But I proceed, in the second place, to observe, that, as these are the things wherein pure and undefiled religion consists—these have been the things by which the religion of the Bible has ever been distinguished, and by which it still stands distinguished from every thing else that has been called religion—mercy and purity are the characteristics of pure religion; mercy in visiting the fatherless and widows, in their affliction, and purity in keeping ourselves unspotted from the world. Mercy and purity were the characteristics of the Old Testament religion, and still more so of the New Testament; and I may add, that never were mercy and purity known to be the characteristics of any other thing that has gone by the name of religion. Neither heathenism, nor Mahometanism, nor any species of philosophy, has ever been known to be productive of any of those effects to any considerable degree: it is the religion of Jesus Christ, it is the religion of the Bible, and this only, that produces mercy and purity. It was a distinguishing charac-

teristic of the religion of the Old Testament. When God gave laws to Israel at Mount Sinai this was one: "If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren, within any of thy gates in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother; but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth;" or of the stranger within thy gates thou shalt open thy hand; thou shalt open thy hand wide unto thy poor brother. The religion of the Old Testament was full of benevolence that cherished a brotherly regard; there were a number of checks on the exorbitant desire of opulence; for instance, the jubilee, the years of release, which were appointed by God, when every man's property reverted to its owner again. These were designed as checks to rising opulence, and as a ballast, so as to keep the state of society in some comfortable degree of equilibrium. The religion of the Old Testament is summed up in three words: "What does the Lord thy God require of thee but to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God?" And if you come to the time of our Lord and his apostles, you will find that, in proportion as true religion prevailed, this spirit prevailed. Not to mention the compassion of our Redeemer, the benevolent nature of his miracles, we know that, when stretched on the fatal tree, and while the blood was trickling from his body, he turned and looked on his mother, and said, "Woman, behold thy son!" and he said to his dear friend John, whom he had so loved, "Behold thy mother!" One of the last acts of his life, therefore, was an act of kindness to the poor widow he was about to leave behind him; and he committed her to his most intimate friend. The early agents of the gospel were distinguished by a spirit of liberality; the primitive Christians seem to have lost almost every idea of retaining property—they had all things in common for a time—they were for dividing as every man had need. So generous, so liberal were they, that they communicated, not only those who were full of wealth, not only the opulent, but the poor were used to give; there was a great deal given by the poor of the church of Macedonia. Paul tells us that their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. It appears that the primitive Christians not only gave a little of their surplus, but that they denied themselves to give a little. Paul speaks as if they laboured for this end. Now it is not enough, to constitute pure and undefiled religion, that we labour continually for the sake of amassing, and, if we can but spare a little out of that, throw it among the poor and needy; that is treating Jesus Christ as you treat the meanest animal that frequents your apartments; it is treating those as dogs, to whom you give the crumbs that you cannot eat yourselves. The primitive Christians are directed to labour that they may have to give to him that needs; to labour for that end, that they may do good to others. The more we have of pure and undefiled religion, the more sacred pleasure shall we feel in such communications. The same or similar things are related of primitive Christians for several centuries after Christ. Whoever reads the history of the primitive church will find that they abounded in this, to the honour of the gospel. There was not in the world, at least so far as I have been able to ascertain, either an hospital, or a charity-school, or a society for the relief of the distressed; none of these were known in the world till Christianity founded them: it is the gospel that has softened the hearts of those that have embraced it; and it is often known that it has provoked to emulation those that had not. When Julian the apostate saw the benevolent deeds of the Christians, who erected hospitals and waited on them, he said to his companions, "For shame! let not the Galileans take all these!" so they were provoked. And thus the gospel operates still. Pure and undefiled religion promotes

general good will in the hearts of those that believe it, and their generosity shall provoke to generosity those that do not. Thus eventual good may be done to others, though it may be no ultimate advantage to the party; for if we give from Julian's disposition, it has, indeed, its own reward. But what is that? alas, it is worthless! Let us be concerned to give in the spirit of pure and undefiled religion.

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### XXXVI.

[Delivered at the Old Jewry Chapel, London, Dec. 27, 1797.]

#### SOUL PROSPERITY.

“Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.”—3 John 2.

THERE are two or three characters mentioned in the New Testament of the name of Gaius. I shall not now inquire to which of them this Epistle was directed, but it is sufficiently evident, whoever it might be, he was an eminently pious and godly man. Gaius seems, by this Epistle, to have been a man of an afflicted body, and, perhaps, in embarrassed circumstances; but however this was, his soul prospered, and it was the desire and prayer of the apostle John that he might be as prosperous in his outward as he was in his inner man.

The prayer in the text is something that strikes conviction, at least to my mind. Here is a prayer for a man that God would prosper him in his outward affairs in proportion as his soul prospered. Now if this were made the rule of all our prayers for temporal blessings, if we never were to pray for prosperity to attend ourselves beyond the degree of soul prosperity which we possessed, I am afraid that very few of us would pray for much more than we have, if any; and if we made this the rule of our prayers for one another, (and why should we not?) I am afraid that we could pray for the outward prosperity of but very few. If our soul prosperity were made the rule by which to pray or wish for worldly prosperity, which is the case here with Gaius, we should very few of us be found qualified so much as to desire it.

In discoursing on this subject we will first consider a few of the leading qualities of soul prosperity as exemplified in the beloved Gaius—and then consider this soul prosperity as the standard by which it is safe to pray for prosperity of other kinds.

A thriving soul! This is a matter of serious import, my brethren. A plant is said to thrive and prosper when it brings forth fruit—a field when it abounds with grain—a human body when it is healthy, vigorous, and active. It is to the last of these that the apostle makes an allusion. When he speaks of Gaius's soul as prospering, he opposes it to his body. You, my friend, as if he had said, you have a weak and sickly body, but you have a prosperous soul, and I pray that your bodily health and your circumstances may be as thriving and as prosperous as your soul is. This was not the language of compliment; neither need I say that it was not the practice of the apostle to deal in unmeaning compliments. The tree was known by its fruits, and Gaius was known by his conduct to have a prosperous soul.

I. WHAT THEN ARE THOSE MARKS OF A PROSPEROUS SOUL WHICH IT BEHOVES US TO ASPIRE AFTER? I would mention four or five, each of which will be found to be exemplified in the beloved Gaius.

1. A prosperous soul *is one in whom the truth dwells, and dwells richly.* You must have remarked, in reading the first eight verses, how much the apostle Paul makes of truth. He describes Gaius as having the truth dwelling in him, as walking in the truth, as beloved for the truth's sake, and as being a fellow helper of the truth. All these expressions are found in those verses. It seems then to enter into the very essence of a prosperous soul, that the truth dwelt in him, and that it dwelt richly in him. Truly, my brethren, gospel truth is that to the soul which wholesome food is to the body, and wholesome words and sound doctrine have on effect on the soul similar to that which wholesome food has on the body; they render it strong, vigorous, and active. Thus the great principles of evangelical truth being imbibed by Gaius, afforded a constant spring of activity. He was a lively, active, generous man. It is of great importance what principles we acquire. Principles will be active—will be influential. Indeed this is the very reason why Divine truths are called principles. We read of the first principles of the doctrines of Christ, and principles you know signify the first moving causes which lie at the foundation and source of action. Merely speculative notions or speculative ideas, that have no influence on a man's heart, are not principles; they may be called more properly opinions; but if the truths of God are imbibed as a thirsty man would drink in water from a fountain, they become in him a well of living water springing up in the disposition to do good, and terminating in everlasting glory. Principles, whether good or evil, will be influential if they are thoroughly imbibed. Hence we read of false doctrines having a fatal influence. The Scripture speaks of God giving men up to strong delusion, or to the energy or efficacy of deception or error.

All principles, if they deserve the name of principles, lie at the bottom and source of affections and actions. If they be genuine, evangelical, and true, they are the spring of a holy life, and lie at the bottom of evangelical obedience; but if they be false principles, they lie at the bottom of a course of alienation and apostacy from God. Indeed, as right principles stimulate to right actions, so where a person imbibes wrong principles, or is indifferent to right, it enervates right actions: even good men, who have swerved in a greater or less degree from the truth, have sunk into a spirit of indifference with regard to evangelical principles—it has had the effect of stagnating their souls in Divine actions.

2. The prosperous soul *is a soul where the doctrinal and the practical parts of religion bear lovely proportion and are united.* We may often observe with regard to the healthiness or unhealthiness of the body two opposite extremes. We see some who are epicures, and they are of no use in society. They live to themselves, and glut themselves in sordid and sensual enjoyments. We see others pining away who are mere slaves. There is a great resemblance in these two characters to different species of professors. There is a kind of religious epicures—men, I mean, who are all clamorous for doctrinal truth, but have no regard to the practical part of godliness; whose whole object is to enjoy the comforts of religion, to be soothed with its promises, to be flattered with its privileges, to be comforted in the prospect of something great and glorious hereafter. Their whole attention, their whole object, is to grasp as much of this as possible, and they are regardless of every thing of a practical nature. On the other hand, there are some who, at the expense of truth, are constantly crying up morality and practical religion. My brethren, these things ought not to be divided; doctrinal and practical religion should be united. To attempt to cultivate the former at the expense of the latter is to constitute an epicurism—to reverse it is to have a body of slaves whipped to duty, without a

motive. It is the great concern of the Scriptures to furnish men with the most constraining and evangelical principles, that should render practical godliness pleasurable. The true Christian is like the husbandman, who labours that he may enjoy his food with an appetite, that he may be strengthened to future labour, and thus, with a happy mixture of enjoyments and labour, becomes a happy man in himself and a blessing to those about him.

3. The prosperous soul *is a soul in which is united a happy mixture of the retired and the active*—a happy attention to the duties of retirement mingled with an equal attention to the duties of active life. Great have been the extremes of men in these cases; some have pleaded for a religion that should make men hermits, and shut them up in a cell secluded from the society of man. As to others again, their religion is always in public; they scarcely ever retire to converse with their own souls. No man can enjoy pleasure in his soul without uniting these. It is not to be always plunged in an active course of life, nor to be shut up always in the closet. Christians must be the salt of the earth, and in order to this they must be spread in every circle of society. They must mingle amongst mankind. It is not improper to mingle in every kind of society where duty calls. But they must retire alone frequently, or they will not carry a savour of God and religion with them. They must be spread like salt, but it will be salt without the savour if they do not retire. It is by retiring to our closets, reading the word of God in private, thinking and praying over it; by conversing with our own souls in secret, by dwelling on divine things, by giving such a tone to the soul that it falls naturally and easily into divine things; it is in these holy exercises that we may expect to meet a Divine blessing, and to acquire such a savour of spirit, that when we go out into the world we shall carry the savour of Christ with us. This is a prosperous and thriving state of soul.

4. The prosperous soul may be known by this, that *it is accompanied by a good degree of public spirit, and largeness of heart*. A man that is concerned principally about himself can never have a prosperous soul. Such was not Gaius—he was a fellow labourer and helper of the truth. He was habitually concerned in promoting the cause of God and religion in the world by every means in his power. A man that takes up six days out of seven, and thinks himself warranted to pursue nothing else but the acquiring of a fortune, and thinks it quite sufficient if he serves God one day out of the week, cannot be a Christian at all. He has not the first principles of religion in him. I grant that one day in seven ought to be devoted especially to the service of God, but the true Christian's aim is to serve God in the whole course of his life; whatever he may do, whether he eat or drink, buy or sell,—to do all to the glory of God. What a contrast to him is the man whose soul or main object is to get a fortune, to accumulate a few thousand pounds, and who says to himself, After a few more prosperous years in trade, I hope to take a country seat and enjoy myself; to attain this object I must save all I can, now and then giving a guinea to some pious object! Such a man may pass through life as a respectable member of society, but a Christian he cannot be. He whose main object is to amass a fortune—he whose main object is to live to himself—lives not to Christ. Christianity cultivates a public spirit, a largeness of heart—not that narrowness of mind by which we consecrate all that we have and are to ourselves.

I may mention, besides this, a sort of religious narrowness of mind in that person whose chief concern it is to get comfort to his own mind—whose chief and almost sole concern it is that he may obtain a good ground to hope for everlasting life in the world to come—who cares little or nothing about the interest of Christ on the earth the cause of God. the cause of

righteousness, truth, and humanity—who does not grasp within the circle of his prayers his fellow men, his fellow Christians—he whose religion centres principally in himself. Alas! it is doubtful whether that man can be a Christian: at any rate he cannot have a prosperous soul; and I have generally remarked that those religious people who are continually poring over their own case, who are only anxious to discover evidences of their Christianity, who are perpetually poring over past experience to spell out whether they were truly converted or not, who hear sermons and read the Scriptures only to find out whether they can come in for any thing to comfort them—I say I have found that those who spend their whole time in this are, generally, disappointed. You, selfish soul, that care little for the souls of others, take a course directly opposed to your own interest. Seek to bring peace to the souls of others; that will be the way to find comfort for yourself. Seek the good of the poor and the afflicted, and in seeking that you will find your own. By seeking the public good we should find a private good. I never knew a man of a large heart—whose soul grasped the well-being of others, who laid out his time and property for the good of others—greatly troubled about his own interest in Christ. It is in seeking the good of God's cause in the world, and promoting the good of our fellow creatures, that God will give us the earnest of eternal life. A public spirit is the spirit of the gospel, and largeness of heart is the mark of a prosperous soul.

5. One remark more, and I have done on this part of the subject: *The prosperous soul is dispossessed of an ambitious spirit*—it is meek and lowly. If a man were ever so public-spirited and active, but withal ambitious, vain-glorious, and noisy, I should say of that man, whether he be a Christian at all is at least doubtful, but he cannot be a thriving one, he cannot be possessed of a healthful soul. A haughty, self-sufficient, self-important, clamorous, ostentatious professor is a very doubtful character. High minds, like high hills, are blasted and barren. It is the lowly mind which, like a well-watered valley, is productive: God's promises are made to such. It is asserted that the Lord is nigh to them that are of a lowly spirit and a contrite heart; and we are told elsewhere that God “giveth grace to the humble, but the proud he knoweth afar off.” In proportion, therefore, as we entertain such a spirit, we shall be far from God, and God from us, and we shall be possessed of a soul far from prosperous.

II. Having enumerated a few marks of soul prosperity, I proceed to observe THE STANDARD WHICH PROSPERITY OF SOUL AFFORDS TO OUR SAFETY IN PROSPERITY OF OTHER KINDS. John prays for prosperity for Gaius; and wherefore? Because his soul prospers. Prosperity of soul is that which renders prosperity of body an object of desire, for two reasons:—One is, *that prosperity of soul makes prosperity of other kinds safe*—we can bear it, which we cannot without. There are few men capable of bearing outward prosperity, but almost every man is vain enough to think that he could. There are very few of us that are not so blinded as to think that we could bear a little more than we have. We flatter ourselves that if God would but give us plenty, we should do good with it. One says, If I had but such a one's riches, what good should I do! Alas! this evinces an ignorance of your own hearts. Is your soul so well that you are in no danger of being selfish? You cannot but have remarked that prosperity in worldly circumstances elates men. You may have seen some persons who were very sober, modest, useful, generous people, to all appearance, when in a mediocrity of circumstances; but when providence has smiled upon them, and improved their circumstances, their hearts have been lifted up in proportion. You must have observed that worldly pleasure and worldly prosperity have had a

similar effect on a man: each has detached the heart from God. It is an old saying, that an additional weight put into a bag draws the strings the closer; but you think there is no danger of your being so affected, and therefore you wish, above all things, that your circumstances may improve. And is your soul so prosperous that there is no danger of your becoming forgetful of the poor and needy? Alas! there is nothing but prosperity of soul will enable us to bear worldly prosperity. Blessed be God, we have seen a few to whom it has presented no temptation. I have heard of a good man whose soul prospered alike in temporal prosperity and adversity. He had an intimate friend who used to make free with him, and, observing his prosperity, he one day thus addressed him: "Do not you find the smiles of this world, my friend, to be a snare unto you?" He paused, and said, "I am not conscious that I do; for though I enjoy much of this world, yet I think I enjoy God in all things." By and by providence turned another way; he lost all his property; he sunk into indigence; he had scarcely a competency to support him. His old friend thus addressed him, "Well, my friend, how is it with you now? do not you find your heart dejected in these circumstances?" "I am not conscious," said he, "that I do; as before I enjoyed God in all things, now I enjoy all things in God. I find God to supply all my wants, and a little, with his blessing, is enough." This, my friends, was a prosperous soul. A soul of this description might well bear prosperity, and his friend might well follow the example of John with respect to Gaius, and say, "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth."

But the second reason which renders prosperity of soul a proper standard for that of our bodies and circumstances is, that *thus the general good is promoted*. If we retain prosperity of soul under temporal prosperity, then for God to bless us is to bless all around us. A man with a truly prosperous soul will not eat his morsel alone—will not keep it to himself; the poor, the fatherless, the widow, will participate the kindness of God to him; so that for Providence to bless him is to bless the neighbourhood, and to bestow a public blessing. Wherever you see a man of that character the whole neighbourhood will concur with the apostle, and say, "May the Lord prosper thee," or with Boaz's reapers, "The Lord bless thee," and I dare say Boaz himself was such a character, or they would not have said, "The Lord bless thee."—"The Lord be with you," said the master.—"The Lord bless thee," said the servants, for we know that in this blessing we all shall be blessed; the town will be blessed, the whole neighbourhood will be blessed, the fatherless will be blessed, the widow will be blessed; every one shall share, and therefore we wish that thou mayest prosper, for thy soul prospereth.

These few remarks I submit to your serious attention. I leave them with you, my brethren: they may lead you to consider whether there be not many who have prosperous circumstances, but not prosperous souls; on whom the world smiles and loads them with its benefits, but from whom scarcely any one receives good; whether there be not many such in all places, even in this city, this opulent city! I grant that I think there is a greater proportion of generous characters in this city than perhaps in any other in the world: this I am inclined, without flattery, to say. But I am sure that there are great numbers who live wholly to themselves; and there are some who profess a regard to religion, and lay their account for eternal life, but who never live to others. Let such consider whether their Christianity be not exceedingly doubtful; or, if it must be admitted that they have the root of the matter in them, still is it not clear that they have unprosperous souls? I bless God, however, that there are many who have prosperous souls, and that over



and above their circumstances. Generosity is not confined to the rich, my brethren: a poor man may feel as much as another; and he who does but little by his substance may do it in other ways. If we are poor in circumstances, yet, if our hearts be tender, we may relieve the poor by our visits, our conversations, and our prayers. I grant that this would not be sufficient without money. He who has money, and who would wish to save his money and give his prayers, will not be received—his very prayers will be an offence; but for the man who has no money, but who has this compassionate and kind disposition, who will not unite with the apostle in interceding, “I pray above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, as thy soul prospereth?”

Such, my brethren, is my wish and prayer for you; such is my wish particularly for those institutions in this city which are now, I bless God, pretty numerous, for the visiting and relieving the afflicted poor.\* I have said, and still say, that of all the benevolent institutions which adorn this metropolis, I know of none which excel in their principle and their effects institutions of this kind, especially in such times as these, when the poor are suffering privations and afflictions perhaps unknown but to those who visit them and search out afflicted cases. True charity does not consist in merely giving a penny to a beggar to get rid of his solicitations, or in giving a guinea to a public charity. Many of these things may be done by persons who have very little genuine benevolence about them; but that is genuine charity which leads us to search out the abodes of the wretched, and to make ourselves acquainted with their wretchedness in order to relieve them. I do not say that every one can give his time to these engagements, but he may assist those whose professed object it is to do so. To this I may add, that the relieving of men’s bodies to get access to their minds is a primitive and an excellent practice. The Son of God himself—and who can doubt that he had access wherever he pleased?—has set us the example; he went among the poor, the blind, the lame, the diseased. He mingled himself with them, and healed their bodies, that he might find access to their souls. The Almighty God, in human nature, would not overturn the laws of humanity; his desire was to establish and sanctify them. Let us operate by a system he himself has established, and do good to the bodies of men with a view to obtain access to their minds, thus relieving the temporal wants of the afflicted poor, and administering the balm of consolation unto the wounded spirit.

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### XXXVII.

[Delivered at the Association of Baptist Ministers and Churches at Oakham, June 3, 1801.]

#### THE COMMON SALVATION.

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”—Jude 3.

THE writer of this Epistle is, in the Gospel of John, called “Judas not Iscariot.” The Epistle itself is called “*general*,” not being addressed to any particular person or people; and may, therefore, be of more common

\* This sermon, it appears, was preached on behalf of “a society to relieve the sick and distressed.”

concern. In the passage which I have now read we may notice, First, The *occasion* there was for writing; "it was needful." The apostle did not write for writing's sake; but to guard them against "certain men" who had crept into the churches "unawares"—"turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ," ver. 4. Secondly, The *earnestness* with which he engaged in it; he "gave all diligence." The word signifies haste, forwardness, diligent care; somewhat like that which a person would feel in pulling a child out of the fire, ver. 23. Thirdly, The *subject* on which he wrote; "the common salvation." This furnishes a reason for his being so much in earnest.—The very vitals of Christianity were struck at. Had not this been the case, it may be, they would not have heard from him. When Haman had conspired against the Jews, you may recollect the petition of Esther, and the manner in which it was addressed to the king. After having invited him to her banquet, and postponed the matter until she had whetted his desire to the uttermost, she at length uttered her request: "If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my *life* be given me at my petition, and my *people* at my request! For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish: but if we had been sold for bond-men and bond-women, I had held my peace, although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage!" Something like this seems to be the spirit of this passage. It is as if the writer had said, If the enemy had levelled his weapon against any thing but the very heart of the gospel, I might have held my peace. The amount is, THE COMMON DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL ARE OF THE FIRST IMPORTANCE TO BE TAUGHT BY US AS MINISTERS, AND RETAINED BY US AS CHRISTIANS.

In discoursing on the subject, I shall endeavour to ascertain wherein the common salvation consists—inquire why it is so called—and show the importance of its being made the grand theme of our ministrations, and the first object of our attachment.

I. Let us endeavour to ascertain WHEREIN THE COMMON SALVATION CONSISTS.

There can be no doubt, I think, that by this phrase is meant the gospel salvation. It is the same thing as "the faith once delivered to the saints;" the "common faith," after which Titus is said to have been begotten. In a word, it is that which in the New Testament is peculiarly denominated "the gospel."

But the question returns, What is the gospel? Great diversity of opinion prevails on this subject. One denomination of professing Christians tell you it is one thing, and another, another; and how shall we judge amidst such discordant accounts? If I were to tell you that such and such doctrines constitute the gospel, you might answer, This is only your opinion, which is subject to error, equally with that of other people. For this reason I shall not attempt to specify particulars, but mention certain Scriptural mediums by which you yourselves may judge of it.

I. We may form a judgment wherein the gospel consists by the *brief descriptions* which are given of it. The New Testament abounds with these descriptions; it delights in epitome. For example: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This is the common salvation; and surely I need not ask whether the doctrine which denies the *perishing* condition of sinners by nature, and supposes the unspeakable *gift* of Heaven to be a mere fellow creature, sent only to instruct us, and to set us a good example, can comport with this representation. Again, "The Jews require a sign," or miracle, "and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but

we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." This is the common salvation. We hear of preachers knowing their auditors, and preaching accordingly: but Paul went straight forward, regardless of the desires of men. Again, "I determined not to know any thing among you but Jesus Christ, and him crucified." In each of these passages the gospel is supposed to be summarily comprehended in what relates to the person and work of Christ. This is the foundation which God has laid in Zion; this is the common salvation. Again, "I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand, by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory," or hold fast, "what I have preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you, first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures." Here also we see what is the *gospel*, and what that is on which the *present standing* and *final salvation* of Christians depends; and I appeal to every thing that is candid and impartial in my hearers, whether such importance can be attached to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ upon any other principle than that of his dying in our stead, and rising again as our forerunner? Finally, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." This language supposes that, in coming into the world, our Lord was *voluntary*, or that it was with *design*, which supposes his pre-existence; and that this design was to *save sinners, the chief of sinners*. In calling it a faithful or true "saying," it is intimated that it was so much the theme of the apostle's ministry, and so well known amongst Christians, as to become proverbial. *A saying grown into credit by experience of its truth*, is the definition which has been given of a proverb; and such was the true saying of Paul. This, therefore, must be the gospel—"the common salvation."

2. We may judge wherein the "common salvation" consists by the *brief descriptions which are given of the faith of primitive Christians*. This, as well as the gospel, is frequently epitomized in the New Testament; and it may be expected that the one will agree with the other. "So we preach, and so ye believed." The creed of the first believers, it has often been remarked, was very simple. "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" Believing is called "receiving the witness," or record, "of God. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son." There are many other important truths, no doubt, the belief of which is necessary to salvation; such as the being and perfections of God, the evil of sin, &c.; but they are all involved in the doctrine of "Christ and him crucified." This all-important principle is a golden link which, if laid hold of, draws with it the whole chain of evangelical truth. Let a man cordially embrace this, and you may trust him for the rest.

There are, I conceive, four things which essentially belong to the "common salvation;" its *necessity*, its *vicarious medium*, its *freeness* to the chief of sinners, and its *holy efficacy*. If we doubt whether we stand in need of salvation, or overlook the atonement, or hope for an interest in it any otherwise than as unworthy, or rest in a mere speculative opinion, which has no effectual influence on our spirit and conduct, we are at present unbelievers, and have every thing to learn.

II. Let us inquire WHEREFORE IT IS CALLED THE COMMON SALVATION. Three reasons may, perhaps, be assigned for this.

1. It is *that in which all the sacred writers, notwithstanding their diversity of ages and gifts, are agreed in teaching.* The Old Testament writers understood it much less than the New; but they all *died in the faith of it.* They “testified of the sufferings of Christ, and of the glory that should follow.” “To him gave all the prophets witness.” The New Testament writers differed widely as to talents. Paul reasoned; but Christ and him crucified was his theme. John had more of the affectionate: he was baptized, as it were, in love; but the Lamb that was slain was the great object of it. “There is no other name,” said Peter, “given under heaven, or among men, whereby we must be saved;” and John stood by his side and assented. If any of the New Testament writers could be supposed to dissent, it would be James, who wrote fully upon the necessity of good works; but he was of the same faith, and only pleaded for showing it by his works.

2. It is *that which is addressed to sinners in common, without distinction of character or nation.* The messages of grace under the Old Testament were principally addressed to a single nation; but under the gospel they are addressed to all nations, to every creature. The promises of the gospel are indeed made only to believers; but its invitations are addressed to sinners. The gospel feast is spread, and all are pressed to partake of it, whatever has been their previous character.

3. It is *that in which all believers, notwithstanding their different attainments and advantages, are in substance agreed.*—It is fitly compared to milk, which is the natural food of children. There may be great darkness, imperfection, and error; and many prejudices for and against distinctive names: but let the doctrine of the cross be stated simply, and it must approve itself to a renewed heart. A real Christian cannot object to any of those four things which were considered as belonging to the common salvation:—to the necessity of it, the vicarious medium of it, the freeness of it, or its holy efficacy.

III. Let us show THE IMPORTANCE OF ITS BEING THE GRAND THEME OF OUR MINISTRATIONS, AND THE FIRST OBJECT OF OUR ATTACHMENT.

It is that which God has ever blessed to the salvation of sinners, and the edification of believers. The primitive Christians lived upon it. Times of great revival in the church have always been distinguished by a warm adherence to it. In the dark ages of popery, the schoolmen, as they are called, employed themselves in deciding curious points; but, at the time of the Reformation, the common salvation was the leading theme. Those ministers whose labours have been more abundantly owned for the promotion of true religion, have been distinguished by their attachment to the common truth; and those churches which have abounded the most in vital and practical godliness, are such as have not descended to curious researches, nor confined their approbation to elegant preaching; but have loved and lived upon the truth, from whomsoever it has proceeded. There are three things, in particular, from which we are in danger of neglecting the common salvation, both as preachers and as hearers:—

1. *A pretended regard to moral and practical preaching, to the disregard of evangelical principle.* All preaching, no doubt, ought to be practical; and there are no greater enemies to the cross of Christ than men who can bear nothing but what soothes and comforts them; but this is not the only extreme. Almost all the adversaries of evangelical truth endeavour to cover their dislike to it under an apparent zeal for “morality, the Christian temper, and Christian practice.” If we neglect the common salvation in our ordinary labours, morality will freeze upon our lips, and neither the

preacher nor the hearer will be much inclined to practise it. To lose a relish for the common salvation is the first step towards giving it up; and the effects of this we are warned against from the example of "the angels who kept not their first estate."

2. *The love of novelty.* Both preachers and hearers are in danger of making light of common truths, and of indulging in a spirit of curious speculation. This will render preaching rather an entertainment than a benefit to the soul. We are commanded to *feed* the church of God—not their fancies or imaginations; nor merely their understandings; but their renewed minds. It indicates a vicious taste, and affords a manifest proof of degeneracy, where the common salvation is slighted, and matters of refinement eagerly pursued. The doctrine of Christ crucified is full of the wisdom of God, and will furnish materials for the strongest powers; and here we may dig deep in our researches. But if this subject has no charms for us, what are we to do in heaven, where it is the darling theme?

3. *A partial attachment to one or two particular truths, to the neglect of the great body of truth.* It has frequently been the case, that some one particular topic has formed the character of an age or generation of men; and this topic has been hackneyed in almost every place, till the public mind has become weary of it; while other things of equal importance have been overlooked. Beauty consists of lovely proportion; and herein consists the holy beauty of religion. When every part of truth has its due regard, and every part of holiness its share in our affections, then will the "beauty of Jehovah, our God, be upon us," and then will he "establish the work of our hands."

Finally, The common salvation, though it affords grounds for a universal application for mercy, yet will be of no essential benefit to us, unless it be *especially embraced*. Notwithstanding the indefiniteness of gospel invitations, it is nevertheless true, that "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned."

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### XXXVIII.

[Delivered at the opening of a new Baptist Meeting-house at Boston, Lincolnshire, June 25, 1801.]

#### DESIRE FOR THE SUCCESS OF GOD'S CAUSE.

"Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it."—Psal. xc. 16, 17.

IN every undertaking we have an end or ends to answer, to which all our labours are directed. It is no less so in religious undertakings than in others; and as these are pure and worthy of pursuit, such is the good or evil of our exertions. What are, or at least should be, the great ends of a Christian congregation in rearing a place for Divine worship? What are the main desires of serious people among you now it is reared? If I mistake not, they are depicted in the passage I have read:—"That God's work may appear among you in your own time—that it may be continued to posterity—that God would beautify you with salvation—and prosper the work of your hands.

The Psalm was written by Moses, probably on occasion of the sentence

of mortality passed upon the generation of Israelites which came out of Egypt, on account of their unbelief, as recorded in the fourteenth chapter of Numbers. It was a heavy sentence, and very affectingly lamented by the holy man; but he discovers a greater concern for the cause of God than for the loss of temporal comfort. He prays that they may be taught to make such a use of this awful providence as to *apply their hearts unto wisdom*; and that however God might afflict them, during forty years' wandering in the wilderness, he would bless them with spiritual prosperity.

This prayer was answered. That generation which was trained in the wilderness was, perhaps, the best that Israel exhibited during their existence as a nation. It was of them that the Lord himself spoke, saying, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel then was holiness to the Lord." May our prayer for the prosperity of God's cause among us be thus answered.

All I shall attempt will be to review the *objects* desired, and show the *desirableness* of them.

The objects desired, though expressed by the Jewish lawgiver, have nothing in them peculiar to that dispensation; but are equally suited to our times as to others. They prove that the cause of God is one, through every dispensation, and is directed to one great end—the establishment of truth and righteousness in the earth.

The *first* branch of this comprehensive petition is that *God's work might appear unto his servants*. All God's works are great. Creation is full of his glory; providence is no less so; and each is sought out by them that have pleasure therein. But it is evident that by the work of God, in this connexion, is meant the operation of his *grace*. When the Almighty took Israel to be his people, he bestowed blessings upon them of two kinds—temporal and spiritual. He gave them the promise of a good land, and of great prosperity, in case of their obedience to his will. But this was not all; he set up his cause among them. They were his visible people, by whom true religion was practised, and its interests promoted. It is the carrying on of this cause that is here intended. It was begun from the time when God made promise to Abraham their grand progenitor, and was carried on during the lives of the patriarchs. When they were brought out of Egypt with a high hand, and formed into a people for himself, it became more apparent, and wore a more promising aspect; but when they were doomed to die in the wilderness, it seemed as if it must sink. Hence Moses, who was tenderly affected with what concerned the honour of God, pleads as he does. Thus he pleaded his *great name* on a former occasion: and thus the prophet Habakkuk pleaded when Judah was going into captivity, and the cause of God was likely to be ruined: "O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years; in the midst of the years make known: in wrath remember mercy."

The work of God may be said to *appear among us* when sinners are converted to himself. Conversion is not confined to Jews and heathens; but extends to sinners of all ages and nations. It is not enough that we are born and educated under the light of revelation, nor that we yield a traditional assent to it. Nicodemus could boast of all this, and more; yet he was told by the faithful and true Witness, that, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven." Conversion work is peculiarly the *work of God*. Ministers and parents may be the instruments, but God is the proper cause of it. None but he who made the heart of man can turn it from its rooted aversion to the love of himself. Ministers and parents know this by painful experience; and therefore can each adopt the

prayer here presented as their own. Wherever this work is, it will *appear* by its holy and happy effects. The drunkard will become sober, the churl liberal, the unclean chaste, and the malignant persecutor of Christ's people a humble sufferer for his name's sake.

The work of God will also appear among us if Christians grow in grace, and in the knowledgè of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The power of Divine grace is no less apparent in the carrying on of God's work, than in the beginning of it. Nothing short of an almighty arm can preserve creatures, so prone to fall away, *from falling*, and present those who are so faulty "faultless before the presence of his glory." And where this part of the work is, it will *appear* also by its holy and happy effects. Such Christians bear the most impressive testimony to the world of the reality and importance of religion.

A *second* branch of the petition is, that God's work might so appear as that there might be an illustrious display of his *glory*. All God's works display his glory; but the work of grace in the salvation of sinners most of all. Other things manifest his wisdom and power; but this his holy nature. The carrying on of his cause in the world, by the conversion and sanctification of sinners, gives a kind of visibility to the Divine character. It is seen, and even felt, by the most abandoned of men. God is said to have appeared in his glory in building up Zion, after it had been broken down by the Chaldeans. Even the heathen, when they saw what he had wrought, could not forbear to acknowledge, "The Lord hath done great things for them!" But the building up of the gospel church, by turning the captivity of those who were the slaves of Satan, is still more glorious. The Lord could accomplish the former merely by his providence; but the latter is the effect of the travail of his soul.

It is requested, *thirdly*, that God would impart to them his beauty: "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us!"—All God's works are beautiful; but saints, who are his workmanship, are the subjects of a *holy* beauty, or of the beauty of holiness. They are comely through the comeliness which he puts upon them. Conceive of the camp of Israel after they had been humbled, and taught to fear the Lord their God. Two or three hundred thousand godly young people, following him implicitly in the wilderness, and trembling at the idea of repeating the iniquities of their fathers! This was a sight at which even a wicked prophet was struck with awe, and could not forbear exclaiming, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!" Powerful are the charms of genuine piety. There is something in it that disarms malignity itself, and extorts admiration even from those who hate it. Milton represents the devil himself, on his approaching Paradise, as awed by innocence, as staggered, as half inclined to desist from his purpose, and feeling a kind of perturbation within him, composed of malignity and pity. Something like this existed, methinks, in Balaam. He wanders from hill to mountain, seeking for curses, but scattering blessings; sometimes half inclined to unite with God, and concluding with a vain desire to die the death of the righteous. Powerful, I repeat it, are the charms of genuine piety. Conceive of a society of Christians drinking into the spirit of Christ, and walking according to his commandments! What an amiable sight! "Beautiful as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, and terrible as an army with banners!" So much as we possess of the spirit of true religion, so near as we approach its original simplicity, so far as our doctrine is incorrupt, our discipline pure and impartial, and our conversation as becometh the gospel, so much of "the beauty of the Lord our God" *is upon us*.

A *fourth* branch of the petition is, that God would set his seal to their

undertakings, and establish the work of their hands. "Establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it." It was the work of Moses and Joshua, and the rest of God's servants, to mould and form the people, especially the rising generation; to instruct them in the words of the Lord, and impress their hearts with the vast importance of obeying them. And this has been the work of God's servants in every age. This is our object in our stated and occasional labours, in village-preaching, and in foreign missions; this is the object in the present undertaking: but all is nothing, unless God establish the work of our hands. "Except the Lord build the house, the builders labour in vain." As we must never confide in God to the neglect of means; so we must never engage in the use of means without a sense of our dependence on God.

It is requested, *finally*, that these blessings might both appear in their own times, and be continued to their posterity: "Let thy work appear unto thy servants" who are now alive, "and thy glory unto their children," when they are no more. It is desirable that true religion should be promoted *in our time*. This, indeed, should be our first and chief concern. Worldly men may care nothing about this. If they gain but the corn, the wine, and the oil, it is enough for them; but God's *servants* cannot be happy with mere temporal prosperity, if the interest of Christ do not prosper. Nehemiah might have lived in affluence at the court of Persia; but he could not enjoy it while the city of his God was going to ruins. The true labourers in God's husbandry long to see it abound in fruits: the builders of his temple desire to see it rise.—And though our times lie nearest us, yet our prayers and efforts must not be confined to them, but extend to *posterity*. The succeeding generation should lie near our hearts. In them we hope for materials for God's building. The prayer of David would fit the lips of every godly man, and especially of every godly parent; "That our sons may be as olive-plants, grown up in their youth; and our daughters as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace!"

Such were the particular objects desired: I shall only add a few words on their desirableness.

We have seen already that the manifestation of the *glory* of God depends on the progress of his *work*: by how much, therefore, we are concerned for the one, by so much shall we be importunate for the other. It is for the glory of God that Satan's kingdom should be overturned, and the kingdom of his Son established on its ruins. This work is the *harvest* of all God's other works of glory. It was glorious in him to promise to give his Son the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession: but the glory of this also depends upon its being performed. It was glorious for Christ to die, that he might purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works; but it is by the actual accomplishment of this object that his glory is perfected. It was glorious for God in his providence to drive out paganism and popery from this kingdom; but if it stop here, what are we the better? The cutting down of weeds will be of but little use, if the pure seed be not sown, and spring up, and bring forth fruit in their place.

The progress of God's work in heathen countries has a close connexion also with our spiritual prosperity at home. There is much beauty and propriety in the petitions offered up in the sixty-seventh Psalm: "God be merciful unto us . . . that thy way may be known upon earth, they saving health among all nations!" God blesses the world by blessing the church, and making it a blessing. A statesman would wish for an increase in population, that the army and navy, and every other department of society, might be filled; and shall not we pray for the prosperity of the church of



God, that faithful ministers, missionaries, and every other description of Christians, may not be wanting?

Finally, The regard we bear to the souls of men, especially to the rising generation, must render these blessings desirable. It is not yours, but you, that we seek. Our hearts' desire, and prayer to God for you, is, that you may be saved. If we recommend you to attend the gospel and embrace it, is it because we want to enlist you under the banner of a party? God knoweth! Yet we shall say to you, and especially to the rising generation, as Moses said to Hobab, "Come with us, and we will do you good; for the Lord," we trust, "hath spoken good concerning" us . . . "And it shall come to pass, that whatsoever good thing the Lord shall do unto us, that will we do unto you."

## XXXIX.

[Delivered at Carter Lane Meeting-house, London, Dec. 18, 1814, on behalf of the British and Foreign School Society.]

## THE INCREASE OF KNOWLEDGE.

"Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased."—Dan. xii. 4.

WHATEVER obscurity there is in these prophecies, there are some particulars in them which determine their application to gospel times, and perhaps to those in which we live. Such is the mystical number of "a time, times, and a half," in verse 7, or 1,260 years; which has an invariable reference to the period of anti-Christian domination (compare verse 7 with Rev. x. 5, 6; xi. 2, 3; xii. 14; xiii. 5). That which is here predicted, therefore, must refer to the close of this period, and to the introduction of the millennial kingdom of Christ.

The characteristics of these times are, that they shall be preceded by "great troubles," but from which Michael will "stand up" to deliver his church; that there shall be men of eminence, who shall "turn many to righteousness, and shine like the stars for ever;" and that "many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased."

Two things require attention; namely, the *kind* of knowledge here referred to, and the *means* by which it is to be increased.

As to the first, we have heard much of late years of *philosophical illumination*, which, by excluding the Bible, is to ameliorate the condition of man; and we have seen some of its effects. It is something remarkable, that from the time when the Bible was to be thrown aside as useless, it has been more in request, and more extensively circulated! Partial as unbelievers may be to their own kind of knowledge, they cannot expect that its prevalence should be an object of Scripture prophecy. No; the knowledge of which the Scriptures make account is that of which the fear of the Lord is the beginning. We may depend upon it that it is Bible knowledge, or the Bible would not have predicted it with approbation. It is that which "the wicked will not understand, but the wise shall understand it." It is the knowledge of "the only true God, and of Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent." With this, however, must be included the first principles, at least, of human science, as subservient to it; inasmuch as the end includes the means which lead to it.

It is the glory of Christ's kingdom that it is established and promoted by

knowledge. It invites examination, and courts humble inquiry. Is it thus with paganism, or Mahommedanism, or apostate Judaism, or deism, or corrupt Christianity? No: these are all works of darkness, for the dispelling of which many shall run to and fro, as with the lamps of truth in their hands.

We have a *written* religion; and though it is not essential to salvation that we should be able to read and write, yet these are essential to our making any considerable proficiency in the knowledge of God. Without being able to read we cannot "search the scriptures," nor "meditate in the law of the Lord by day and by night." It is a great disadvantage to a hearer of the gospel to be unable to compare what he hears with the word of God. Nor is it less so to a minister, or a missionary, in addressing such auditors. It might therefore be presumed, that prior to the general spread of the gospel there would be a general diffusion of knowledge, even amongst the lower classes of mankind.

Secondly. Respecting the *means* by which knowledge shall be increased,—"many shall run to and fro;" that is, they that possess it shall be desirous of imparting it to others. There may be a desire to impart knowledge without possessing it. Some good men, like Ahimaaz, are eager to run while yet they have no tidings, and some vain men have an itch to be teachers when it would rather become them to learn. Those who possess knowledge, however, will do well to impart it according to their ability.

It is chiefly by means of instruction that men are "wiser than the beasts of the field." We are born, it is true, with capacious and immortal powers, but while the mind is uninformed they are of but small account. Knowledge enters principally at the door of the senses. To what do we owe the gift of speech? It may seem to be natural to us; but if we are born deaf we shall also be dumb; and if with this we were blind, there would be but little difference in point of knowledge between us and other animals. Why is man so long in growing up to maturity? Other animals attain theirs in a short time compared with him. Is it not that there may be opportunity for instruction? What is the difference between the civilized and the savage part of mankind? Both may possess like powers; but the one is instructed, while the other is not. Many poor boys and girls in a country village, who cannot read, and never hear the gospel, nor converse with wise men, are very little, if any thing, superior to savages. Who can read the pathetic lines of Gray, when looking at the graves of the poor in a country churchyard, without dropping a tear of sympathy?

"Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid  
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;  
Hands that the rod of empire might have swayed,  
Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre.

"But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page,  
Rich with the spoils of time, did ne'er unroll;  
Chill penury repressed their noble rage,  
And froze the genial current of their soul?"

A portion of this evil may always continue to be the lot of the poor in the present life: but it may be considerably diminished; and, when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters do the sea, it will be so. Genuine benevolence will produce this effect. God hath so ordered things that we should be blessings to one another. One generation passeth not away till it has reared another to take its place. We might all have been called alone, and blessed, like Abraham; but as in blessing him God made him a blessing to the nations, it is in some respects the same with us. If he gives us the cup of salvation, we must hand it round. If he give us

knowledge, or riches, or any other gift, we must not keep it to ourselves, but run to and fro that we may impart it.

If it be the design of God to diffuse the knowledge of himself over the earth in these last days, it might be expected that suitable means and instruments would be employed to accomplish it. When he meant to rear a tabernacle in the wilderness, he raised up Bezaleel and Aholiab, and other wise-hearted men, in whom he put wisdom and understanding. Thus we might expect men to be gifted and qualified for the work appointed them, and to be stirred up to engage in it. It might be expected, supposing a great work designed to be accomplished, that societies would be formed, some to translate the sacred Scriptures into the languages of the nations, some to give them circulation, some to scatter tracts which shall impress their leading principles, some to preach the gospel, and some to teach the rising generation to read and write.

Who can observe the movements of the present times without perceiving in them the finger of God? They may not have risen just in the order above described. The institution of Sunday schools, as they are called, for the children of the poor, took the lead about thirty years ago; since then, other institutions of various kinds have followed; but they have all risen *nearly* together, and all indicate a divine design. They form a whole, and, like the different parts of a machine, all work together.

Amongst these institutions which have already attracted the attention of Europe, and not of Europe only, that which is now called "The British and Foreign School Society" claims our attention. And such a society is wanted to give success to all other institutions for the diffusion of knowledge; for, if the world were full of Bibles, it would be of little avail if the people were not taught to read them. Is not the British system of education an engine capable of moving the moral world? From what little I know of it I am persuaded it is; and that God has caused it to be brought forward for this purpose. Its principle appears to me to be military. We all know what astonishing effects are produced in the political world by forming and organizing a number of men, every one filling the most advantageous post, and all acting together in concert. If this principle has been brought to bear in war, why should it not rather be employed in promoting knowledge, and diffusing the blessings of peace? It is of but small account, whether it originated with a Bell or with a Lancaster, and whether the societies act in concert, or not, so that they do but act. It may be a useful rivalry, and serve to provoke to good works. It requires to be supported, and I trust it will be so. If the nations of Europe, who have sent and are sending messengers to learn the principles of our operations, should perceive our hands to slacken in the use of them, it must not only sink us in their esteem, but impede the progress of the work. It is only to be a little more economical, denying ourselves of a few of the superfluities of life, and we may support all these institutions. The expense of one lust is greater than all the taxes of benevolence and religion.

I only add, amidst all our running to and fro to increase knowledge, our first concern is, that we ourselves know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. Without this, the rebuke of the apostle to a conceited Jew will apply to us: "Thou art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, who hast the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law: thou therefore who teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?"

## XL.

## PRAYER OF DAVID IN THE DECLINE OF LIFE.

## TO THE AGED.

“Cast me not off in the time of old age, forsake me not when my strength faileth.”—Psal. lxxi. 9.

THIS Psalm is supposed to have been written about the time of Absalom's conspiracy. God had cast off his predecessor Saul, and things looked as if he now meant to cast *him* off. His people also seemed disposed, by their joining with Absalom, to cast him off: hence the force of the petition.

Old men do not always put up this petition. If the desires of many of them were put into words, their request would be that they might save money, retain power, and many other things. Covetousness is particularly the sin of old age. The reason may be, that in early life corruption has a number of channels in which it flows; but in old age these are stopped up, or nearly so, by the decay of natural powers and passions; and hence the whole flows in one or two channels. But these things will soon forsake us, or we must forsake them. The favour and presence of God should be the object, the supreme object, of our desire.

I. THERE ARE SOME PECULIAR CIRCUMSTANCES OF OLD AGE WHICH RENDER THIS BLESSING NECESSARY.

1. Old age is a time of but little natural enjoyment, as Barzillai acknowledged, 2 Sam. xix. 35. There is the more need, therefore, for other enjoyments. It is a soil on which that kind of pleasure will not grow;—but the joys of religion will, and there may be fruit in old age. Be this, therefore, our object! Psal. xcii. 14; Isa. xl. 30, 31.

2. It is a time in which the troubles of life are often known to increase. Many are poor and can struggle no longer, and so sink under their hardships. Others have families, and live to see their children's miseries; or what, if we fear God, will grieve us more, their evil courses. How fit then is the prayer of David to the lips of those whose gray hairs are going down with sorrow to the grave!—Others lose their friends by death. Youth is the time for forming connexions, which is a source of pleasure; and age, of those connexions being dissolved, which is a source of pain. How many poor widows may hear this address, who are left in a world of care and sorrow, to serve alone? Does not this prayer fit your lips?—At this period we often have to reap the bitter fruits of the sins of earlier years. Disobedience to parents is often followed by disobedience in children; neglect of family government by family ruin, as in the case of Eli; and criminal indulgences in youth by similar practices among our children. David had his troubles in his younger days, but they were light compared with those which respected Amnon, Tamar, and Absalom. Here impurity and blood reappeared, and wounded his heart.

3. Old age is a time in which the troubles of life not only increase, but become less tolerable. Young people will weather the storm, but it is not so with the aged. Pains of mind resemble pains of body; young people will work them off, but in old people they remain, and are carried to the grave. Jacob had hardships at Padan-aram, the heat by day, and the frost by night; but he forgot them in a little time; not so after having lost his beloved Rachel. A garment was brought to him covered with blood! Is this, or any thing like it, your condition? So much the more necessary the petition.

4. Old age is a time that ought to command respect, and does so among dutiful children, and all serious Christians; but it is often known to be attended with neglect. This is the case especially where they are poor and dependent. It has been the case where public characters have lost their youthful vivacity, and the brilliancy of their talents. In these cases, also, how fit is the petition, "Cast me not off in the time of old age, forsake me not when my strength faileth!"

5. It is a period bordering on death and eternity. The enjoyments of life are more than half gone, and the remainder hangs upon a thread more than half broken.

But it may be worth while to inquire,

II. IN WHAT CASES THERE ARE GROUNDS TO HOPE THE BLESSING WILL BE GRANTED. Not all old men enjoy God's favour and presence. There are some tottering on to the grave who are yet wicked; yea, ripe in wickedness—mercenary, deceitful, crafty, and oppressive. Even those sins which they can no longer act, through a failure in their natural powers, they will recall in their defiled imaginations, and repeat in conversation, to the corrupting of youth. Ah, wicked old man! God will cast you off. Age itself entitles *you* to no respect from man, nor will you find mercy from God. Think particularly of two passages. "The sinner, a hundred years old, shall be accursed—God shall wound the hairy scalp of him who goeth on still in his trespasses," Isa. lxxv. 20; Psal. lxxviii. 21. Who then shall be found sharers in this blessing?

1. It is certain that, if we have been God's servants from our youth, he will not cast us off in old age. David pleaded this, in the fifth and seventeenth verses of this Psalm: "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth; and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works." How was this truth also verified in the old age and death of Jacob, Moses, Daniel, Paul, and others!

2. Though we should not have been his servants in our youth, yet in old age, even from thence, if we seek him with all our hearts, he will be found of us. He will not reject us even at the eleventh hour.

3. Though you should never have been his servant to this day, but have grown gray under Satan's yoke, and are now a poor miserable creature, just ready to fall into hell; yet if from hence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, with all thy heart and with all thy soul, he will be found of thee; for the Lord our God is a merciful God; and through the death of Christ he can save thee to the uttermost. If with all your heart you only put up this prayer, "Cast me not off in the time of old age, forsake me not when my strength faileth;" he will not cast you off, but stand your friend when forsaken by the whole world, Deut. iv. 29—31; Heb. vii. 25.

## XLI.

### ADVANTAGES OF EARLY PIETY.

#### TO YOUNG PEOPLE.

"O satisfy us early with thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days."—Psal. xc. 14.

THE season is returned, my dear young people, in which you expect I should address you on your eternal interests. I hope what I have heretofore

said to you, not only on these occasions, but in the ordinary course of my labours, has not been altogether in vain. Some of you, I hope, have already set your faces Zionward. Happy should I be to see many more follow their example!

The words which I have read to you express the desire of Moses, the man of God, in behalf of Israel, and especially of the rising generation. The generation of men which came out of Egypt with Moses were most of them very wicked. Though God divided the sea to save them, and caused manna to fall from heaven to feed them, with many other wonderful works; yet they did little else than provoke him by their repeated transgressions. Ten times they tempted him in the wilderness; and, to complete their crimes, they despised the good land, and disbelieved His promises who had engaged to put them in possession of it. The consequence was, Jehovah swore in his wrath, "They shall not enter into my rest." So they were all, except Joshua and Caleb, doomed to die in the wilderness. On occasion of this melancholy sentence, (the account of which you will find in the fourteenth chapter of Numbers,) it is supposed that Moses, the man of God, wrote this plaintive Psalm; in which he laments over the mortality of man, and supplicates Divine mercy to mitigate the doom; and the doom as it respected Israel was mitigated, or at least mingled with much mercy. Though the fathers were sentenced to perish in the wilderness, yet the promise was accomplished in the rising generation. "Your little ones," said the Lord, "which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised." This younger generation, from that time, became the grand object of hope to Moses and his companions. Their great business in the wilderness, for thirty-eight years, was to teach them the good knowledge of God, and to form their spirit and manners for his service. How earnestly did Moses pray for the Lord's blessing upon these their labours, towards the close of this Psalm! "Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children; and let the beauty of Jehovah our God be upon us; and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it." To the same purpose is the petition which I first read: "O satisfy us early with thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days." These petitions, too, were graciously answered. God's work did appear to Moses and his associates, and his glory to their children, and that at an early period. His spirit was richly poured forth upon the Israelitish youth. The beauty of the Lord their God was upon them, and the work of their hands was established. It was this amiable generation that extorted the admiration of Balaam himself: "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!" It was of them that the Lord declared, that "Israel then was holiness to the Lord, and the first-fruits of his increase."

I hope I need not say that this prayer of Moses, on behalf of the Israelitish youth, is expressive of the desires of your minister and of your parents; you know it is so. Oh that it may also express your own!

There are two things pertaining to this subject which require particular notice; namely, the object desired, which is an early participation of Divine mercy; and the influence of such a participation of mercy on the happiness of future life.

I. Let us notice THE OBJECT DESIRED.—This is *mercy*, a being *satisfied* with mercy, and a being *early* satisfied with mercy. Pay attention, young people, to each of these particulars.

I. The grand object that you need is *mercy*, the mercy of God against whom you have sinned.—Holy angels worship God; but this prayer would not fit their lips. They are guilty and undone sinners to whom the voice

of mercy is addressed; and such are you, and therefore it becomes you to sue for this all-important good. Mercy is of two kinds, *common* and *special*. Every good we enjoy is mercy; but they are not common mercies only, nor chiefly, that are here desired. They would not have satisfied Moses, nor will they satisfy us. That which he sought on behalf of the Israelitish youth, and which we seek on behalf of you, is saving mercy, renewing mercy, forgiving mercy; that which Saul the persecutor obtained, having sinned in ignorance and unbelief.

2. The blessing here sought is not only mercy, but a being *satisfied* with mercy.—If the rising generation among the Israelites obtained mercy, Moses and Aaron, and all their godly associates, would feel satisfied on a review of their labours; and if you, young people, obtain a similar blessing, we shall feel the same. Nor shall we be satisfied with any thing short of it. We are glad to see you sober, intelligent, ingenious, and industrious; we rejoice in your temporal prosperity; but this will not satisfy us. How should it? To care for the less, and not for the greater, were cruel beyond expression. Nor will any thing short of saving mercy satisfy *you*. You may think that pleasure will, but it will not; nor fame, nor riches, nor aught else under the sun. Immortal minds can be satisfied with nothing short of an immortal good. Read, and carefully consider, the first three verses of the fifty-fifth chapter of Isaiah. But, in order to be satisfied with mercy, you must possess a thirst after it. Nothing satisfies but that which corresponds with our desires. Have you such desire? Do you call upon the Lord for mercy? and that with your whole heart? How many heathens are there in a Christian country who live without prayer! and how many who pray in form, without any earnest or sincere desire after those things for which they pray! Such will never be satisfied. But if mercy be the one thing desired, you need not doubt being satisfied with it; for there is enough in God, enough in Christ, to assuage all your thirst. “With the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.”—“Open your mouth wide, and he will fill it.”—“The Spirit,” in the invitations of the word, “says, Come; the bride,” or church of Christ, “says, Come; and whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely.”

3. The blessing to be sought is, not only a being satisfied, but satisfied *early* with Divine mercy.—Moses desired that his prayer might be speedily answered; and if genuine piety appeared in the young people at an early period of life, this his desire would be accomplished. Piety is a beautiful flower at any age, but most so in early life. How amiable did it appear in these young people! It is called “the love of their espousals,” which the Lord afterwards remembered for the sake of their posterity. How amiable did it appear in Isaac, in Joseph, in Samuel, in David, in Abijah, in Josiah, and in many others! But let us proceed to observe—

II. THE INFLUENCE WHICH A PARTICIPATION OF DIVINE MERCY, AND ESPECIALLY AN EARLY ONE, WILL HAVE ON THE HAPPINESS OF YOUR FUTURE LIFE. This good obtained, you will *rejoice and be glad all your days*.—It is a notion imbibed by many who are strangers to true religion, that it makes people melancholy and miserable. But this is false. The contrary is the truth. Every one that has known it has spoken well of it. The reproaches of those who know it not are unworthy of notice. To render this evident, let me request your attention to a few remarks.

1. To have participated of mercy *is to have all your sins forgiven*; and is not this a source of joy and gladness? You may think but little of these things in the hour of health and thoughtless dissipation; but whenever you reflect, whether it be under a sermon, or on a bed of affliction, or on any other occasion, you will feel the force of such truths as these: “Blessed is

the man whose transgressions are forgiven, and whose sin is covered!"—"Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee!" I cannot perceive what grounds there can be for joy or gladness while your sins are unforgiven. To rise every morning, and to retire every evening, with the curse of the Almighty on your heads, must needs be a dreadful thing; and, if you be not shockingly hardened in unbelief and stupidity, it must render your life far from happy. You may rejoice and be glad in many things, but it is only while you forget your true condition. One thought on this subject dissolves the charm, and sinks you in melancholy. O my dear young people, drink but at this fountain, and it will prove the water of life! It will banish suspense and dread; and will take away all that is terrible from these most terrible of all words—DEATH, JUDGMENT, and ETERNITY.

2. The partaking of Divine mercy will furnish you with great sources of enjoyment in the study of truth.—While blinded by your own carnality, the things of God will appear uninteresting, if not foolishness; but, having known the gift of God, you will ask, and he will give you more and more of this living water. Knowledge of any kind is food to an ingenious mind; but mere science has not that rich and interesting quality which attends evangelical truth. Astronomy may amuse you, and even delight you, by showing you the wonderful works of God; but the gospel gives you an interest in all. If you are Christians, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours. The study of nature is a source of pleasure; but the gospel, of joy. It has with great propriety been called "the wisdom that speaks to the heart." Such was the decision of the Earl of Rochester in his wisest days. Joy, and especially the joy of the gospel, possesses much of that charming perturbation of spirit which is not excited but by great, interesting, and transporting objects. Happiness may cause a smile, but joy will add to that smile a tear, and perhaps a flood of tears. What a delicious enjoyment! Thus may you rejoice and be glad all your days!

3. By a participation of Divine mercy, all your duties will be converted into pleasures.—Without this, every duty will be a task: praying, reading and hearing, Sabbaths and all other religious opportunities, will either be disregarded, or if through custom you attend to them, yet your heart will not be in them. They will appear as lost time; and such, indeed, they will prove. Time so spent will to you be lost, and worse than lost. But true religion will inspire your hearts with love; and this will render every religious duty a delight.

4. A participation of the mercy or grace of God will shed a lustre on all your natural enjoyments.—To have only natural enjoyments is to have a slender, short-lived, and uncertain portion. To have to reflect, in the midst of your pleasures, Now I am receiving my good things, and these, for aught that appears, are to be my all, is sufficient to spread a damp over every thing; but to have earthly good with a blessing, with the good-will of Him that dwelt in the bush, must give it a tenfold sweetness. Art thou but a Christian, "Eat thy bread with gladness, and drink thy wine with a cheerful heart; for God now accepteth thy labour."

5. A participation of Divine mercy will support your hearts under the heaviest afflictions, and enable you to rejoice and be glad, while others are sinking under their burdens.—You are young, but you must lay your accounts with those ills which are common to men. Some of you who may be engaged in trade may sustain heavy losses; but this will bear you up. If you have Christ, you will never have lost your all. When poor Moab was wasted, she had nothing left. Well, therefore, might Jeremiah bewail her condition, chap. xlviii. 36. But when Judah was gone into captivity,



she could yet say, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him." Others of you may pass through life in poverty. *Hardly bestead and hungry*, you have little to lose; and, if destitute of religion, may be tempted to "curse your King and your God, and look upward." But the hope of the gospel will cause you to rejoice, even in this situation. Though no fruit appear on your vine, nor flock in your fold, nor herd in your stall; yet you will rejoice in the Lord, and be glad in the God of your salvation.

6. A participation of God's special mercy affords an assurance that *all the blessings before mentioned are but the beginnings of joy, the earnest of everlasting bliss*.—Here we are at a loss. "Now are we the sons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but this we know, that we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." O happy people! Well are they exhorted to "rejoice always, and again to rejoice"—"to sing aloud upon their beds"—"to count it all joy, even when they fall into divers trials, knowing that these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

To all this may be added, *the earlier you obtain these blessings, the greater will be your enjoyments*.—Early piety will save you from much wickedness. The conversion of a soul, especially at this period, hides a multitude of sins; and renders life much more happy as well as useful. Evil habits are broken with difficulty. Those who return to God in old age seldom do much for him, or enjoy much from him. Manasseh, though he obtained mercy, yet did but little towards undoing the mischief which he had wrought in Israel. He could lead his people and his family into wickedness while he was wicked; but he could not lead them back again when he returned. Amon, his successor, imitated Manasseh the idolater, not Manasseh the penitent. And as to himself, though he cast the idols out of the temple, and out of the city, yet the far greater part of the work of reformation was left for his grandson Josiah. That amiable young prince began, in the sixteenth year of his age, to seek after the Lord God of his fathers; and in the twentieth he set about a thorough work of reformation; "and God was with him, and blessed him, and he," like his ancestor Abraham, "became a blessing."

O young people, a thousand arguments and examples might be adduced to show the force and propriety of the petition! If you have a spark of ingenuousness towards God in your hearts, you would not desire to put him off with the refuse of a life spent in the service of sin. You would offer him the first-fruits of your days; the best of your time, strength, talents, and influence. And this is not all. Time flies. Years roll over in quick succession. Death sweeps away the young as well as the aged. Of the burials that we have had this year in our congregation, five out of six have been young people; some of them under twenty years of age, and others of them but little past that period. None of them seem to have thought much of dying, yet they are gone from the land of the living! Hark! from their tombs I hear the language of warning and solemn counsel! "Whosoever thy hand findeth thee to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge in the grave, whither thou goest." Join with your pastor, join with your parents, join with all that seek your welfare, in praying, "O satisfy us early with thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days."

What shall I say more? Will you, my dear young people, will you drink and be satisfied at the fountain of mercy; a fountain that is wide open, and flows freely through our Lord Jesus Christ? You cannot plead the want of sufficient inducements. Ministers, parents, Christians, angels, the falter-

ing voice of death, the solemn assurance of a judgment to come, and, above all, the sounding of the bowels of Jesus Christ, all say, Come. But if, like those who refused the waters of Siloah, you prefer the follies and pursuits of the present life to the joys of immortality, our souls shall weep in secret places for you. Tribulation and anguish will overtake you even in this life; and under it, instead of the consolations and hopes of the gospel, you will have to reflect, This I have brought upon myself; and these are but the beginnings of sorrows!

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## XLII.

### THE CHOICE OF MOSES.

“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of reward.”—Heb. xi. 24—26.

COMMON history generally overlooks the servants of God as unworthy of its notice. The world has thought it worth while to hate and persecute them in all ages, but not to record either their lives or deaths. Statesmen, warriors, philosophers, poets, and the like, are held up to view, while they and their memorial are consigned to oblivion. It is not so however in God’s history. The world loves its own, and God loves his own. God’s history takes as little notice of the sons of the mighty as man’s history does of the sons of the holy, exhibiting them as a succession of wild beasts, who have rendered themselves conspicuous only by their rapacity; while it holds up the characters whom they have traduced as men “of whom the world was not worthy.” What a catalogue is given us in this chapter! To have a name in such a record is true honour.

Among these worthies stands the name of *Moses*. From his early childhood he was an object of the special care of Heaven; and when arrived to years of maturity, he was a believer, and an eminent servant of God.

It is pleasing to observe how the apostle finds an evangelical spirit in Old Testament saints. Moses was distinguished as the lawgiver of Israel, and he venerated the law which he had the honour to dispense. He did not, however, trust in his obedience to it for acceptance with God, but in Christ, in whom he believed. Yes, the religion of Moses was an attachment to *Christ*, though at that time he was known only by promise. Moses had also an expectation of the earthly Canaan, of that goodly mountain and Lebanon, though for his sin in a single instance he was deprived of it; but his principal “respect” did not terminate here, but on a “recompense of reward” beyond the grave, even in that better country in the faith of which the patriarchs lived and died.

To illustrate and vindicate the choice of Moses, which is here celebrated, is all I shall attempt. There are three remarks which offer concerning it.

1. The choice of Moses is ascribed to *faith*. He believed in the Messiah who was promised covertly to Adam, and to Noah, and more explicitly to Abraham, as the Seed in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed. He also believed in the invisible realities of a future state. And thus his faith determined him to embrace even the reproach of Christ, and to relinquish every thing which stood in the way of the heavenly prize. The choice of Moses was free; yet it was not the effect of free will, but of

faith in Christ, and which was the gift of God. And if we make the same choice, it will be owing to the same cause.

2. It was made under the strongest *temptations*. The refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter was in effect refusing a crown; for she is supposed to have been the only daughter of the king of Egypt, and to have had no children of her own. Moses therefore appears to have been designed for a successor to the throne. For this also he seems to have received a suitable education, being "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." All things conspired to tempt him. Fortune, with her flattering smiles, invited him to her banqueting-house, and to think no more of his abject relations. Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house, was her language. Apis must be thy God, and worship thou him.

We who are stationed in the common ranks of life may think but little of such a temptation. A crown never having been within the reach of our expectations, it may possess but few charms for us. We cannot be ignorant, however, that for such stations men in high life have frequently sacrificed every thing. Poor Henry IV., king of France, about two hundred years ago, though a protestant in principle, and a truly great man, yet, rather than relinquish a crown, abjured his religion. It is true our James II. lost his throne through his attachment to popery; but he meant not so, and even his friends ridiculed him for it. "There is a certain good man," said they, "lately come to Rome, who has resigned three crowns for a crucifix!"

There is no principle that is equal to the choice which Moses made but faith. Nothing else can find an object that will outweigh it. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he who believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

3. In making such a choice, the best of this world was weighed against the worst of religion, "the reproaches of Christ;" and yet the latter was preferred. If the best on Christ's side had been weighed against the worst on the side of the world, or even the best on both sides against each other, the triumph had been less glorious. But here we see in one scale the pleasures of sin, and the treasures of a mighty empire; objects for which men are continually sacrificing their health, peace, conscience, character, lives, and souls; in the other, Christ and religion, with the greatest outward disadvantages; yet the latter preponderates. An attachment to the cause of the Messiah would at any time excite the reproaches of proud men; but at this time more especially, when his kingdom seemed so unlikely to prevail that his subjects were actually in a state of slavery. "The people of God" are at all times, more or less, in an afflicted state; but now waters of a full cup were wrung out to them; yet with all these disadvantages, faith obtains the victory. Many are daily choosing the world, with not a thousandth part of this to choose; and setting light by Christ and his people, with not a thousandth part of this to refuse.

To a mind blinded by carnality, the choice of Moses will appear fanatical and foolish; but it was not so. Faith and right reason are not at variance. His decision was as wise as it was just. He did not choose afflictions and reproaches for their own sake; for he had all the feelings of a man as well as we. His choice terminated on "the recompense of reward," which, like the joy that was set before the great Object of his faith, enabled him to endure the cross, and despise the shame. More particularly,

1. The things which he refused would last only *for a season*; but the things which he chose were of everlasting duration. We measure periods in all other estimations; and why should we not in this? Who would give so much for a short lease, or rather an uncertain tenure, as for a full purchase, and a lasting possession?

2. The society of the people of God, though afflicted, reproached, and persecuted, exceeds all the pleasures of sin *while they do last*. It is delightful to cast in our lot with them; for the bond of their union is holy love, which is the sweetest of all sweets to a holy mind. If we have once tasted of this, every thing else will become comparatively insipid. How sweet a bond of union is the love of Christ!—how sweet is the fellowship of saints! Even when borne down with reproaches and afflictions, how sweet are the tears of sympathy! What are the country and the gods of Moab to Ruth, after having lived in a religious family, and become acquainted with the true and living God? And what are the discouragements which Naomi presented, on the ground of future poverty and neglect? “Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee,” was her answer: “for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried. Jehovah do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me!” The Lord, moreover, hath spoken good concerning his people, and he delights to do them good. This motive was held up by Moses to Hobab, to induce him to cast in his lot with them; and, in persuading his friend, he doubtless made use of the same considerations which had prevailed on himself.

3. The very reproaches of Christ contain *greater riches* than all the treasures of this world. They carry with them, not only the testimony of a good conscience, but the approbation of God; and these are substantial riches. They are accompanied with the fellowship of Christ; for in suffering for him, we suffer “with him;” and these also are substantial riches. Nor is it a small thing to be counted worthy to suffer for his name’s sake. It becomes the servants of Christ to consider the reproach of his enemies as their honour, and to bind it to them as a crown.

Let us then inquire what is our choice. We may not have the offer of a crown; or, if we had, it might have but little influence upon us. The desires of man are mostly confined to things a little above his present situation, or which are next within his reach. A good estate, or a well-watered plain, might weigh more with many of us than a kingdom. Nor may the people of God in our day lie under such reproaches and afflictions as in the time of Moses. But this only proves that our temptations are not so strong as his; and, consequently, that if the world conquer us, we shall be the less excusable. But the world and Christ are in competition for our choice, and we are required to give a decisive and immediate answer. Choose ye this day whom ye will serve. There are many who can and do say as Joshua did, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” His people shall be our people, and his cause our cause. If any refuse, and prefer the present world before him, be it known to them that, as is their choice in this world, such will be their portion in that which is to come

## XLIII.

## PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE EPHESIANS.

“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.”—Eph. iii. 14—16.

THE writing and preaching of the apostles had two distinct objects in view. They *preached* to make men Christians; to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. They *wrote* to make them eminent Christians; to quicken believers in their heavenly race, to promote in them a growth in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Such was the zeal of Paul, in endeavouring to accomplish the former, that he counted not his life dear to him, but was willing to die for the name of the Lord Jesus. Nor was he less desirous of the latter, making it the leading object in all his Epistles, and the matter of his prayer day and night.

In the apostle's words there are three things which require our notice—the object desired—its importance—and the encouragement we have to seek it.

I. THE OBJECT IN WHICH THE APOSTLE WAS SO MUCH INTERESTED ON BEHALF OF THE EPHESIANS: “That he would grant you to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.” Nothing good is found in fallen man: nothing grows spontaneously in that soil but what is evil. If any thing holy be found there, it must be produced by the Spirit of God, who worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure. Nor is Divine influence less necessary in carrying on the good work after it is begun. Such is our proneness to relax, to grow weary and faint in our course, that we need to be continually “strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.”

The object prayed for is not *bodily* strength. That is of but little account in the sight of God, though in many cases it becomes the matter of human boasting. Samson was possessed of might in the outward man to a high degree, and a poor use he made of it. Perhaps a more feeble character is not to be met with among those whom the Scriptures mention as good men: with all his wonderful exploits, he weakly yielded to the tempter, and became an easy prey to his enemies.

Nor is it mere *mental* ability that is here intended; that was the strength of Solomon. Paul did not pray that we might be made great men, but good men; not that we might be poets or philosophers, but Christians; not that we might excel in genius, or learning, but in grace and goodness; that our souls may prosper and be in health, and that we may be strengthened with might in the inner man.

This part of the subject will be better understood by considering some of the symptoms of spiritual might:—

1. *The manner in which we perform religious duties* may serve as a criterion by which to judge of our strength and weakness.—If we be Christians, we shall worship God in our families, and in secret; we shall search the Scriptures, frequent the house of God, and aim to discharge the various duties which pertain to our stations in life. These things we shall feel it incumbent upon us habitually to regard; but the question is how, and in what manner, do we perform these exercises? If our souls be in a languishing state, they will become a task, and not a pleasure to us; we shall be weary of the Lord's service, feel his yoke to be grievous, and, while we

keep up a round of duty, our devotions will be cold, feeble, and unprofitable. But if we be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might," we shall count of the return of sacred opportunities, and find that Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and that all her paths are peace. When David longed for water of the well of Bethlehem, three mighty men broke through the host of the Philistines to obtain it, hazarding their lives for his sake; while men of weaker attachment would have murmured at the severity of such an enterprise. If we possess a warm heart for Christ, we shall not think much of the time, the talents, the property, or the influence which we may devote to his service; nor count our lives dear to us, if we may but promote his kingdom and glory in the world. "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous." Nor will this pleasure be confined to the public exercises of religion, but will extend to those of a more personal and private nature. It is possible we may feel much animation, and possess much enjoyment, in the outward means, while we are cold and lifeless in the duties of retirement; and this will be the case where the religion of the heart is not cultivated, nor close walking with God carefully maintained. But if we be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, communion with God will be earnestly sought after, private duties will be vigorously attended to, and the closet will yield us pleasure, as well as the tabernacles of the Lord of hosts. There are but few of whom it may be said, as of Caleb and Joshua, that they "follow the Lord fully." Multitudes of professors appear to be but half-hearted in religion; they neither wholly relinquish it, nor take it up in earnest: but are desirous of following the Lord so far as is consistent with their carnal ease, their worldly interest, or their sinful passions, and no further. But if the object of the apostle's prayer be accomplished in us, we shall be decided for God, and prompt in our manner of serving him; not consulting with flesh and blood, not attempting to accommodate our principles and practice to those of the generality, nor wishing to do as little as possible for God, consistently with our own safety; but, delighting to do all his will, we shall run in the way of his commandments.

2. The degree of our spiritual strength may be determined by *the manner in which we resist temptations*.—All men are tempted, but all do not resist temptation; this is peculiar to the Christian character. Mere worldly men go with the stream; they walk according to the course of this world, and are hurried along with the impetuous torrent. But if we be Christians, we are not of the world, and are in the habit of resisting temptations. Yet if our resistance be feeble and indeterminate—if we hesitate where we ought to be decided—if we look back on Sodom, like Lot's wife, with a lingering desire after those sinful pleasures which we profess to have given up, and regret the loss of sensual gratifications—are we not carnal, and walk as men? He who is strengthened with might in the inner man will not pause when temptations meet him, nor parley with the tempter; but will readily answer, "Thus it is written." It will be sufficient for him to know that God has forbidden this or that. Like a dutiful child, the will of his Father is the guide of his conduct, and that alone will furnish sufficient motives for obedience. "Thus it is written."

3. *The spirit in which we endure affliction* will tend to discover the degree of religion we possess.—Affliction is the lot of man, as well as temptation; and we must all get through our difficulties in some way or other; but the manner in which we get through them will show whether we be strengthened with might in the inner man or not. If we faint in the day of adversity, our strength is small. If we be fretful, and murmur at the

hand of God—if we sink under the burden, and wish in ourselves to die—we either have no religion at all, or possess it only in a small degree. Great grace would enable us to bear affliction with submission, and even to rejoice in tribulation. Primitive Christians were destitute, afflicted, tormented; and yet how happy were they with their lot! They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake, and counted it all joy when they fell into divers temptations. Out of weakness they were made strong, and waxed valiant in fight: thus they were more than conquerors through him that loved them.

4. *The sense we entertain of our own weakness* is also a criterion of our being strengthened in the inner man.—An apostle could say, “When I am weak, then am I strong.” To a worldly mind this may appear highly paradoxical, but a babe in Christ can understand it. When we have the greatest sense of our own insufficiency for what is good, and feel that we are nothing, and without Christ can do nothing; then are we “strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” But if we feel self-sufficient, confident, and disposed to lean to our own understanding, then are we weak indeed, and become an easy prey to the enemy. Peter was never so weak as when he thought there was no danger of falling, and boldly said, “Though all men should forsake thee, yet will not I.” Paul was never so strong as when he felt himself to be “nothing.” When most sensible of our own insufficiency, we shall pray most for strength from heaven, and watch most against temptation; and by this means we shall be strengthened with strength in our souls.

II. THE IMPORTANCE AND DESIRABLENESS OF THE BLESSING PRAYED FOR. Paul would not have been so importunate in his request, if it had not been of the greatest importance that we should not only be Christians indeed, but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. But there are other reasons which might be offered.

1. The Scriptures lay much stress on this as tending to *glorify God*.—“Herein is my Father glorified,” says our Lord, “that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.” Every field will bear some fruit in the ordinary course of things; but it is to the more abundant honour of the husbandman when his field brings forth thirty, sixty, or a hundredfold. So it is not merely by our being Christians that God is glorified, but by our being eminent Christians. Nor is this all; if we are desirous only of so much grace as may carry us safely to heaven, it is doubtful whether we shall ever arrive there at last. Abounding in the fruits of righteousness is considered by our Lord as essential to the very existence of true religion; for, says he, “so shall ye be my disciples.” Christ himself brought forth much fruit, and it is necessary that we resemble him.

2. *Our usefulness* depends much on our being strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.—If our souls be in a languishing state, what good can we do in the world? “Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing.” What good can we do in society, amongst our immediate connexions, or in our families, but as we diffuse a savour of Christ! And how can this be done, if we ourselves have lost that savour, and are become lifeless and unfruitful in the ways of God? At the close of every day it becomes us to inquire, Has any one been improved by our conversation? Will any one think the better of Christ from what they have heard or seen in us? Or have we been amongst men merely as men of the world; and might they not say of us, What do you more than others? He who possesses much religion will impart more or less of it to those about him; he will not make a show of it, yet it must be seen. There is that in the out-

ward mien, the inward temper, and daily conversation of a man of genuine piety, which indicates that he has been with Jesus. The modesty of his countenance, the meekness and cheerfulness of his disposition, the sweet familiarity and seriousness of his intercourse with men, enliven the circle in which he moves, and recommend the religion which he professes.

III. THE ENCOURAGEMENT WE HAVE TO PRAY THAT WE MAY BE STRENGTHENED WITH MIGHT BY HIS SPIRIT IN THE INNER MAN is intimated by the phrase, that the Lord would grant it "according to the riches of his glory." When men are both rich and generous, and willing to give to the necessitous according to their ability, it suggests a very powerful motive to solicit their assistance. But who can estimate the riches of God's goodness and the boundless extent of his grace? And if he gives "according to the riches of his glory," what encouragement is here for prayer! "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it, saith the Lord."—"Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." Let us ask much, and we shall have much: "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy." He who had but one talent, and went and hid it in the earth, lost it; but he who had five talents, and went and traded with the same, gained five other talents. Men who live to God, and whose whole concern it is to promote his glory, shall find their sphere of usefulness enlarging with their activity, and that God is girding them with strength proportionate to their labours. Like their Divine Master, their reward is with them, and their work before them. "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."

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#### XLIV.

[Delivered on laying the Foundation of a New Chapel, at Norwich.]

##### INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL RELIGION.

"To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."—1 Pet. ii. 4, 5.

HAVING been requested to say a few words on this occasion, I wish, my friends, to direct your attention, not so much to the *place* about to be erected, as to the *use* to which, I trust, it will be appropriated. Under the gospel it is not place, but the worshipping of God in spirit and in truth, that is of account.

Much of the religion of the Old Testament consisted in the building and worship of the temple; when therefore the New Testament was introduced, it was usual to speak of its religion under this imagery. Thus the passage which I have read alludes partly to the building and partly to the worship of the temple. As the stones were laid on their foundation, so, believing in Jesus, we "come to him as unto a living stone," and are "built up a spiritual house;" and as the priests offered up their sacrifices, so believers are "a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Yet there are great *disparities* between the Jewish and Christian temple. The stones of the former, being mere unconscious matter, were brought; here, being conscious and voluntary agents, they "come:" the foundation there also was mere matter, but here it is "a living



stone:" that was literally a house; that is "a spiritual house:" priesthood was there distinguished by descent; here by character: their sacrifices were taken from the herd or the flock; ours from the heart—the offering of prayer and praise, presented in the name of Jesus Christ.

But, laying aside the imagery, we may consider the whole as furnishing a description of *individual and social religion*. Social religion begins with individual, and individual religion with "coming" to Christ.

I. With respect to **PERSONAL RELIGION**, the Scriptures make much of our coming to Christ. However correct we may be in our deportment, and devout at the stated seasons of worship, if Christ be "disallowed" all is nothing. Election itself no otherwise secures our salvation than as it secures our coming to Christ for it: "All that the Father giveth me shall *come* to me." The atonement of Christ does not avail us but as coming to him. It was thus in the atonements under the law; in some cases sins were confessed by the party laying their hands on the head of the victim, and in others by the priest on their behalf; but in no case could they derive benefit but as "comers thereunto."

The first operations of true religion in the mind are in this way. Christ may not be the first object to which a sinner's thoughts are turned; this may be his sin and exposedness to the wrath of God; but let our thoughts of sin and misery be as pungent as they may, if they lead us not to Christ for salvation, there is no true religion in them. He is "the way" to God: "no man cometh unto the Father but by him." We may be burdened under guilt and fear; but, till we *come* to him with our burden, there will be no gospel rest for our souls. The promise is not made to us as burdened, but as coming to Christ with our burdens, Matt. xi. 28.

Nor is it confined to the time of our first believing; the Christian life consists in coming habitually to Jesus. "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh is by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." That which food is to the body, the doctrine of Christ crucified is to the mind. "Except we eat his flesh, and drink his blood, we have no life in us."

Our estimation of other objects is often governed by public opinion, but we must appreciate Christ, not by what men think of him, but by what he is in the account of God. He may be "disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious;" and if we are of God, we shall be of God's mind; he that is precious to God will be so to us. May there be many characters of this description, my friends, among you. You will then have materials for building up the spiritual temple, and for the offering up of spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

II. Add a few remarks on **SOCIAL RELIGION**, under the same idea of a temple; particularly on the materials with which it must be built—the important character it sustains—the employment of its priesthood—and the medium through which all their sacrifices must be accepted.

1. The proper materials for the Christian temple are "lively stones;" else they will not fit a living foundation, nor unite with other living stones in the building. Beware that the desire of being a large and opulent people may never induce you to overlook this. If it ever come to this, that your members are admitted on any principle short of faith in a living Redeemer, Ichabod will be written upon your doors.

2. The important character you sustain is that of a temple for God to dwell in. If the word of truth be preached among you, the worship of God preserved in its purity, and the ordinances of Christ observed according to their primitive simplicity, God will dwell in you, and walk in you, and ye shall be his people, and he will be your God. He makes great

account of Christian churches, as being the appointed means of establishing his kingdom among men. With what complacency did he speak of ancient Zion! "This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it."—"The Lord loveth the gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob." What a high degree of interest is Christ described as taking in the concerns of the seven churches in Asia! The same idea is conveyed by the judgments denounced against those who have persecuted or corrupted them. "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy." It was this that opened the gates and broke down the walls of old Babylon; and it is on account of this that another Babylon, the anti-christian church, shall come down even to the ground. "They have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink, for they are worthy."

3. As to your employment as a holy priesthood, this is to offer up "spiritual sacrifices." We have heard much of the Christian priesthood, as applied to ministers; but Christianity knows of no priesthood, except what is common to all believers. It knows of pastors, bishops, and elders; but it is a misnomer to call them priests. It is for you all as Christians to offer up prayer and praise, both for yourselves and others; and may you continue on this spot to offer them!

4. Be not forgetful of the medium through which all your offerings become acceptable—"Jesus Christ." We must not carry our offerings in our hand, like Cain, presuming to be accepted on account of them. The order of the Divine proceedings is the reverse of this. The Lord had respect, not to the offering of Abel, and so to him, but to Abel, and so to his offering. The good works of sinful creatures, even those which are most "spiritual," are no otherwise acceptable to God than by "Jesus Christ." The case of Job and his three friends serves to illustrate this principle. The Lord was so displeased with them, that he refused to accept even a petition at their hands. "My wrath," saith he, "is kindled against you. Take your offerings, and go to my servant Job: he shall pray for you, and him will I accept, lest I deal with you after your folly." Such is our case, and such the intercession of our Redeemer. Him God accepts, and through him our prayers and praises become acceptable to God.

## XLV.

### THE VANITY OF THE HUMAN MIND.

"The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity."—Psal. xciv. 11.

SURELY it is the design of God in all his dispensations, and by all the discoveries of his word, to stain the pride of all flesh. The dust is the proper place for a creature, and that place we must occupy. What a humbling thought is here suggested to us! Let us examine it.

1. If vanity had been ascribed to the meaner parts of the creation—if all inanimate and irrational beings, whose days are as a shadow, and who know not whence they came nor whither they go, had thus been characterized—it had little more than accorded with our own ideas. But the humiliating truth belongs to man, the *lord* of the lower creation—to man, that distinguished link in the chain of being which unites in his person mortality and

immortality, heaven and earth. The "Lord knoweth the thoughts of *man*, that they are vanity."

2. Had vanity been ascribed only to the exercises of our sensual or mortal part, or of that which we possess in common with other animals, it had been less humiliating. But the charge is pointed at that which is the peculiar glory of man, the intellectual part, his *thoughts*. It is here, if any where, that we excel the creatures which are placed around us. We can contemplate our own existence, dive into the past and the future, and understand whence we came and whither we go. Yet in this tender part are we touched. Even the *thoughts* of man are vanity.

3. If vanity had been ascribed merely to those loose and trifling excursions of the imagination which fall not under the influence of choice, a kind of comers and goers, which are ever floating in the mind, like insects in the air on a summer's evening, it had been less affecting. The soul of man seems to be necessarily active. Every thing we see, hear, taste, feel, or perceive has some influence upon thought, which is moved by it as the leaves on the trees are moved by every breeze of wind. But "*thoughts*" here include those exercises of the mind in which it is voluntarily or intensely engaged, and in which we are in earnest; even all our schemes, contrivances, and purposes. One would think, if there were any thing in man to be accounted of, it should be those exercises in which his intellectual faculty is seriously and intensely employed. Yet the Lord knoweth that even these are vanity.

4. If, during our state of childhood and youth only, vanity had been ascribed to our thoughts, it would have been less surprising. This is a truth of which numberless parents have painful proof; yea, and of which children themselves, as they grow up to maturity, are generally conscious. Vanity at this period however admits of some apology. The obstinacy and folly of some young people, while they provoke disgust, often excite a tear of pity. But the charge is exhibited against *man*. "*Man at his best estate is altogether vanity.*"

5. The decision proceeds from a quarter from which there can be no appeal: "The Lord knoweth" it. Opinions dishonourable to our species may sometimes arise from ignorance, sometimes from spleen and disappointment, and sometimes from a gloomy turn of mind, which views mankind through a distorted medium. But the judgment given in this passage is the decision of Him who cannot err; a decision therefore to which, if we had no other proof, it becomes us to accede.

But that which is here declared as the result of Divine omniscience, is abundantly confirmed by observation and experience. Let us take a brief view of the thoughts of man as exercised on two general topics—the world that now is, and that which is to come.

I. WITH RESPECT TO THE PRESENT WORLD, CONSIDER WHAT MULTITUDES OF THOUGHTS ARE EMPLOYED IN VAIN.

1. *In seeking satisfaction where it is not to be found.*—Most of the schemes and devices of depraved man go to the indulging of his appetite, his avarice, his pride, his revenge, or in some form or other to the gratifying of himself. Look at the thoughts of such a man as Nabal: "Shall I then take my bread and my water, and my flesh, that I have killed for my shearers, and give to I know not whom?" Or of such a man as Haman now aspiring to be the man whom the king delighteth to honour; now contriving the death of a whole people, in revenge of the supposed crime of an individual, Esth. iii. Such, alas! is a great part of the world to this day. What desolations have come upon the earth through the resentments of a few individuals! And those whose situation has afforded them the greatest

scope for self-gratification in all its forms are generally the furthest off from satisfaction.

2. *In poring on events which cannot be recalled.*—Grief, under the be-reaving strokes of providence, to a certain degree, is natural, it is true, and allowable; but when carried to excess, and accompanied with despondency, and unthankfulness for continued mercies, it is a great evil. I knew a parent who lost an only child, and who never after appeared to enjoy life. It seemed to me, that if his spirit had been expressed in words, they would have been to this effect: Lord, I cannot be reconciled to thee for having taken away the darling of my heart, which thou gavest me!—All such thoughts are as vain as they are sinful, seeing none can make straight what God hath made crooked.

3. *In anticipating evils which never befall us.*—Such is our folly, that, as though the evils which necessarily attend the present state were not enough for us to carry, we must let loose our imaginations, and send them into the wilderness of futurity in search of ideal burdens to make up the load. This also is vanity.

4. To these may be added *the valuing of ourselves on things of little or no account.*—If Providence has given one a little more wealth than another—if he lives in a better house, eats better food, and wears better apparel—what a multitude of self-important thoughts do such trifles breed in the mind! But all is vanity, and rejoicing in a thing of nought.

5. *In laying plans which must be disconcerted.*—The infinitely wise God has laid one great plan, which comprehends all things. If ours accord with his, they succeed; if not, they are overturned, and it is fit they should. Men, in their schemes, commonly consult their own private interest; and as others are carrying on similar designs for themselves, they meet, and clash, and overturn one another. Thus men, partly by their plans being at variance with that of God, and partly with those of their fellow creatures, are ever exposed to disappointment and chagrin. Their lives are wholly occupied in building Babels, having them thrown down, and fretting against God and their neighbours on account of their disappointments.

In looking at the struggles of different parties for power, whether in a monarchy, an aristocracy, or a democracy, one sees a dangerous rock, which multitudes are climbing at the utmost hazard, and from which great numbers fall and perish; and the same spirit operates through all degrees of men, according to the opportunities which they enjoy.

II. LET US SEE WHAT ARE MAN'S THOUGHTS WITH REGARD TO RELIGION, AND THE CONCERNS OF A FUTURE LIFE. It might be expected that if in any thing they be other than vanity, it is in this. The thoughts of a rational and immortal creature upon its eternal interests, one would think, must be serious and solemn. When the objects of thought are—God—our accountability to him—our sin against him—our salvation from it, or condemnation for it—surely we shall not trifle and deceive ourselves! Yet, alas! so far is man from excelling in this solemn department, that there is nothing on which he thinks to so little purpose. The truth of this remark will appear from the following questions:—

1. *What are the thoughts of the heathen world about religion?*—In them we see what the thoughts of man, left to himself, amount to. To call them vanity is to call them by a tender name. I speak not merely of the common people, who are enveloped in ignorance and superstition, but of their wisest philosophers. To what do all their inquiries about God, the chief good, amount? To nothing at all. All is vanity! A babe in the Christian religion, with a page of God's word in his hand, knows more than they have been able to discover in the space of three thousand years.

2. *What are all the thoughts of the Christian world, where God's thoughts are neglected?*—Men who have the Bible in their hands, but who, instead of learning the mind of God in it, and there resting contented, are ever bent on curious speculations, prying into things beyond their reach, vainly puffed up with a fleshly mind; to what do their thoughts amount? Nothing! They may presently lose themselves, and perplex others; they may obtain the flattery of unbelievers, and compliment one another with the epithets of candid and liberal; they may comfort themselves in the idea of being moderate men, and not like those bigots who refuse to yield or make any concessions to the objections of unbelievers; but all that they gain is the friendship of the world, which is enmity to God. Were a monument erected to the memory of all those who have perished by falling from the precipice of unscriptural speculation, it could not have a more appropriate motto than this: "Vain man would be wise."

3. *What is all that practical atheism which induces multitudes to act as if there were no God?*—Great numbers of people in every part of the world, whatever they may call themselves, are practical atheists. They "work iniquity in the dark, and say in their hearts, 'The Lord seeth us not; the Lord has forsaken the earth.'" The Lord, they think, takes no cognizance of the world now, whatever he may have done formerly; but leaves us to shift for ourselves, and do as well as we can.—Such characters there were in the times of David; and their presumptuous folly seems to have given occasion for the words on which these reflections are founded. They are denominated "proud;" described as "triumphing and boasting" in their wickedness, as "uttering hard things," as "breaking in pieces God's people and afflicting his heritage," as "slaying the widow and the stranger, and murdering the fatherless;" yet as saying, "The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard." Well did the Psalmist admonish them, saying, "Understand, ye brutish among the people; and ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that chastiseth the heathen," (who are without the light of revelation,) "shall not he correct" those who possess and despise it? "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity."

4. *What are all the unbelieving, self-flattering imaginations of wicked men,* as though God were not in earnest in his declarations and threatenings?—Nothing is more solemnly declared than that "except we be converted, and become as little children, we cannot enter the kingdom of God"—that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap"—that "neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God"—and that "without faith it is impossible to please God." Yet the bulk of mankind do not seem to believe these things, but flatter themselves that they shall have peace, though they add drunkenness to thirst; that to talk of a man, born in a Christian land, requiring to be born again, is enthusiastical; that God is merciful, and will not be strict to mark iniquity; and that if we do as well as we can—that is, as well as we can find in our hearts to do—the Almighty will desire no more. The vanity of these thoughts, prevalent as they are in the world, will appear, if not before, when God shall judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ.

5. *What are the conceits of the self-righteous,* by which they buoy up their minds with vain hopes, and refuse to submit to the righteousness of God?—Of the two first-born sons of man who presented their offerings to God, one came without a sacrifice; and the greater part of professed worshippers in all ages, it is to be feared, have followed his example. It is

deeply rooted in every human heart, that if the displeasure of God be appeased towards us, or if he show us any favour, it must be on account of some worthiness found in us. To go to God as utterly unworthy, pleading the worthiness of a Mediator, and building all our hope of acceptance on his obedience and sacrifice, is a hard lesson for a proud spirit. Yet, till we learn this, we in effect learn nothing; nor will God accept our offering, any more than he accepted the offering of Cain.

Such is the vanity of man's thoughts, in things of everlasting moment. But, it may be asked, are *all* the thoughts of men of this description? No: the charge is directed against men as depraved, and not as renewed; for though there be much vanity in the thoughts of the best of men, yet they are not mainly so. There are thoughts which, though we are not sufficient of ourselves to obtain them, yet, being imparted to us by Him in whom is all our sufficiency, are not vanity. If we think of God with approbation, of sin with contrition, of ourselves as nothing, of Christ as all, of earth as the house of our pilgrimage, and heaven as our home; this is thinking justly, as we ought to think. Such thoughts also are an earnest of that state where themes of unutterable glory shall for ever present themselves; and where all our powers, being corrected and sanctified, shall ever be employed in exploring the wonders of grace.

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## XLVI.

### EQUITY OF THE SENTENCE AGAINST THOSE WHO LOVE NOT CHRIST.

“If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha.”—1 Cor. xvi. 22.

A SENSE of the excellency of Christ, or of his worthiness of being loved, is of great importance in religion. Without this we can never truly love him, nor prize any thing which pertains to him. Destitute of this, we shall see his name degraded without indignation, and hear it exalted without delight. Without this, we shall esteem his salvation itself no otherwise than a happy expedient to escape eternal misery. In short, without this, we shall be mere statues in Christianity, bring no glory to its Author, and enjoy none of its refined pleasures.

A spirit very different from this possessed the great apostle, when he uttered the above passage. Twenty years ago, if a soldier, who had fought under the late *Marquis of Granby*, had heard the language of detraction against his noble commander, deeply impressed with a sense of the hero's worth, he would have been ready to exclaim, If any man love not the Marquis of Granby, let him be banished the British dominions! Probably, some such feelings might possess the heart of Paul, who had long served under the Lord Jesus Christ, and was deeply impressed with an idea of his innate worth.

Indeed the sentence is *anoful*. “Let him be accursed when the Lord cometh!” It probably alludes to the Jewish excommunications, which they tell us were of three sorts, or degrees. In the first, the offender was *put out of the synagogue*, or merely *excommunicated*; in the second, he was not only excommunicated, but *anathematized*, or *cursed*; in the third, (which was only for the worst, and most incorrigible,) he was not only *anathematized*, but *consigned over to the judgment of the great day!* The meaning of the word here seems to be, Let him be excommunicated from the pre

sence of God and all holy beings; and as he did not love the Lord Jesus Christ as a Saviour, let him fall before him as a Judge! This sentence, however awful, is strictly *equitable*. The truth of this will appear by the joint consideration of three things.

I. He that loves not the Lord Jesus Christ must be an ENEMY TO GOD, TO VIRTUE, AND TO ALL MORAL EXCELLENCE. Such a oneness is there between God as a Lawgiver and Christ as a Saviour, that what is done to the one is done to the other. The Jews, in our Saviour's time, wished to be thought friends to God, while they were enemies to Christ; but, "if God were your Father," saith he, "ye would love me." And again, "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not." The same thing is observable now, among the deists, who would be thought friends to the one Supreme Being, but enemies to Christianity. And indeed this deistical spirit seems greatly to prevail in multitudes that are not professed deists, especially among some in the higher ranks, who, though they can now and then assume so much fortitude as to speak respectfully of the Supreme Being, yet would be ashamed that a word should be heard from their lips in defence of Christ or Christianity. It were to be wished, too, that none of those who sustain the character of *Christian ministers* had ever discovered the same spirit. This is very awful! But whatever we may think here, and whatever character we may sustain, it will be found at last that "whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father!"

1. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, he can have no regard to the *authority of God as a Lawgiver*, seeing it was this that he came into the world to maintain. When devils had cast off God's yoke as grievous, and practically declared him a tyrant; and men had followed their example, judging it too mean a thing, it seems, for ever to be so kept under rule; then the Son of God came down, and, in the presence of these revolters, was subject to the very law which they had discarded. Though he was under no natural obligation to come under the law, yet, that he might show how worthy he thought it of being obeyed, and thus wipe off the foul reproach, "he learned obedience." Yea, that it might be seen how "easy" a yoke it was, and thence the unreasonableness and wickedness of their revolt, he declared, whatever others might think, it was his "meat to do the will of his Father!" If any man, therefore, love not the Lord Jesus Christ, he cannot love the law of God, but must be of Satan's mind, accounting it a severe law, and obedience to it slavery; and thus he must be an enemy to God.

2. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, he can have no regard to the honour of God's *justice* being secured. If we had a proper regard to the justice of God, we could not bear the thought of salvation itself being erected upon its ruins. To desire such a thing would be nothing less than desiring to depose the King of the universe; *for justice and judgment are the basis of his throne*. If a fallen creature loved God, and could see no way for his own salvation but what must be at the expense of truth and equity, his soul must be filled with inexpressible distress. If the way of salvation by Jesus Christ were then to be preached to him—a way wherein, through his glorious sacrifice, God could be just, and the justifier of him that believed in Jesus—how would his spirit revive within him! With what joy of heart would he acquiesce in a plan wherein mercy and truth could meet together! The more he loved God, the more he would love Him who out of love to equity invited the sword of vengeance to plunge itself in his heart, saying, "*Father, glorify thy name!*" But if Christ and his way of salvation have no charms in our eyes—if we would barely like

to be justified, (that is, freed from condemnation,) but care not how; and think, as to God being just therein, he must see to that—is it not evident that we have no love to God, truth or righteousness?

3. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, he gives proof that God's grand *enemy being defeated*, and all his *counsels turned into foolishness*, affords him no pleasure; and consequently he can be no friend of God, but an enemy. If we love our prince, we shall rejoice at his enemies being overthrown, and admire that noble commander who, by hazarding his life in the high places of the field, should put them to confusion. If any monster had been so unfeeling, in the day when David slew Goliath and saved Israel, as to have had no love to the young hero, would he not have been deemed an enemy to his king and country, and suspected of being on the side of the Philistines? Now, as the Lord Jesus Christ entered the field, and with his own arm spoiled principalities and powers, broke the serpent's head, routed his forces, and ruined his scheme, if we love not him, whatever we may pretend, we must be enemies to God, and on the side of Satan.

4. In short, if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, he must be an enemy to all *moral excellence*; for of this he was a perfect model, both living and dying. God himself hath borne witness of him that "he loved righteousness, and hated iniquity." He lived to set forth the amiableness of the one, and died that God in him might show his abhorrence of the other. He lived and died that God's character in saving sinners might be untainted with moral turpitude. It may well therefore be said of him—"The *upright love thee!*" Christ is the *sum and centre of all excellence*. Perhaps we cannot form a better idea of him than as an assemblage of all goodness, a Being in whom all excellences meet. To have no love to him, then, is to have no love to moral excellence, and so to be an enemy to all good. Such a character surely deserves to be anathematized from God and all holy beings!

II. He that loves not the Lord Jesus Christ must be AN ENEMY TO MANKIND. Perhaps it might be asked, Cannot people be possessed of *humanity* without being the subjects of Christianity? It is answered, No, not in the full extent of that term. It is not denied but that people may wish well to one another's temporal interests—may wish to promote their health, and wealth, and reputation—may live in friendship with mankind, and be of a compassionate spirit to the poor—and may have no design in what they do to destroy their souls. But all this is no more than an over-indulgent parent may feel, who yet *interpretatively*, by sparing the rod, is said to *hate* his son; and it is common to say, in such cases, the parent was the child's *enemy*. Yea, it is very little, if any thing, more than thieves and robbers may exercise towards their comrades. Here is one of that character, for instance, draws a young man into his practices: he has no *intention* to bring him to the gallows, or himself either; and he may wish his health and prosperity, and pity and relieve him in distress. All this is good; but could it appear from this that he was not his *enemy* in setting him against his own interests, and seducing him away from his best friends? Is he not his *enemy*? But to come nearer to the point—

The Lord Jesus Christ is the best Friend to mankind that ever existed: if therefore any man bear *true* love to the souls of men, and seek their real welfare, it is impossible but that he should love the Lord Jesus Christ. We should deem him an enemy to mankind, who, if a skilful and generous physician came into our parts and healed all gratis who applied to him, should endeavour to prejudice the minds of people against him. An enemy to *Joseph*, who was the saviour of Egypt and the adjacent countries, would



have been deemed an enemy to mankind. But what were these? Christ has healed the tremendous breach between God and man, has rescued millions and millions from eternal ruin, and is still "able and willing to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by him." If any man therefore love not the Lord Jesus Christ, surely he deserves, as an enemy to the public good, to be excommunicated from the society of the blessed.

But may there not be a *neutrality* exercised in this affair? If some do not love Christ, does it follow that such are his *enemies*? Yes, it does. This is a cause wherein the idea of neutrality is inadmissible and impossible. They that are not *with* him are declared to be *against* him.

III. He that loves not the Lord Jesus Christ must be AN ENEMY TO HIMSELF.—To be an enemy to Christ is to be guilty of the most awful kind of suicide. "All they that hate him" are said to "love death." Christ is the only door of hope for any lost sinner: to hate him, therefore, is to hate ourselves. Had *Naaman* continued to despise the waters of Jordan, people would have thought that he had no love for himself. If a company of wretches who had escaped a shipwreck were in an open boat at sea, and if, on the appearance of a friendly vessel bearing down upon them, they were so infatuated that, instead of imploring assistance, they should treat it with every mark of indignity and contempt, we should say, *they love death*—they deserve to perish. If the power of Christ's *anger* be considered, it will amount to the same thing. For a man to rouse a Lion would seem as if he were weary of his life: much more to provoke the lion of the tribe of Judah. Of him it may well be said, "Who shall rouse him up?"

If a person then be an enemy to God, to mankind, and to himself, surely it is but right and fit he should be excommunicated from the society of God, and all holy beings, as an enemy to being in general. Surely he that loves not God ought to be accursed from God; he that loves not mankind ought to be banished, to take his lot among devils, as we should banish a murderer from the society of men; and he that loves not himself, but seeks his own ruin, ought to find it.

Upon the whole, if the foregoing thoughts be just, then that distinction has been made without ground, that sinners will not be punished for their not loving the Lord Jesus Christ, but only for *the breach of God's law*; as if the want of love to Christ were not a breach of the law. So far from this, it is such a breach of it as perhaps cannot be equalled by any other case whatever. It is at once a breach of the *whole law*, and that in the highest degree. What doth the law require, but *love to God, love to our neighbour, and love to ourselves*? These are the whole of what is included in that summary given of it by our Lord; and these we have seen are all broken, and that in the highest degree, in the want of love to Christ.

Oh how is it that we are not all excommunicated and accursed of God? Are we better than others? No, in nowise. God might justly have banished us from the abodes of the blessed. It is all of grace, free, sovereign, and great grace, if we are brought to love him, and so escape the awful curse; and for this we can never be sufficiently thankful.

## XLVII.

## FELLOWSHIP OF GOD'S PEOPLE IN EVIL TIMES.

“Then they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels: and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.”—Mal. iii, 16, 17.

WE often hear people complain of the times, and of the low state of religion; but good men will be good men in the worst of times, and that which others make an excuse will to them furnish a motive to speak often one to another. In the Jewish worship, all who were of Abraham's seed mingled together; yet even then the godly found one another out: “I am a companion of all those that fear God.”

I. NOTICE THE CHARACTER OF THESE TIMES. The prophet Malachi lived some time after Nehemiah, when the Jews were become very degenerate. 1. Great degeneracy among the *priests*—sordid despisers of religion. God speaks of what a true priest should be, but charges them with the reverse, chap. ii. 5—8. The consequence was, as might be expected, they were despised by the people. 2. Great degeneracy among the common people—profane towards God, and treacherous towards one another—frequent divorces for trivial causes, yet full of excuses. 3. Even the professed worshippers of God had a great deal of hypocrisy. 4. All these things put together proved a stumbling-block to people in general. Wicked men were reckoned happy and promoted, and providence seemed to favour them; hence infidelity and atheism abounded: yet even “THEN they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another.”

II. OBSERVE THE CHARACTER AND CONDUCT OF THE GODLY IN THESE TIMES. I. They are characterized as fearing the Lord. The phrase may be more expressive of the Old Testament than the New; but it is characteristic of good men under any dispensation. It denotes that filial reverence of God's name, and fear of offending or dishonouring him, which a truly good man possesses. 2. They are described as keeping up a close communion with one another. The world was alive, and they were alive. The seed of the serpent leagued, and the seed of the woman communed together. You may be sure their conversation was edifying, or it would not have been recorded. They might have occasion to reprove, to admonish, to counsel, to exhort, to encourage, to instruct. Such a state of things is necessary, especially in evil times. The more wicked the world, the more need of Christian fellowship. 3. Their doing this is called thinking upon God's name. Thinking here is not opposed to *speaking*, (for they that speak are the same persons as those who think,) but to *forgetting*. While others cared not for God's name, their thoughts were occupied about it. God's interest lay near their hearts; they grieved for its dishonour, and concerted plans for its promotion. If we love his name, it will occupy our thoughts.

III. THE FAVOURABLE NOTICE TAKEN OF THIS CONDUCT. It seems they were retired from the notice of the multitude; perhaps like the disciples, for fear of the Jews. They might be apprehensive lest any should hearken and hear them. One, however, did so, and took down their conversation too, not literally, for God needs no book but his own mind. This will be brought out at judgment, Matt. xxv. They that think of him here will be remembered by him there, and when they have forgotten it. “They shall be mine in that day.” That day shall be a day of general destruction, like

that of a tempest to shipping, and then nothing is spared but the most valuable things or persons, as jewels. Cities, nations, sea, land, heaven, earth, all will be one general wreck; or, lest this should not be sufficiently strong, he will spare them as a man spareth his son—as *his own son*, whose life is bound up with his own.

Which of these characters is ours?

Will our conversation bear writing in a book?

## XLVIII.

### PUBLIC WORSHIP.

“Bless ye God in the congregations, even the Lord, from the fountain of Israel. There is little Benjamin with their ruler, the princes of Judah and their council, the princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali. Thy God hath commanded thy strength: strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us.”—Psal. lxxviii. 26—28.

THIS Psalm was sung, it is probable, on the removal of the ark into the city of David, Numb. x. It was now that the ark had rest, and the tribes assembled three times a year at Jerusalem, the place that God had chosen.

The text is a lively description of their worship.

I. OFFER A FEW REMARKS BY WAY OF EXPOUNDING THE PASSAGE. 1. Israel had their lesser congregations in ordinary every sabbath day, and their national ones three times a year. Their business in all was to *bless God*. 2. This business was to be carried on by *all Israel*, beginning at the fountain-head, and proceeding through all its streams. God had blessed Israel; let Israel bless God. 3. All the tribes are supposed to be present; four are mentioned in the name of the whole as inhabiting the confines of the land. Their union was a source of joy; they had been divided by civil wars, but now they are met together. 4. Those tribes which are named had each something particular attending it. Little Benjamin (see Judg. xxi.) had nearly been a tribe lacking in Israel, but now appears with its ruler. Judah had been at war with Benjamin: Saul was a Benjamite; David was of Judah: yet they happily lost their antipathies in the worship of God. Zebulun and Naphtali were distant tribes, yet they were there! dark too—yet there. 5. The princes and the people were all together. 6. They were supposed to be strong, but were reminded that what they had of strength was of God’s commanding. Their union and success, as well as that degree of righteousness among them which exalted the nation, was of God. 7. They are not so strong but that they need strengthening, and are directed to pray as well as praise. “Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us.”

II. APPLY THE SUBJECT. Two things are here exemplified, namely, diligence and brotherly union; and three things recommended, namely, united praise—united acknowledgment that, for what they are, they are indebted to God—and united prayer for future mercies. Each of these affords a rule for us.

1. The worship of God must be attended with *diligence*. There are the princes of Zebulun and Naphtali. They had to travel about 200 miles three times a year, thither and back again, that is, 1200 in a year, twenty-four miles a week. Those who neglect the worship of God for little difficulties show that their heart is not in it; and when they do attend, cannot expect to profit: “they have snuffed at it.” Those whose hearts are in it

often reap great advantage. God blessed the Israelites in their journeys, as well as when there, Psal. lxxiv. 6, "the rain filleth the pools;" and so Christians. There is a peculiar promise to those that seek him *early*.

2. The worship of God must be attended to with *brotherly love*. All the tribes must go up together. It is a kind law that enjoins *social* worship; we need each other to stimulate. "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together." God has made us so that we shall be greatly influenced by each other, both to good and evil. It greatly concerns us to cultivate such a spirit; to this end we must cherish an affectionate behaviour in our common intercourse—bear, forbear, and forgive; and whatever differences we may have, not suffer them to hinder our worship. The tribes, as we have seen, had their differences, yet they were there. When all Israel met at Hebron to anoint David king, what should we have said if some had kept away because others went?

3. Our business, when assembled, must be to *bless God* in our congregations; and a pleasant work this is. Israel had reasons, and great reasons—and Christians more. Thank him for his unspeakable gift—bless him for the means of grace and the hopes of glory. Bless him—he "healeth all thy diseases," &c., Psal. ciii. This is an employment that fits for heaven. The tears of a mourner in God's house were supposed to defile his altar. We may mourn for *sin*; but a fretful, discontented, and unthankful spirit defiles God's altar still.

4. Another part of our business is to unite in acknowledging that, whatever we are, we owe it to God alone: "Thy God hath commanded thy strength." We possess a degree of strength both individually and socially. Art thou strong in faith, in hope, in zeal? It is in Him thou art strong. Are we strong as a society? It is God that increased us with men like a flock; it is he that keeps us in union, gives us success, &c.

5. Another part of our business must be to unite in prayer for future mercies. We are not so strong, either as individuals or societies, but that there is room for increase, and this is the proper object of prayer. God has wrought a great work for us in regeneration. God has wrought much for us as a church in giving us increase, respect, and room in the earth. Pray that each may be increased; or, in the words of the text, "Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us."

Are there none who are strangers to all this?

## XLIX.

### GREAT SINNERS ENCOURAGED TO RETURN TO GOD.

"But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul."—Deut. iv. 29.

THERE is a mixture of mercy and judgment in all the sacred writings. The New Testament contains some awful threatenings. "He that believeth not shall be damned."—"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha." On the other hand, the law of Moses is interspersed with mercy. As the whole passage has immediate respect to Israel, it doubtless refers to their sins, their captivity and troubles, and to God's great mercy to them in remembrance of the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And as mention is made of "the latter days," it seems

to be not merely an encouragement to them to return, but a prophecy which has yet to be accomplished. Yes, when the Spirit of grace and supplication is poured out upon them, it shall be fulfilled.

But though it may specially refer to Israel, it is no less applicable to us Gentiles. We are sinners, and have brought innumerable miseries on ourselves, and there is but one refuge for us to seek to—and if we seek him with all our heart and soul, we shall find mercy; for the Lord our God is a merciful God.

I. NOTICE A FEW CASES TO WHICH THIS LANGUAGE APPLIES.—The description given of an impenitent people is—“No man spoke aright, saying, What have I done?” Were we to institute such an inquiry, and answer according to truth, what would the answer be?

1. One would say, I have gone great lengths in sin: I lived without restraint; I was a drunkard, a blasphemer, an injurious person to all I had to do with; and now God has brought me into troubles—I am hated and despised by my relations and neighbours—I cannot live long, and yet fear to die. Yet, “if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.”

2. Another says, I was born of religious parents; I was long weary of religion, and wished to be free. At length my father died, and I gave myself up to evil; and now my troubles are come upon me, no one respects me, nor careth for my soul; I was undutiful to my parents, and now my children are so to me. But, “if from thence,” &c.

3. Another may say, My conduct has been correct and orderly, so as to obtain the approbation of those about me; but I have valued myself upon it, have lived without God, and never sought mercy as a guilty creature; I have lived a Pharisee; and now I feel the want of something in which to appear before God. Well, “if from thence,” &c.

4. Another—I have made a profession of religion and thought well of my state, and talked to others, and was thought well of by others; but I indulged first in little and secret sins, and after this they became greater and more exposed; and now I am an outcast—every one shuns me. Yet, “if from thence,” &c.

5. Though I have not lost my character, yet I have lost my peace of mind; I have not walked with God, and God seems to have departed from me; I cannot pray, nor read, nor hear to profit; I can enjoy no pleasure in the world nor in religion; I feel myself a backslider in heart, and God has filled me with my own ways. But, “if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.”

II. OBSERVE THE GROUNDS ON WHICH THE ENCOURAGEMENT RESTS.

1. The merciful character of God. Isa. lv. 7, “Let the wicked forsake his ways,” &c. No sins are so great or numerous but that he can forgive them: “if—with all thy heart,” &c.

2. The covenant which God made with the fathers, and much more with his Son. There is this difference between uncovenanted and covenanted mercy; the one has no promises, the other has many. God has pledged his perfections, that whosoever believeth in him shall be saved. No ground therefore to despair; whatever thy condition, how far soever from God, return to him through his dear Son, and you will obtain mercy.

## L.

## CONSOLATION TO THE AFFLICTED.

“I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.”—John xiv. 2—4.

If our Saviour had been going to some unknown place, where we must not follow him, we might well be unhappy; but “whither I go ye know.” It is true we know nothing of an hereafter beyond what God in his word hath told us; but those lively oracles are a light in a dark place, whose cheering beams pierce the otherwise impervious gloom of futurity. When a dying heathen was asked whither he was going, he replied, O my friends, we know nothing of an hereafter! Such also must have been our answer, but for the glorious gospel of the blessed God. As it is, we know whither our Redeemer is gone. He is gone to his Father, and to our Father; to his God, and to our God. He is gone to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, to the innumerable company of angels, to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to God the Judge of all. Whither he is gone we know, for we have had a foretaste of the bliss. As believers we also are already come to Mount Zion. The church below and the church above are only different branches of the same family, so that he who is come to one is come to the other.

But how are we to follow him, unless we “know the way?” If he “come and receive us,” he will be our guide. And this is not all: “the way we know.” Thomas thought he knew not whither his Lord was going, nor the way that led to him; yet he knew his Lord, and believed in him as the Son of God and the Saviour of sinners. Jesus therefore answered him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life;” knowing me, you know the way to the heavenly world. Yes, we not only know whither our Saviour is gone, but the way that leads to him. The doctrine of the cross, as dear Pearce observed, is the only religion for a dying sinner.

If an affectionate father had resolved to remove to a distant country, he might not take his family with him in the first instance, but might choose to go by himself, to encounter and remove the chief difficulties in the way, and make ready a habitation to receive them. Such in effect was the conduct of our Saviour. “I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.” His passage through the territories of death was attended with the most dreadful of all conflicts; but, having overcome, it renders ours an easy one. Death to us is Jesus “coming to receive us to himself.”

1. The presence of a beloved object is the grand preparative of any place, and that which gives it its principal charm. Such is the preparation of a place in the future world for us. Jesus is there, and that is quite enough. If any thing will operate as a magnet to attract us from earth to heaven, it is the consideration of being “where Jesus sitteth at the right hand of God.” Think what an accession of joy his triumphant entrance must have occasioned through all the heavenly regions, and what a source of uninterrupted bliss his presence affords. What would some societies be without certain interesting characters, which are in effect the life of them? And what would heaven be without Christ? The zest of all its bliss consists in *his* being there, and this is urged as the grand motive to “setting our affections on things above,” Col. iii. 1, 2.

2. There also he will gather together the whole family of heaven and earth. His redemption brings multitudes to glory, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and every one that enters adds to the enjoyment. In order to connect us together in the closest bonds of affection, God has so ordained, that both in this world and that which is to come our blessedness should be bound up with that of each other; in seeing the good of his chosen, rejoicing in the gladness of his nation, and glorying with his inheritance. Hence it follows that every accession to the heavenly world affords an influx to the enjoyment of its inhabitants. Every one that goes before may be said to contribute to the preparing of the place for them which follow after. The pure river of the water of life has its origin in the throne of God and of the Lamb; but in its progress it passes through various mediums, which swell its streams, and render it more and more delectable. From the entrance of righteous Abel into the new Jerusalem, to this day, it has been rising higher and higher, and will continue to do so till all the nations of the saved are gathered together.

3. Christ prepares a place for us, in superintending the concerns of the universe, and causing all events to work together and produce the highest ultimate good. Glory awaits the righteous immediately upon their departure from the body, but a much greater glory is in reserve. Innumerable events in the system of providence must remain inexplicable, till the mystery of God be finished. It is impossible for spectators to comprehend the use of all the parts of a complicate machine, till it is constructed and put into motion. And as our Forerunner is now preparing the scenery of this grand exhibition, and hastening it to its desired issue, it is thus that he is preparing a place for us.

Hence we are encouraged to be looking for, and hastening unto, the coming of the day of God, and directed to consider it as the period when we shall be fully "satisfied." How solemn, and yet how sweet, is the description of it! "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first." A "shout" perhaps denotes the universal joy of heaven, for the arrival of the day when the war is terminated in victory, and the last enemy is destroyed. The blowing of a "trumpet" may probably allude to that of the jubilee, on which the prison doors were thrown open, and the captives set at liberty. Such were the consolations presented to the Thessalonians, on the death of their Christian friends.

Our Lord did not absolutely forbid his apostles to weep at his departure; he himself wept at the grave of Lazarus; but he dissuaded them from *excessive* grief. "Let not your heart be troubled." I think I never felt what may be called heart trouble, or deep distress, for the loss of any person, however near to me, whose death I considered merely as a removal to the church above. The words of our Saviour are here applicable: "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I go to the Father; for my Father is greater than I." That is, the glory I go to possess with my Father is greater than any thing I could inherit upon earth; and therefore, if ye loved me, and your love operated in a proper way, you would rather be glad for my sake than sorry for your own.

## II.

## COVETOUSNESS.

“And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness; for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.”—Luke xii. 15.

WHEN our Lord was preaching on subjects of eternal importance, a certain young man interrupted him, requesting him to speak to his brother to divide the inheritance with him. It seems as if his father had lately died, and that his brother could not be induced to do him justice in the division of the estate. He might possibly have heard of some such case as that of Zaccheus; in which Jesus, by a few words speaking, had rendered a selfish man both just and generous. Jesus, however, instead of complying with his wishes, disclaims having any thing to do in such matters; and warns others, from his example, to “take heed and beware of covetousness.”

Allowing the propriety of our Lord’s declining to be a judge in such matters, as not comporting with the spiritual nature of his kingdom, yet how was it that he should take occasion hence to warn his followers against the sin of covetousness? There is nothing in the story that gives us to suppose that the young man coveted what was not his own. Wherein then consisted his sin? Let us suppose a person under a mortal disease, who, seeing an eminent physician passing by him, instead of telling him his case, should request him to settle a dispute in his family! What should we say? If any thing, it would be to this effect:—Settle those matters as you can; in applying to the physician, treat him in character, and have regard to your life.—For a sinner to come to the Saviour on a mere secular business, and this while his soul was in a perishing condition, must prove his heart to be set supremely on this world, and his regard to Christ to be only a wish to render him subservient to his temporal interest.

Here then we perceive the species of covetousness that our Lord meant to censure. It is not that which breaks out in acts of robbery, theft, or oppression—not that which withholds the hire of the labourer, or studies the arts of fraud—it is not any thing, in short, which respects the conduct of man to man; but that which immediately relates to God, withholding the heart from him, and giving it to the world.

Such is the idea conveyed by the parable of the rich fool, which is here introduced by our Lord in illustration of the subject. He is not accused of any thing injurious to those about him; his “grounds brought forth plentifully;” and who can blame him for this? All that he proposed was, by the bounty of Providence on his labours, to accumulate a fortune, and then to spend it on himself. And what harm (most men will ask) was there in this? Truly, it is the general opinion of mankind that this is all fair and right. If a man regard not God, but himself only, so long as he acts well towards them, he will not only be acquitted, but applauded at their tribunal: “Men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself.” However, this is not the doctrine of Christ. In his account, it is not the miser only that is covetous, but he who sets his heart upon the world, rather than God, even though he lays out a part of his substance in building and other accommodations; and proposes, when he has got things a little in order, to “eat, drink, and be merry” with the surplus.

In the case of the young man who came to Christ on a secular errand, we see that things in themselves lawful, by being pursued out of place and out of season, may become sinful. It is lawful at proper seasons and in



subordination to higher objects to follow our worldly affairs; but if we go to the house of God with this end in view, it is profaning it. The same is true if while we are there our thoughts are employed in forming plans and schemes for the week, by which we may promote our temporal interest. Such things are: nor is it confined to the house of God. Even when upon our knees, the busy mind will wander after this and that pursuit, till we have in a manner forgotten where we are! Nor does the evil of such things consist merely in a few volatile wandering thoughts, but in that of which they are an indication; namely, a mind cleaving to the earth instead of ascending to God. In the case of this young man, we may also see the danger of regarding Christ and religion in only a secondary or subordinate manner, while the world is treated as supreme. Religion may have changed a bad husband into a good one, or induced a customer to leave off his expensive habits, and to pay his bills with punctuality and promptitude, and as such you may respect it; but such respect will not be approved of Christ. If we have any thing to do with him, it must be in his proper character of Lord and Saviour. To attempt to render his religion subservient to worldly interest, is to lean upon him while you are worshipping in the temple of mammon.

It was not without cause that our Saviour said, on this occasion, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness!" Truly, this is a sin which presents itself under so many specious forms and names, which so insensibly insinuates itself on almost all occasions, and which may be indulged with so little danger of losing our good name among men, that without much prayer and watchfulness against it, and much communion with Christ, there is no hope of overcoming it.

In observing my own mind, and the behaviour of my acquaintance, I see matter for both pleasure and pain. I see a goodly number of professing Christians who appear to me to live "not unto themselves, but unto him that died for them and rose again." I see some of this description into whose hands God is pouring plenty, and who, though continually imparting, still increase. The poor people of Glasgow used to say of a late great and good man in that city, "David Dale gives his money by sho'elsful, and God Almighty sho'els it back again." Characters like-minded still live; and long may they live and be blessings to the world! They afford a striking contrast to those described by David: "Let them be as grass upon the housetop, which withereth before it groweth up; wherewith the mower filleth not his hand, nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom; neither do they that go by say, The blessing of the Lord be upon you!—we bless you in the name of the Lord!"

Nor is it in men of opulence only that this grace shines! I see men who have learned to be economical in order to be generous; men whose *deep poverty abounds to the riches of their liberality!* This is to "cast our bread upon the waters;" and this may be more in the esteem of Christ than the most splendid donations of those who, in giving, exercise no self-denial.

But I see, on the other hand, not only sordid misers, but men who profess godliness, and who would be thought liberal, full of anxiety about appearance. They *must* dress, visit, and show away in their circle. The consequence is, they have nothing to spare in the way of doing good; or if they give a little, it is chiefly to save appearances. It may be thought this belongs to vanity rather than covetousness; it is, however, living to ourselves rather than God; and this is the covetousness against which our Saviour warns us.

There are three descriptions of men, each of which, if I mistake not, has some peculiar temptations to this sin; and who, if destitute of grace, are likely to be carried away by it; these are the prosperous, the aged, and the professor of religion.

With respect to the *prosperous*, it is a fact which falls under common observation, that men who while possessing little were compassionate and willing to communicate, when they come to rise in the world, are hard-hearted, and part with their money with great reluctance. This is not difficult to be accounted for. While necessity calls for nearly the whole of what is received, there is no room for a plan of accumulation; but when money flows in, and rises beyond the mark of immediate want, and the advantages of it begin to be felt, a saving system is adopted, and the mind is employed in calculating the number of years necessary to the arrival of such and such a point; and when this comes to be the case, every application for benevolence strikes a damp upon the spirits, as interfering with the system, and lengthening the time ere it will reach the proposed point. Hence arises the force of the caution, "If riches increase, set not your heart upon them." Hence also we perceive the folly and self-deception of thinking—If we had such a one's estate, what great things we should do? or if we should live to possess so and so, then how charitable we will be! All such thoughts are framed to excuse the neglect of present duty, and are as if a person engaged in a race should desire, in order to make swifter progress, to have his feet laden with thick clay.

With respect to the *aged*, it is a fact which also falls under common observation, that persons as they get older get more covetous. This observation, however, is not universally true. There is a goodly number of men who bring forth other "fruits in old age;" or who, as they draw nearer to heaven, become more heavenly-minded. The truth seems to be, that as every principle tends to maturity, those who have been covetous in their younger years, provided there be no change of heart, will be more covetous in old age. The stream of depravity in early life had several channels,—such as the lust of the flesh and the pride of life, and these would of course diminish the strength of avarice; but in the last stages of life those channels are in a manner stopped by the decay of the natural powers, and the whole current flows in one direction. Hence we perceive many an old wealthy churl living to himself, and repelling every application for a Divine or benevolent object: "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?"

When I see such a spirit in aged people, recollecting that every principle, as was said, tends to maturity, I cannot help considering it as a strong indication that they have all their lives been under the dominion of this vice, only that it has been checked by a regard to appearances, and it may be by other vices; and that they are now fast ripening for destruction.

But in what way, it will be asked, are the third class, namely, *professors of religion*, subject to this sin, more than other men? As a fact, it has long impressed my mind, and I conceive it is not difficult to be accounted for. Supposing a person to be merely a professor, whatever impedes his evil propensity in all directions but one, will be certain to strengthen it in respect of that one. This is exactly the case as to a profession of religion. If you would be thought a Christian, you must not be a drunkard, nor a debauchee, nor a gamester, nor a liar, nor a blasphemer, nor an injurious person; but you may love the world more than God; for this, being confined to things between God and your own conscience, does not fall under human cognizance; or though it may affect your liberality to men, yet, as the discipline of the New Testament leaves every man to judge of his own ability, and to give what he gives, *not as it were of necessity, but willingly,*

you may here live undetected, and with a little management unsuspected, by your brethren. Of this the case of Judas Iscariot will furnish you with a notable example!

In this view, perhaps, Dissenters from the Established Church may be more in danger of indulging in covetousness than in most other evils. They are shut out from things which are principally adapted to feed other dispositions as well as this; such as promotion in the church, in the army, and in the navy. The chief openings for them are found in manufactures, trade, and husbandry; openings which it is certainly very lawful for them to embrace, but which, in case of success attending them, are often great temptations to covetousness.

I close with two remarks:—First, That the danger of falling into covetousness is not confined to the mere professor: a Christian may be greatly impeded by it in his way to heaven, and like Lot, whose heart was seduced by the well-watered plains of Sodom, may die under a cloud. Lastly, That the most effectual preservative from this sin, as well as others, is believingly to converse with the doctrine of the cross. By this the world was crucified to the apostle, and he unto the world.

## LII.

## MYSTERIOUS NATURE OF MAN.

“I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”—Psal. cxxxix. 14.

THE term “fearful” is sometimes to be taken subjectively, for our being possessed of fear. In this sense it signifies the same as timid. Thus the prophet was directed to say to them that were of a “fearful heart, Be strong.” At other times it is taken objectively, for that property in an object the contemplation of which excites fear in the beholder. Thus it is said of God that he is “fearful in praises,” and that it is a “fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” In this sense it is manifestly to be understood in the passage now under consideration. The human frame is so admirably constructed, so delicately combined, and so much in danger of being dissolved by innumerable causes, that the more we think of it, the more we tremble, and wonder at our own continued existence.

“How poor, how rich, how abject, how august,  
How complicate, how wonderful is man!  
How passing wonder He who made him such,  
Who mingled in our make such strange extremes  
Of different natures, marvellously mixed!  
Helpless immortal, insect infinite,  
A worm, a god—I tremble at myself!”

To do justice to the subject, it would be necessary to be well acquainted with anatomy. I have no doubt that a thorough examination of that “substance which God hath curiously wrought,” verse 15, would furnish abundant evidence of the justness of the psalmist’s words; and even those things which are manifest to common observation may be sufficient for this purpose. In general, it is observable that the human frame abounds with avenues at which enter every thing conducive to preservation and comfort, and every thing that can excite alarm. Perhaps there is not one of these avenues but what may become an inlet to death, nor one of the blessings of life but what may be the means of accomplishing it. We live by inha-

lation, but we also die by it. Diseases and death, in innumerable forms, are conveyed by the very air we breathe. God hath given us a relish for divers aliments, and rendered them necessary to our subsistence; yet, from the abuse of them, what a train of disorders and premature deaths are found amongst men! And where there is no abuse, a single delicious morsel may, by the evil design of another, or even by mere accident, convey poison through all our veins, and in one hour reduce the most athletic frame to a corpse.

The elements of fire and water, without which we could not subsist, contain properties which in a few moments would be able to destroy us; nor can the utmost circumspection at all times preserve us from their destructive power. A single stroke on the head may divest us of reason or of life. A wound or a bruise of the spine may instantly deprive the lower extremities of all sensation. If the vital parts be injured, so as to suspend the performance of their mysterious functions, how soon is the constitution broken up! By means of the circulation of the blood, how easily and suddenly are deadly substances diffused throughout the frame! Through this fearful medium, not only the taint of vice rankles in the veins of the debauchee, but virtue itself may destroy us. The putridity of a morbid subject has been imparted to the very hand stretched out to save it. The poisoned arrow, the envenomed dart, the hydrophobic saliva, derive from hence their fearful efficacy. Even the pores of the skin, necessary as they are to life, may be the means of death. Not only are poisonous substances hereby admitted, but, when obstructed by surrounding damps, the noxious humours of the body, instead of being emitted, are retained in the system, and become productive of numerous diseases, always afflictive, and often fatal to life.

From these few instances we may learn our absolute dependence upon Divine preservation. So numerous are the avenues at which death may enter, that no human foresight can possibly render us secure for a single moment; and even those dangers which may in a measure be avoided require for this purpose the regular exercise of reason; but reason itself depends upon a variety of minute causes, over which we have no control. Instead of wondering at the number of premature deaths that are constantly witnessed, there is far greater reason to wonder that there are no more, and that any of us survive to seventy or eighty years of age.

“Our life contains a thousand springs,  
And dies if one be gone :  
Strange that a harp of thousand strings  
Should keep in tune so long.”

Assuredly, it can be ascribed to nothing short of the mighty power and all-pervading providence of God. A proper sense of this truth, while it would prevent us from presumptuously exposing ourselves to unnecessary injury, would induce us to commit ourselves to the Divine protection in every danger which duty calls us to encounter.

Nor is this all. If we are “fearfully made” as to our animal frame, it will be found that we are much more so considered as moral and accountable beings. In what relates to our animal nature, we are in most instances constructed like other animals; but in what relates to us as moral agents, we stand distinguished from all the lower creation. We are made for eternity. The present life is only the introductory part of our existence. It is that however which stamps a character on all that follows. How fearful is our situation! What innumerable influences is the mind exposed to from the temptations which surround us! Not more dangerous to the body is the pestilence that walketh in darkness than these are to the soul.

Such is the construction of our nature, that the very word of life, if heard without regard, becomes a savour of death unto death. What consequences hang upon the small and apparently trifling beginnings of evil! A wicked thought may issue in a wicked purpose, this purpose in a wicked action, this action in a course of conduct, this course may draw into its vortex millions of our fellow creatures, and terminate in perdition, both to ourselves and them. The whole of this process was exemplified in the case of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. When placed over the ten tribes, he first *said in his heart*, "If this people go up to sacrifice at Jerusalem, their hearts will return to Rehoboam; and thus shall the kingdom return to the house of David," 1 Kings xii. 26—30. On this he took counsel, and made the calves of Dan and Beth-el. This engaged him in a course of wickedness from which no remonstrances could reclaim him. Nor was it confined to himself; for he "made all Israel to sin." The issue was, not only their destruction as a nation, but, to all appearance, the eternal ruin of himself, and great numbers of his followers. Such were the fruits of an evil thought!

O my soul, tremble at thyself! Tremble at the fearfulness of thy situation; and commit thine immortal all into His hands "who is able to keep thee from falling, and to present thee faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy."

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### LIII.

#### THE BROAD AND THE NARROW WAY.

"Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."—Matt. vii. 13, 14.

THE whole world are travellers: there is no rest for the sole of man's foot: the ways in which they walk are extremely various, yet all reducible to two:—"To heaven or hell we daily bend our course." These two are here described by their properties and end. The one is attended with things which are smooth and agreeable to the flesh; but the end is destruction: the other with things which are hard and disagreeable; but the end is everlasting life.

I. If you incline to the former of these ways, it has many things, it must be owned, to recommend it; particularly,

1. You have no *difficulty in your entrance upon it*: it is a *wide gate*; it just suits your depraved inclinations. As soon as the powers of your souls begin to act, they will incline that way; so of every particular evil course that you may take—it is easy to get into it: the gate of temptation is wide, and is set wide open to invite you; you are in ere you are aware. Evil habits are readily contracted; the transition from occasional to habitual indulgence is very short, and that of which you are scarcely sensible at the time.

2. You have also *full scope for your inclination in your progress*: "Broad is the way." 'Though there is but one way to heaven, and that a strait one; yet there are many ways to hell, out of which you may take your choice. The broad way admits of many divisions, and subdivisions. You may walk in the path of gross immorality; may swear and lie, or drink and commit

lewdness; or, if you covet a degree of reputation which does not comport with such a life, you may pursue a much more decent course in the indulgence of avarice or pride. You may be a mean sycophant, cringing to the great; or a haughty, overbearing oppressor to those who are beneath you; nay, you may be both these at the same time. You may revel with the vulgar, or banquet with the genteel, as circumstances and inclination may lead you. You may scoff at all religion; or, if that does not suit, you may be religious yourself. You may be righteous in your own eyes; or, if that does not accord with your creed, you may be an advocate for grace, and turn it, when you have done, into lasciviousness.

3. Moreover, you will be in *no want of company; for many go there*. Rich and poor, rude and learned: it is impossible you should be at a loss for agreeable society. You will have the majority on your side, and that with many is a great matter; yea, the majority in all the nations, cities, towns, and villages in the world. You will hardly go into any company or place but you will find fellow travellers to keep you in countenance . . . “but the end thereof is destruction!!”

II. If, on the other hand, you incline to the latter of these ways, I must direct you to count the cost: be assured it will be hard and disagreeable to the flesh. The difficulties which attend it are given as the reason why it is so little occupied.

1. If you incline to this way, there may be *great difficulties attending your entrance*; for “strait is the gate.” While you are under convictions, and your hearts are not subdued to the obedience of Christ, these difficulties will appear insurmountable. To escape the wrath to come, it will appear absolutely necessary that you should enter in: yet to forego all hope of mercy on the ground of your good deeds, or even of your prayers and penitential tears, and to sue for pardon as one of the chief of sinners, wholly for the sake of Jesus Christ, is hard work for a proud heart. If you enter in, it is also necessary that you give up all your former idols without a single reserve; but this also is hard work to a corrupt heart: these are things which make many people hesitate about religion for a long time, labouring under darkness of mind, and unable to find rest for their souls.—But, let me add, these difficulties exist only in your own mind: “ye are not straitened in God, but in your own bowels.” If you can be contented to accept of mercy as one of the chief of sinners, all will be easy. Come to Jesus as such, and you will find rest unto your soul; and if his name be precious unto you, his yoke also will be easy, and his burden light. Denying self, taking up the cross, and following him, will then be no hard service, but your very meat and drink. The way of salvation through his atoning blood will also be a source of joy unspeakable, and of peace which passeth all understanding; and you will be amazed at your former ignorance and aversion.

2. There may be *hard struggles attending your progress*; for “narrow is the way.” You may meet with contempt from the world, persecution from your connexions, and, if you be faithful, with many a hard speech, and hard measure, from loose professors; you may be annoyed by temptations from without, and confounded by strong struggles from within; old companions may invite you to turn back; the allurements of the world may be placed on the right hand and on the left, to induce you to turn aside; and, through the remaining corruption of your nature, you may be too apt at times to listen to their counsels: you may also expect to meet with things that will make your heart sink within you; despondency may lay fast hold of you; and the very hand of God be stretched out against you. Let me add, however, that this way is infinitely less rugged than that in which Jesus walked

to accomplish your salvation; and if your heart be with his heart, I need not add more to reconcile you to it.

3. In pursuing the narrow way, you may have *but little company*; for "few there be that find it." Compared with the ungodly, religious people are but as the gleanings of the vintage; and your lot may be cast in a part of the world where few of those few are to be found. You may reside in a village where no one cares for Christ, or in a family that calls not upon his name. In such circumstances you may be the object of derision, a man wondered at, and persecuted; and even hated by your nearest relations! But be of good cheer; though there be but few who will accompany you, yet those few are the excellent of the earth. You will also hold society with an invisible host of heavenly spirits that watch over you; a host so numerous, that more are they that are with you than they that are with your adversaries; and, what is more than all, the narrow way "leadeth unto life."

Thus life and death are set before thee; which wilt thou choose? Recollect that the *destruction* which awaits the ungodly is not a loss of being, but of well-being; it is the loss of all that is desirable, and an exposedness to all that is dreadful; the weeping of desolation, the wailing of despair, and the gnashing of teeth which attends the most intolerable anguish. Consider also that the *life* which awaits the godly is not mere being, but well-being; it is an entire freedom from evil and an eternal enjoyment of bliss, "which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and which hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive." It will also be heightened by the trials through which we pass to the possession of it.

If you enter the strait gate, and walk in the narrow way, an abundant entrance will be ministered unto you, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ; but if found pursuing the broad way, you shall hereafter strive to enter into that kingdom, and shall not be able.

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#### LIV.

#### HOPE IN THE LAST EXTREMITY.

"Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple."  
—Jonah ii. 4.

THE greater part of the writings of the prophets contain little history; but this book is an exception. It is a history of a prophecy against a city which at that time was the metropolis of the world. It affords a singular example of the influence which the true religion, as presented among the Israelites, had upon the surrounding nations. When we read of the idolatrous Gentiles, we are apt to think they were altogether sunk in ignorance, and without any means of knowing better except what were afforded by the light of nature. But in those early times God had a people, as he has now, who were witnesses for him, and whose testimony left a strong impression on the minds of mankind about them. If Jonah, when overtaken by the tempest, had been a heathen, and had committed a crime, the mariners might have been alarmed, concluding, from their general notions of an unseen providence, that vengeance had overtaken him; but when they were told that he was a Hebrew,—and feared Jehovah, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land, but had fled from his presence,—then they were "exceedingly afraid." They had heard, no doubt, of this God of gods, who was worshipped by the Hebrews, and trembled at his judgments. So

when Jonah entered into Nineveh, and threatened its overthrow, if he had been a heathen soothsayer, his message might have influenced a few; but government would doubtless have apprehended him, and either have punished him as a disturber of the public peace, or confined him as a madman; but finding him to be a prophet sent by Jehovah, the God of Israel, whose judgments upon Egypt and other nations had rung through the world, they were struck with amazement. The king rises from his throne, lays aside his robe, covers himself with sackcloth, sits in ashes, and causes a fast to be proclaimed, accompanied with an admonition for every one to turn from his evil way, saying, "Who can tell if God will repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" Great is the force of truth and true religion upon the conscience!

But let us observe more particularly the history of Jonah, in which we see an affecting example of human depravity, and of the mystery of Providence. God commands him to go and prophesy against Nineveh, a great city, north of Judea. He dislikes the errand; and, in downright rebellion, takes a ship for Tarshish, a sea-port of the Mediterranean, in nearly a southern direction. But whither can he flee from God's presence? Though suffered to take his course for a while, he is soon pursued. A tempest overtakes him. One would have thought his restless mind must have anticipated it, and been the first to interpret it; but, instead of this, all parties are alarmed before him;—he is asleep at the bottom of the ship. A guilty mind cannot be always on the rack of reflection; yet its repose is not peace, but the stupidity of horror and wretchedness. The rebuke of the ship-master seems scarcely to have awakened him. At length, however, the lot of God falls upon his guilty head; and now we have to witness a most humiliating sight—a prophet of the most high God arraigned at the bar of a company of heathen sailors! We should have said, Let it not be known unto the heathen!—He, if he could have prayed at all, would have said, Make me not a reproach to the foolish.—But God says, It shall be known. He knows how to vindicate the honour of his name, without having recourse to the little arts of concealment of which creatures commonly avail themselves. The whole must come out—his country, his religion, his character, his sin! And do the heathens reproach him? If they had, we could not have wondered; but it operates in a different way. God knows how to soften the hearts of men by that which we might expect would harden them; and things which appear to us injurious to his cause shall tend to establish it. They inquire of him what they shall do; and he pronounces his own doom. Humanity, notwithstanding, and the fear perhaps of incurring the displeasure of his God, struggle hard for his deliverance; but struggle in vain. He must be cast away, or they must all perish. No time is to be lost; they must come to a decision. Lifting up their eyes to heaven, they appeal to God for the painful necessity under which they acted; and then, taking up the unhappy man, they cast him into the sea! Reader, had you and I been spectators of this affecting scene, and in possession of our present views, we should probably have not only dropped a tear over the watery tomb of the prophet, but have exclaimed, "How unsearchable are God's judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Viewing the effect of all upon the mariners, we should have seen men, who till now were strangers to Jehovah, calling upon his name; we should have seen, perhaps, the hopeful conversion of some, and rejoiced in the "sacrifices and vows" which on this mysterious occasion were offered: but, what would have been a damp to our pleasure, we should have seen Jonah himself committed to the deep, prayerless, and, to all appearance, without a ray of hope! But "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" When the closing waves had parted him from human observation,



Divine Providence still follows him. He is swallowed by a "great fish," probably a shark.\* In this perilous situation his life and consciousness are preserved; and here he is brought to his right mind. Hence he who could not offer one petition while in the presence of the mariners "prays unto Jehovah his God." What were his prayers, and the workings of his mind, he recorded after his deliverance. A part of this record is contained in the sentence on which this address is founded: "Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple." It describes the crisis of his distress the moment he was sunk to the greatest despondency, bordering on utter despair; out of which he is recovered by the hope of Divine mercy.

"I said, I am cast out of thy sight." Did he mean that he was now beyond the reach of God's omniscience? No; though mortal eyes could follow him no further, he was well aware of his being naked to the eyes of Him with whom he had to do. His meaning was, I suppose, that he was cast out of God's favour; alluding to the practice of princes and great men, who admit their friends into their presence, but banish those who have offended them out of their sight. Thus the Divinely favoured Land of Promise is described as that on which "the eyes of the Lord were set, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year;" and thus the children of Israel, when they had for a long time offended God, are said to be removed by captivity out of his sight. Now Jonah had been favoured of God in several ways: As an Israelite, he had long enjoyed the means of grace, of which those of other nations had been destitute; but now he is deprived of them. No more shall I peruse the lively oracles of Jehovah! No more frequent his temple, in company with his people! No more join in the melody of Zion! Far from the holy abodes of hope and peace, I die alone! No fellow servant of God to attend me in my last hours! no eye to pity me, nor hand to help me! I die an outcast, an outcast of the heathen!—He had also been highly honoured in being a prophet. The Lord had employed him as an ambassador extraordinary; but having offended him, he appears now to be cast off. God, as if he should say, will employ me no more. In this shameful and painful manner ends my stewardship.—Finally, As a religious man, he had enjoyed communion with God, and cherished hopes of everlasting life; but now what can he think of himself, and of his prospects for eternity? If by this language he meant that all was over with him, for this world and that to come, it is no more than might be expected. Sin must needs cloud our evidences for heaven, and render our state doubtful. "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercies."

There is something in this language peculiarly awful. Of all the ills that can befall us, being cast out of God's sight is the most to be dreaded, because this is the course and sum of evil. As God's presence is heaven, to be cast out of it is hell. Deprived of his favour, what is life, even though we were possessed of every earthly comfort, and could insure it for a long series of years? What then must it be to one in the very article of dissolution? To live without the Divine favour is dreadful; but to die without it is much more so!

It is also observable how the punishment corresponds with the nature of the offence; and this we shall find to be a general character of the Divine administration. They that receive not the love of the truth are given up to believe a lie; deceivers are deceived; adulterers are cast into a bed, and those who have committed adultery with them; and they that have loved cursing, the curse shall come upon them, as oil into their bones. Thus

\* See Parkhurst's Greek Lexicon, on κητος.

Jonah fled from the presence of the Lord; and now his conscience forebodes the issue—"I am cast out of thy sight."

There are two other remarks which present themselves from this desponding sentence, of a more pleasing complexion. One is, that, happily for him, it was only *he that said* it. It was the punishment awarded by conscience at the time; but the awards of conscience are not final. They respect what ought to be, if we had our desert; but not always what shall be. Sovereign mercy reserves to itself the right of revising and reversing these decisions. If the Lord had said Amen, all had been over with Jonah; but "his thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways; as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his thoughts higher than our thoughts, and his ways than our ways."—"Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me;" but the Lord her God did not say so too! The other remark which offers is, the *piety* or *godliness* which appears even in the despondency of this good man. How different is the spirit of it from that of Cain! Future punishment is sometimes distinguished into a punishment of *loss* and a punishment of *sense*. The latter is the dread of the wicked. Could they but be exempted from positive misery, they would not be much concerned for the loss of God's favour; nor indeed at all, but as depriving them of natural enjoyment. But it is not thus with a good man. The loss of God's favour is, to him, the heaviest of all punishments. This was the distress of Jonah. One sees in him also, in his darkest state, a tenderness of sinning against God by being any otherwise accessory to his own death, than as owning what was his desert. Some men, if they had felt half his burden, would have plunged themselves into the sea; but he, humiliating as it must be, pronounces his own doom, and submits to be cast away by their hands!

But we have now arrived at the period of his dejection. Lo, when he was just giving up all for lost; nay, when he had actually pronounced his doom; when death had laid hold upon him, and he seemed already in his grave; a thought glances across his mind; a gleam of hope accompanies it: yet, before I die, "I will look again toward thy holy temple!" The thought proves a resurrection to his soul.

But let us observe what it was on which his hope at this affecting crisis caught hold. Was it the temple, the material building, to which he looked for relief? Surely not. An Israelite in name only might have indulged a superstitious confidence in the place; but Jonah looked further. It was to the temple with respect to *Him that dwelt therein*, and the manner in which he dwelt therein, namely, *upon the mercy-seat* or *propitiatory*, that he looked. If expressed in New Testament language, it would be looking to God through a Mediator, who is our Advocate with the Father, and whose advocacy is founded on his having been made a propitiation.

The encouragement which the prophet felt to look toward the temple for relief appears to have arisen from two sources, namely, *Scripture* and *experience*. The prayer of Solomon at the dedication was recorded in the Scriptures, and must have been familiar to every godly Israelite. After having enumerated divers particular cases, he adds, "What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, who shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and shall spread forth his hands toward this house, then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place, and forgive, and do, and give." This was doubtless a directory for Jonah, when other help failed; and the answer given to Solomon, "I have heard thy prayer, and thy supplication that thou hast made before me," turned all his petitions into promises. Here, therefore, was rest for the soul of every distressed Israelite, throughout all their generations; and for Jonah, though in the most deplorable state. "I will look," saith he, "toward thy holy temple;

and hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place; and forgive, and do, and give." To Scripture direction was added former experience. The language implies that this was not the first time that Jonah had looked to the temple for relief. He had looked before, and would now look again. It had long, no doubt, been his practice, under every load of guilt or sorrow of any kind, to repair to the mercy-seat, where Jehovah had promised to commune with his people. This, to Old Testament believers, was as common as coming "to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in time of need," is to believers under the New Testament; and having formerly found relief in looking, they would be encouraged to look again. It is a good use to make of past experiences, to take encouragement from them to make renewed applications for mercy. They are not designed for a pillow of repose under the load of a guilty conscience; nor the source from which our comfort is to be derived; but a directory to point us to the Saviour, and an encouragement that we shall not apply to him in vain.

From the whole, we learn the following important instructions:—First, The great evil of departing from God, and of flying in the face of his commands. The story of Jonah leaves an impression behind it of the justness of his own reflection, "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercies." What are all the reasonings of the flesh against God's revealed will? Vanities, lying vanities; the end of which, if grace prevent not, will be death. Secondly, Yet if any one have sinned, let him not despair. While there is a propitiation, an Advocate with the Father, to despair were to add sin to sin. Thirdly, If, through sin, we have lost the light of God's countenance, and would recover it, it must be sought in the same way as that in which we first obtained it. If ever we regain rest to our souls, after having backslidden and lost it, it must be by applying to him, as guilty, unworthy, and perishing sinners, entreating to be forgiven through the blood-shedding of the Saviour. This was the manner in which we first looked; and in this manner we must look again. Fourthly, Draw no positive conclusions of the state of the dead from what we see in the last hours of life. There may be no ground to conclude any thing in their favour; yet the case of Jonah is sufficient to deter us from concluding that they are lost. Had we been present when he was convicted and cast away, and seen the manner in which he went down to the watery grave, we might have drawn an unfavourable conclusion of him. All that took place of a favourable kind was after every human eye had left him. Such a case proves the possibility of a penitent and believing look to the mercy-seat, when the party is removed beyond the ken of human observation; and this is sufficient to teach us our own ignorance, and our incompetency to judge of the future state of any individual.

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## LV.

### PAST TRIALS A PLEA FOR FUTURE MERCIES.

"Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil."—Psal. xc. 15.

THIS "prayer of Moses the man of God," as it is entitled, is thought to have been occasioned by the sentence denounced against that generation of Israelites which came out of Egypt, viz. that they should perish in the wilderness. In it we see much of the plaintive, and yet much of the *man*

of God, cleaving to God under his judgments, and hoping in his covenant mercy and truth. Forbidden to enter their promised *dwelling-place*, they are directed to make up their loss in God, ver. 1, 2. Cut short as to the number of their days, to apply their hearts to wisdom, ver. 12. And though they, and himself with them, were doomed to die, they are taught to pray that the cause of God may live, ver. 16, 17.

The language of the text implies that it is usual for God, in dealing with his people in this world, to balance evil with good, and good with evil. He neither exempts them from chastisement, nor contends with them for ever. If he had dealt with us on the mere footing of justice, we had had a cup of wrath only; but through his dear Son it is mixed with mercy. The alternate changes of night and day, winter and summer, are not more fixed in the course of nature, than the mixture of judgment and mercy in the present state.

The children of Israel were long afflicted in Egypt, and when delivered from that grievous yoke, their numerous sins against God brought on them numerous evils in the wilderness, till at length it issued in the dismal sentence which is supposed to have occasioned this plaintive song. Yet this dark night was preparatory to a morning of hope and joy. The people that were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness. The judgments upon the first generation proved a source of wholesome discipline to the second, who appear to have been the best of all the generations of Israel. It was of them that God spoke in such high terms by Jeremiah:—"I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first-fruits of his increase." All that God had done for them till then was but ploughing up the fallow ground; but now he began to reap the fruits of his work. Now Balaam, instead of being able to curse them, is compelled to bless and envy them. And now the prayer of the man of God is answered. They are made glad according to the days in which they were afflicted, and the years in which they had seen evil. God's work appeared to his servants, and his glory unto their children. His beauty was upon them, and he prospered the work of their hands.

We might refer to numerous instances in the Scriptures in which the same truth is exemplified. In the first hundred and thirty years of Adam's life, he drank deeply of the bitter effects of his fall. He had a son; but after high hopes had been entertained of him, he proved wicked. He had another son, but him his brother murdered; and as the murderer was spared and his family increased, it would seem as if the world was to be peopled by a race of wicked men. But it did not end thus: God gave Adam another seed, instead of Abel whom Cain slew; and soon after this men began to call upon the name of the Lord. It must have been very afflictive for Noah to have been "a preacher of righteousness" century after century, and at last, instead of seeing his hearers converted to God, to see them all swept away by the deluge. But as the waters were assuaged when they had risen to their height, so the wrath of Heaven issued in mercy. God accepted the sacrifice of his servant, and made a covenant of peace with him and his posterity.

Similar remarks might be made from the histories of Jacob, and Joseph, and David, and many others: these were made glad according to the days wherein they had been afflicted, and the years wherein they had seen evil. Nor is it confined to individuals. When idolatrous Israel drew down the Divine displeasure in Hazael's wars, Jehu's revolution, and Elisha's prophecies, it was very afflictive. Yet when Jehoahaz besought the Lord, the Lord hearkened unto him, and was gracious to his people, in respect of the

covenant which he had made with their fathers, 2 Kings xiii. 3—5, 23. Thus the wind, the earthquake, and the fire were succeeded by the still small voice, 1 Kings xix. 11, 12. Finally, the great afflictions of the church during the successive overturnings of the monarchies issued, according to Ezekiel's prophecy, (chap. xxi. xxvii.) in Christ's coming and kingdom.

It is not difficult to perceive the wisdom and goodness of God in thus causing evil to precede good, and good to follow evil. If the whole of our days were covered with darkness, there would be but little of the exercise of love, and joy, and praise; our spirits would contract a habit of gloominess and despondency; and religion itself would be reproached, as rendering us miserable. If, on the other hand, we had uninterrupted prosperity, we should not enjoy it. What is rest to him that is never weary, or peace to one that is a stranger to trouble? Heaven itself would not be that to us which it will be, if we came not out of great tribulation to the possession of it.

Evil and good being thus connected together, the one furnishes a plea for the other. Moses pleaded it, and so may we. We may have seen days of affliction, and years of evil, both as individuals and families. Borne down, it may be, with poverty and disappointment, our spirits are broken. Or if circumstances have been favourable, yet some deep-rooted disease preys upon our constitution, and passes a sentence of death within us long before it comes. Or if neither of these has befallen us, yet relative troubles may eat up all the enjoyment of life. A cruel and faithless husband, a peevish and unamiable wife, or a disobedient child, may cause us to say with Rebecca, What good does my life do me? Or if none of these evils afflict us, yet if the peace of God rule not in our hearts, all the blessings of life will be bestowed upon us in vain. It may be owing to the want of just views of the gospel, or to some iniquity regarded in our heart, that we spend days and years with but little communion with God.

Finally, If, as in some cases, a number of these evils should be combined, this will make the load still heavier. But, whatever be our afflictions, and however complicated, we may carry them to the Lord, and then turn them into a plea for mercy. Though the thorn should not be immediately extracted, yet if God cause his grace to be sufficient for us, we shall have reason to be glad.

We have also seen days of affliction and years of evil as a *nation*. It is true we have less cause to apply this language to ourselves than most other nations at the present time; yet to a feeling heart there is matter for grief. What numbers of widows and fatherless children have been left even among us, within the last sixteen years! Let the faithful of the land turn it into a prayer, not only in behalf of our country, but of a bleeding world.

Many of our *churches*, too, have experienced days and years of evil. The loss of faithful and useful pastors, disorders, scandals, strifes, divisions, the consequent withdrawal of the Holy Spirit, are evils which many have to bewail. Let the faithful remnant in every place carry these things to the throne of grace, and there plead with the God of mercy and truth, by whom alone Jacob can arise; and though weeping may continue for a night, joy will come in the morning.

*The whole church of God* has seen much evil hitherto. Its numbers have been few and despised. It has often been under persecution. Compared with what might have been expected, in almost six thousand years, "we have wrought no deliverance in the earth, neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen." But all these things furnish a plea for better times. Even the wickedness of the wicked may enable us to plead with the psalmist, "It is time for thee, O Lord, to work, for they have made void thy law."

We may urge the prayer of *faith* too on this subject, since glorious things are *spoken* of the city of God. Both the world and the church have their best days to come.

It is necessary, however, to recollect that the happy issue of all our troubles depends upon our union with Christ. If unbelievers, our troubles are but the beginning of sorrows. It is a fatal error in many, that great afflictions in this life indicate that we have had our evil things here. Few men have been more miserable than Saul was in his latter days. But if, renouncing every other ground of hope, we believe in Jesus the crucified, whatever our sorrows may be in this life, they will be turned into joy.

## VI.

[Delivered at the commencement of a New Year.]

### THE CHANGES OF TIME.

“The acts of David, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of Samuel the seer, with all his reign and his might, and the times that went over him, and over Israel, and over all the kingdoms of the countries.”—1 Chron. xxix. 29, 30.

THERE is something in the manner of the sacred writers peculiar to themselves. A common historian might have glanced at the reign of David, and referred to other books in which it was described; but viewing the events of it only with the eye of a politician, his diction, though elegant and instructive, would leave no impression upon the heart. The sacred historians felt what they wrote. Eyeing the hand of God in all things, they conceive of them, they represent them, in an affecting light. There is something in the phraseology of this passage which is singularly impressive. It opens at once to our contemplation the constant vicissitudes of human affairs. We see and feel, as in a moment, that the same affecting scenes which are passing over the world in our times have passed over it in former ages. Society may assume different shapes and forms; but it is essentially the same. “The things that are, are the things that have been; and there is no new thing under the sun.”

We are also led to view the great current of human affairs as moving on without our consent, and without being subject to our control. We bear a part in them, but it is like the fishes playing in the stream; which passes over them independent of their will, and returns no more. What an idea does it give of our insignificance and entire dependence upon God! But though our influence in counteracting the great events of time be very small, yet their influence upon us is great. They bear a relation to us, as they formerly did to David and Israel, and the kingdoms of the countries, and leave an important impression upon us. We are either the better or the worse for the times that have gone over us, and may be so to eternity. The vicissitudes that pass over us *during a single human life*, and the *impressions which they leave behind them*, are subjects which, if realized, would overwhelm the mind. There is a current of *national changes* which is passing continually. What times have passed over the nations of Europe within our remembrance! Some have risen, some have fallen, some enlarged, and some contracted. What multitudes of lives have been lost! How much of human nature has been developed! What evidence has been afforded of the enmity of man’s heart against the gospel, and the in-

sufficiency of all human devices to give happiness to the world without it! What seeds have been sown for future change, the fruits of which may be seen to the end of time!

And while the page of history records the acts of the great, whether good or bad, there are others which it overlooks, but which are no less interesting, on account of the near relation they bear to us. There is a current of changes *within the circle of our immediate acquaintance*. What a number of deaths, of new faces, and of new circumstances! Poverty, power, and influence have changed hands; those whose fathers were abject are raised on high; while others, who have been delicately educated, are sunk into wretchedness. Nor do these changes extend merely to our acquaintance, but to *ourselves*. There are few of us but have had our times of sickness and of health, of prosperity and of adversity, of joy and sorrow. Times when unions were formed, and times when they have been dissolved; times when children have been born, and times when they have died; times when we have been so happy that we thought nothing could make us miserable, and times when we have been so miserable as to despair of ever again being happy.

But these are things mostly of a *civil* nature. There is also a current of changes continually passing over us of a religious kind. The cause and kingdom of Christ while in this world is subject to constant vicissitude. In some places it prospers, in others it declines. Upon the whole, however, it is going on, and it becomes us to mark its progress. It was in one life that Israel forsook Egypt, and was planted in Canaan; in one life they were carried into captivity; and in one life brought back again; in one life the Son of God became incarnate, and accomplished our redemption; in one life the gospel was preached almost over the whole earth; in one life the Reformation was effected; and it may be in one life that antichrist may come to his end, and the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. Our life has been cast in an eventful period, and that of our children may be more so.

But if, as has been remarked, the events of time bear a relation to us, and leave an impression upon us, it becomes us to inquire what impression those times which have passed over us have left upon our minds:—

Great numbers of them are *disregarded*, and they can leave no good impression. All that was wrought in Judea, in the times of Augustus and Tiberius, was overlooked by the great mass of mankind. It filled some few with joy unspeakable; but the world in general took but little notice of it. The Greeks, Romans, and other nations went on just as we do; scheming, intriguing, buying, selling, amassing fortunes, spending them, waging wars, and struggling for the highest posts of honour. Many never heard of it, and most that did cared for none of these things. With what contempt did Festus speak of a cause which came before him, relative to faith in Christ! "Certain questions of Jewish superstition, and of one Jesus, who was dead, and whom Paul affirmed to be alive!" Many of those who beheld the miracles of Christ, and heard the preaching of the gospel, *wondered and perished*. Thus things of the greatest moment may pass over us disregarded, and consequently can leave no good impression. It was the same at the Reformation from popery. God wrought a great work in that day; but the mass of mankind saw it not. They were each pursuing their schemes of ambition, or covetousness, or sensuality; and so did not profit by it: and thus it is at this day. The principal actors upon the theatre of human affairs have their respective objects in view; but they see not God's hand. Nor is it much otherwise with the spectators: some

admire, others fear, and others are filled with abhorrence; but few regard the works of the Lord, or discern the operation of his hands.

In others, the things which have passed over them may have made *some degree of impression upon them, and yet the issue of it may be doubtful*. Under threatening providences, or close preaching, they have been affected not a little—have heard the word gladly, and done many things—have been greatly moved, and reformed in their behaviour; but, after all, it is doubtful whether their hearts be divorced from their idols.

On some, however, the things which have passed over us have had a good effect, and require to be recollected with *thankfulness*. One can remember a providence which brought him under the word, or into a praying family or religious connexion; another, a conversation, a sermon, or a solitary walk, in which he saw and felt the light of life, and from which period his feet were turned from the ways of death.

Finally, A recollection of the times which have passed over us, over Israel, and over the nations, will furnish matter for much *humility and trembling*, even though we should have profited by them; and if we have not, it is a subject the realizing of which would overwhelm us. What opportunities have we had of glorifying God, which have passed by unnoticed! what instructive lessons, under which we have been dull of learning! what rebukes, without being effectually corrected! and what narrow escapes from temptation, the falling into which had been worse than death! Neither have we sufficiently regarded the operations of God's hand upon the world and the church, so as to be properly affected by them. And if such reflections be furnished in regard of good men, what must be the retrospection of the wicked! Youth has passed over them, and left only the impression of guilt, shame, and remorse; or, what is worse, a gust to react its follies, even when they have lost the capacity. Prosperity has made them proud, and adversity filled them with hardness and rebellion of heart. They have been afflicted, and have not called upon God; or if they have, no sooner has it subsided than they have ceased. Death has approached them, and in their fright they have entered into solemn vows; but all have quickly been forgotten. How many slighted opportunities, solemn warnings, tender sermons, and powerful convictions will come into the account at the last day!

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## LVII.

### TRUE WISDOM.

“The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way; but the folly of fools is deceit.”—Prov. xiv. 8.

This proverb teaches us that true wisdom is of a *useful or practical* nature. There is a great difference between the wisdom of some worldly men and that of others. Some deal in mere speculation; their discoveries are of no use either to themselves or mankind. Others, who are of a more *prudent* turn, bend their talents to useful purposes. The philosophy of a Lunardi exhibits an air balloon—that of a Franklin is applied to objects of real utility.

But Solomon seldom, if ever, writes of mere natural wisdom. That on which he chiefly dwells has its origin in “the fear of the Lord,” chap. i. 7.



The passage may, therefore, be considered as giving the character of *holy* wisdom, as distinguished from the wisdom of this world; it directs to the understanding of our *way*, in matters of the highest importance. And this is the proper opposite of the *folly* described in the last clause, which is said to be *deceit*. Wicked men are the greatest fools in God's account; and their folly consists in self-deception. While the wisdom of the truly wise turns to a good account, the folly of the wicked puts a cheat upon their souls.

The wisdom of some men is to understand things which *cannot be understood*. When David appealed to God, saying, "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me"—"My soul is as a weaned child"—it implies that there were men who did, and so there are still. "Man," says Locke, "should know the length of his tether." What a deluge of abstract speculations has been poured upon the world in all ages, especially since the invention of printing! There is no end to questions upon such subjects. Instead of finding out truth, we presently lose ourselves. Ask, What is a spirit? What is eternity? What is immensity? How came a pure creature to become sinful? Why did God create man, seeing what part he would act? All these, and a thousand more questions of the kind, belong to the wisdom of the imprudent. It does not lead us a step towards heaven, but in a contrary direction.

Again, The wisdom of others is to pry into things which, if understood, *are of little or no use*.—Long and elaborate treatises have been written on the question, What is space? But *cui bono*? Even those things which are of use, (astronomy, for instance,) if pursued to the neglect of our *way*, are folly, and will deceive the expectation. We should blame any man, and count him a fool, notwithstanding his learning, if he employed himself in studying the distances of the stars while his family were pining for want, and his affairs going to ruin; and why not if in the same pursuits he neglects the salvation of his soul?

Further, The wisdom of some is to understand *the way of other men*.—We meet with many who are exceedingly censorious on public measures. For their part, they are wise; and happy would it be for the world if it were under *their* direction! but whether it be that the affairs of religious and domestic duty are too little for their expanded minds, or whatever be the reason, so it is, that their own concerns are generally neglected. We meet with others who understand all the private concerns of a neighbourhood, and can point out the faults and defects of every one about them, but forget their own. We have even met with professors of religion, who understand the faults, defects, and errors of almost all the religious world, and, whenever they meet together, these are the topics of conversation by which they edify one another. Surely this is not "the wisdom of the *prudent*!"

But, it will be asked, what is "the wisdom of the *prudent*?" And I may answer, It is that which leads to the understanding of our way through life, and to the heavenly home.

Particularly, It will lead us above all things to see that our way be *right*. There are many by-ways, and many who are walking in them; but true wisdom will not rest till it find out the road that leads to everlasting life. It will know whom it trusts, and whether he be able to keep that which is committed to him. It will lead us also to attend diligently to the *directions* of the way. We shall read the oracles of God: the doctrines for belief, and the precepts for practice; and shall thus learn to cleanse our way by taking heed thereto, according to God's word. It will moreover induce us to guard against the *dangers* of the way. We shall not be ignorant of Satan's

devices, nor of the numerous temptations to which our age, times, circumstances, and propensities expose us. It will influence us to keep our eye upon the *end* of the way. A foolish man will go that way in which he finds most company, or can go most at his ease; but wisdom will ask, "What shall I do in the end thereof?" To understand the end of the wrong way will deter; but to keep our eye upon that of the right will attract. Christ himself kept sight of the joy that was set before him. Finally, as holy wisdom possesses the soul with a sense of propriety at all times, and upon all occasions, it is therefore our highest interest to obtain this wisdom, and to cultivate it by reading, meditation, prayer, and every appointed means. "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee, so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth wisdom; out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous; he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly."

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## LVIII.

### IRREMEDIAL EVILS.

"That which is crooked cannot be made straight, and that which is wanting cannot be numbered."—Eccles. i. 15.

THE wise man inquires, "What is that good for the sons of men which they should do all the days of their life?" At the close of his inquiries he answers, "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." But before he comes to this *conclusion of the matter*, as he calls it, he takes a large survey of human affairs, the result of every inquiry concerning which is, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit." Every thing that passed under his review was either void of substantial good, or connected with some evil which imbittered it.

Two of the marks of vanity inscribed on earthly things are, that a great number of them are inveterately *crooked*, or devious from the line of what is good for the sons of men; and that a still greater number are *wanting*, or defective, so that though there were nothing in them repugnant to what is good, yet they are *insufficient* to satisfy the mind.

That devious and defective things should be found in the world is not surprising; but they are found also in the church, and our endeavours to rectify and supply them are often ineffectual. It is too much to infer from this that we are to sit down in despair and attempt nothing; but it will be profitable to know the limited extent of our powers, so as not to waste our time and energies on that which will answer no good end.

Many have been employed during the greater part of their lives in striving to correct the errors and disorders of the church, and to supply its defects. This has certainly been a good work. What else were the labours of the Reformers, of the puritans, of the nonconformists, and indeed of all the servants of God in every age, but so many attempts to bend the minds of men to the mind of Christ? Nor have they laboured without effect. When we compare the present state of things with what we wish, we seem indeed to have done nothing; but when with the state of things in times

past, we may say, "What hath God wrought!" Paganism has been excluded from Europe; popery has been so diminished as to have lost its wonted energies; and Christianity, cherished under the wing of religious freedom, has of late taken a notable flight, alighting in the very heart of the pagan world. But with all this there are many crooked things among us, and things which by human hands cannot be made straight. The spirit of infidelity has pervaded the minds of millions in Europe whose fathers were once the decided friends of the Reformation. The systems of many who would be thought to be Christians are so tinged with it as to become anti-christian. And, among those who profess to believe the doctrines of the Reformation, many content themselves with the name of orthodoxy, without the thing. There is a tendency in the human mind to deviate from Divine truth. Had it not been for the illuminating influence of the Spirit of God, we should never have understood it; not because of its abstruseness, but on account of the uncongeniality of our minds; and when we do understand and believe it, there is a continual tendency in us to get wrong. It might seem that when a person has once obtained a just view of the gospel, there is no danger of his losing it; but it is not so. There is a partiality in all our views, and while we guard against error in one direction, we are in equal danger from a contrary extreme. Many, in shunning the snare of self-righteous pride, have fallen into the pit of Antinomian presumption; and many, in guarding what they consider as the interests of practical religion, have ceased to teach and preach those principles from which alone it can proceed. Besides this, there are many ways by which a minister may get beside the gospel without falling into any palpable errors. There may be nothing *crooked*, yet much *wanting*. We may deliver an ingenious discourse, containing nothing inconsistent with truth, and yet not preach that truth "in which believers stand, and by which they are saved." We may preach *about* the gospel, and yet not preach the gospel, so as to "show unto men the way of salvation." And if we get into a vain, carnal, and worldly frame of mind, this is almost certain to be the case. It is no breach of charity to say, of hundreds of sermons that are ordinarily delivered by those who are reputedly orthodox, that they are not the gospel which Jesus commissioned his servants to preach; and if it be thus among preachers, is it marvellous that a large proportion of religious people are not strictly evangelical, but imbibe another spirit? And if the doctrine of Christ be neglected, (not to say corrupted,) the effects will appear in a neglect of faithful discipline, in a worldly spirit, and in a gradual disregard of a watchful, circumspect, and holy individual conduct.

It is no breach of charity to suppose that many who profess evangelical principles are Christians only in name, and that these principles are professed merely on account of their popularity in the circles in which they move. The ways of such must be crooked. Like Saul, they know not how to go about obedience to God, but are always stumbling, or turning aside in pursuit of some carnal object.

There are few things more spoken against in the present times than *party zeal*; but there are few things more common. To unite with those whom we consider on mature examination as being nearest the mind of Christ, and having done so to act up to our principles,—is our duty; but few things are further from the mind of the partisan than this. Having enlisted in the cause of a party, he sees no good but that which is within its pale, and will say and do almost anything to keep up its reputation. "Many things have I seen in the days of my vanity." There is a man whose heart unites with every one who loves our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and who rejoices in the work of God wherever he sees it; but not being of the right party, he

is of little or no account: and there is a man who gives no other proof of his liberality than that of boasting of it; yet, being of the right party, he is liberal.

Genuine candour and liberality are not to be looked for in parties, but in individuals of various parties. There are men who, while seeking the good of their immediate connexions, consider them not so much as their *party* as an integral part of the kingdom of Christ, and who know how to rejoice in the success of truth and true religion wherever it is found: but is it thus with the bulk of any denomination, established or unestablished? I fear not. He that has lived thirty or forty years in religious society, and has not met with things that must needs have shaken his confidence in professions, must either be a very happy man, or very unobservant of what has passed before him. What shall we say then? Shall we sigh, and say, "That which is crooked cannot be made straight?" Be it so; let us distinguish between Christianity and the conduct of its professors; so that while we are grieved at the latter, we may not think the worse of the former. "Let God be true, and every man a liar!" Let us also examine our own hearts, and pray that we may have grace at least to correct the deviations, and supply the defects, that are to be found in ourselves; in which case, whatever may befall others, we shall find rest for our souls.

I shall conclude with a few remarks on *misrepresentation*. Some men in the course of their lives are exposed to a large portion of this, accompanied, it may be, with much foul abuse, the correction of which often becomes an object of despair. "He that is first in his own cause," says the wise man, "seemeth just, but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him." But how if a man should be so deluged with misrepresentations, and his hands so occupied with more important concerns, as to have neither time nor inclination to refute them? There are two ways left him.

First, He may safely treat the foulest and most unworthy of his opponents with *neglect*. Their calumnies will not do him much injury; and if he attempt to answer them, he may be in danger of imbibing a portion of their spirit. This seems to be the fool that should *not* be answered according to his folly, lest we be like unto him.

Secondly, He may give a brief statement of the truth, and leave the misrepresentation and abuse to fall of its own accord. When the Jews, after their return from Babylon, began building the temple, it caused a great sensation among their adversaries. They first offered to join them in the work, thinking, no doubt, to come in for a share, and perhaps the chief share, of the glory; and when their offer was refused, they accused them to the Persian government, so that the work for a time was stopped. We may wonder that the Jews did not by a counter-statement correct these vile misrepresentations, and expose the insincerity of their accusers; yet they did not; but, as appears from the history, held their peace. When the storm had blown over, encouraged by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, they renewed the work; and when interrogated anew by their adversaries, contented themselves with a simple statement of the truth. The substance of it was this: We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth. We are engaged in rebuilding the house that was built many years ago by a great king of Israel. Our fathers sinned against God, and he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, who destroyed this house, and carried the people away into Babylon. But in the first reign of Cyrus there was a decree to rebuild it, and its furniture was at the same time restored to Sheshbazzar, whom he appointed our governor. The same Sheshbazzar began this work, which is not yet finished.—This simple statement of truth, which leaves out all reflections on their adversaries, would bear to be repeated even by them,

in their letter to Darius, and in that form was repeated, and ultimately prevailed, Ezra iv.—vi. The crooked things were let alone, and the straight rule exhibited, and thus the end was answered.

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## LIX.

[Delivered at New Broad Street Chapel, London, July 1, 1800.]

### IMPORTANCE OF UNION OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INTERESTS IN THE SERVICE OF GOD.

“From above the horse-gate repaired the priests, every one over against his house. After them repaired Zadok the son of Immer over against his house. After him repaired also Shemaiah the son of Shechaniah, the keeper of the east gate. After him repaired Hananiah the son of Shelemiah, and Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph, another piece. After him repaired Meshullam the son of Berechiah over against his chamber.”—Neh. iii. 28—30.

I HAVE no desire, my friends, to amuse you with curious speculations on a difficult passage; but you will readily admit that all Scripture is profitable, and is designed to convey some important instruction to us. The zeal and diligence of these good people, in rearing the walls of Jerusalem, are far from being uninteresting. Were you to read the whole book, you would find your hearts warmed with a view of the ardour with which they undertook and finished it. Sixty or seventy years before this, the captives had returned from Babylon, and had rebuilt the city, and after that the temple; but still there was a wall wanting, and the city and temple were exposed to the depredation of enemies. Nehemiah, a godly Jew, at that time resident at the court of Persia, hearing how Jerusalem was circumstanced, was in great affliction that the gates thereof were burned, that the walls thereof were broken down, and the city under great reproach. He wept, he fasted, and went in unto the king, and obtained a commission to go and rear these broken and desolated walls. He met with great impediments: there were deep-rooted enmities amongst some of the Samaritans, especially Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the Ammonite; and some of his companions did all in their power to hinder the good work; but Nehemiah had his heart right, and was continually offering up his prayer, “Think upon me, O my God, for good;” and having his heart in the work, he communicated his design to his friends and brethren, and they set to work and wrought mightily with a sword in one hand and a trowel in the other, and they laboured from the dawn of day till the stars appeared—in short, the wall was begun, and the wall was finished; for “the people had a mind to work.” I think, in this ardour, this zeal on the part both of Nehemiah and of the people, there was not only an amiable patriotism, but a portion of real piety. It was not merely the city of their fathers—it was not merely their own city—the walls of which they were thus zealous to repair; it was the city of God, the city of Zion. It was for the protection of the worship of God: and here lay the piety of this zeal.

I cannot now go over the chapter—you may read it at your leisure. It gives an account of the various persons and families who were engaged in this work of building the wall. I will only offer a few remarks.

Observe, in the first place, how the work was divided amongst them. You will read all along that every man and body of men, or family of men, had all separate work appointed them. All were set at work; one built this part, and one that, and thus, by every one taking his proper part, the whole

was reared—by union the whole was accomplished. By a number of individuals setting their hands to the same work, uniting in it with all their heart, the work will rise, the wall shall not only be begun, but completed.

A second remark that offers itself, from this history, is, that though their work was separate, yet they had not separate interests. The place on which each laboured was separate—each had his own peculiar spot appointed him to labour on; but the object in which all were engaged was the same. Every man by rearing a part of the wall contributed to the finishing of the whole. It was one city, one wall, one great object, and, by every one accomplishing a part, the whole was completed. This teaches us that there is in the service of God a union of private and public interest, and that, while we each separately attend to our specific duty, we all contribute to that great object, the glory of God, the good of his church, and the good of mankind.

Once more, It is worthy of notice, and indeed this is the thought for which I read this passage, that things were so contrived that each man and body of men should, as far as possible, build over against his own dwelling. Nay, we are told in the thirtieth verse of one man who was only a lodger, that is, he inhabited a chamber; and we are informed “that he built the wall over against his own chamber;” so that the smallest apartment served as a ground to excite all to unite in the general work of rearing the wall. I think, without any forced interpretation, this teaches us the importance of union of public and private interests in the service of God. Things are so devised, that, by thus acting in our own particular charge, we contribute to the general work; by building the wall, so to speak, against our own houses or our own chambers, we help to rear the wall around the city of God—we contribute to the building of the church, to the building of society, to the good of mankind, to the glory of God. You see, by this time, the sentiment on which I mean to enlarge.

I need not say, my brethren, that we are all engaged in a work analogous to that of the Jews. It is our business to build God’s house: it is our highest honour to build up society, to be blessings in our generation; and what we are here directed to, as a means, is to attend immediately to those things which are our especial charge—to build, as it were, over against our own houses.

God requires that we be of a large heart. We are enjoined to cherish largeness of heart, to seek the good of mankind, to embrace within our affections, and good wishes, and efforts, and prayers the well-being of the whole human race. Undoubtedly this is the case; yet the whole human race do not come within our province. We may pray for them, we may wish them well, we may long for their salvation, we may do something perhaps towards it; but the main part of our labour lies within our reach—it is over against our own apartments.

I. Let us inquire, then, WHAT ARE THOSE EXERTIONS WHICH MAY BEAR AN ANALOGY TO WHAT IS HERE RECOMMENDED—building the wall over against our own apartments? and I answer in a few of the following particulars:—By an attention, in the first place, to our own souls; in the next place, to our religious connexions; and in the last place, to our neighbours, to the poor, to those who are within our reach. I apprehend a proper attention to these different objects will be found to be analogous to building the wall over against our own apartments, and will contribute to raise the wall of Jerusalem, to promote the cause of God and the good of mankind.

1. I would observe that *a proper attention to our own souls is of the first importance.*—I do not mean by this to deny that there is a duty owing to our bodily welfare, to our temporal interests, and that this is a part of building the wall over against our own houses too. Doubtless, if every one of

us, by paying a proper attention to our temporal concerns, by industry, economy, and the like, providing things honest in the sight of the Lord, and in the sight of all men, that we may have to give to him that needeth—if every one were to build in this way against his own house, we should hear of but few failures, we should hear of but few bankruptcies, of few that would be incapable of paying their just debts; undoubtedly this may be included; but I speak of the chief thing—the soul, and its most important interests. This is the main thing to which our attention should be directed. My dear hearers, you have heard much of the gospel. You have been in the habit, I presume, of hearing the gospel. You have heard much said, and have thought much perhaps, about spreading the gospel. You have heard animating discourses, and read animating writings, about missionary labours and efforts to spread the gospel of the Lord Jesus amongst the heathen. You have heard many an animating discourse, perhaps, in favour of efforts to spread the gospel in the towns and villages of your own country; but do not forget one thing: do not let your attention be so taken up about building the wall around the city as to forget to ask, How goes on the building against my own house? How go on matters as to my own soul? Am I a Christian? Do I repent of my sins? Do I believe in the Son of God for the salvation of my soul?—Of what account will it be to me that the wall is built all around Jerusalem, if it be down against my door? Here is the point. Undoubtedly it behoves us to be attentive to the public cause of God and the public interests of man, but not so as to neglect our own souls. On the contrary, it is by attending first, and principally, to our own good, that we contribute to the general good. Or let me take it for granted that your soul is in a state of salvation—let me take it for granted that you are converted, that you are in the road to heaven and to God—yet this is not enough. Is your soul in a thriving, prosperous state, or do its concerns lie in ruins? It is possible you may be thriving in your business: it may be your fortune may be accumulating: it is possible you may have built yourselves a habitation in the country as well as in the city: but is the wall repaired in a spiritual sense? Is thy soul prosperous, and art thou in health? Perhaps I ought to ask myself this question. I am sure I need it equally with you, and the Lord knows that, while preaching to you in this manner, I do not mean to overlook myself. I often fear lest, while watching the vineyards of others, my own should be neglected; and it is one of the snares and temptations that is peculiar to ministers, that while they are attentive to Divine things, and studying them in reference to their hearers, they should neglect to deal in them for their own souls. I fear it is no unusual thing for a minister to be employed in building up the wall against his hearers' habitations, while it is all in ruins against his own. Let each of us, especially those who are engaged in the sacred work of the ministry, say, O my soul, how is it with thee? It was not without cause that the apostle said to young Timothy and Titus respectively, "Take heed to thyself and to the doctrine." No, it was not without cause that he charged each of them saying, "Keep *thyself* pure." And it is by an attention, both as ministers and people, to our own souls' best interests that we rear the wall of Zion—that we promote the glory of God and the good of those around us. Nor can we be useful without it to any considerable degree. No one of us can communicate what he does not possess. He, therefore, who sinks into carnality and earthly-mindedness in his own soul, will not be able to communicate spirituality to others. How can we communicate what we do not feel? The Lord may in some instances make use of us, and bless that truth which does not proceed from our hearts; but, ordinarily speaking, it is the spiritually-minded minister, and the spiritually-minded Christian,

whom the Lord blesses in making the means of diffusing the savour of Christ. It is those that have salt in themselves that are the savour of Christ to those about them. Thus by building the wall, as I may say, against our own houses, we contribute to the well-being of the city of God.

2. Perhaps the next subject that demands our attention, or the object that calls for our solicitude next to our own souls, is *the spiritual welfare of our families*. They are our charge. God has given us them as a solemn charge to rear for him. Our children, our servants, all our domestics, are in a sort our solemn charge, and so answer to the wall, or that part of the wall over against our own apartments. The godly parent has a very solemn and important charge, and he feels it to be such. It has been remarked more than once, where a child has been born and added to a family, "Now we have not only another body to provide for, but another soul to pray for." A parent has seemed sometimes like the commander of a convoy, having a number of ships under his charge, to conduct through the boisterous sea of life, and to see them safely brought into the desired harbour. Alas! how painful must be the thought, if one, or two, or more of those thus committed to our charge, be wrecked and lost! How interesting it must be to a serious mind to be able to say, at the last day, "Here am I, and the children which thou hast given me!" It is true that the parent is not accountable for the conversion of his children. He cannot change their hearts. He only that made the human mind can change it; but the means are his, the blessing is the Lord's. It is of importance that we carefully walk before our children, setting them a holy example, walking before our families and all our domestics in such a way as that we can recommend them to follow us. Oh for the parent to be able to say, on his dying bed, "Be ye followers of me as I also have been of Christ!" Oh for the parent to be able to say to his family, when taking leave of life, "The things that you have heard and seen of me, do; and the God of peace be with you!" This, my brethren, wherever it exists, is building over against our own apartment; this is building the wall of Zion; this is glorifying God. And it is worthy of notice that the church of God is thereby raised; for what is the church—what is any Christian church—but a number of Christian families associated together? A Christian family is the first nursery for the church of God. It is there that the seed of truth is ordinarily sown. It is there that the first principles of true religion are often instilled. The prayers, the tears, the cautions, and the example of a godly parent, who walks in the fear of God before his family, will leave effects on the mind. I have seldom known persons converted who were brought up in religious families, but they have dated their first impressions from something which took place in the family. They have dated their early convictions to what has passed in family worship, perhaps, or in the counsel and example of their friends. Thus is the church of God supplied from Christian families—thus are the lively stones furnished, by which the spiritual house is reared. Let this be an encouragement to us to build over against our own apartments.

3. Next to our families, perhaps, I may mention *our religious connexions*. I may suppose that Christians are in the habit of forming themselves into Christian societies, according to the Christian rule; and if you are a member of a Christian church, undoubtedly it becomes your immediate charge to labour to build up those particular societies. I do not mean to the exclusion of others. Christians should cherish a largeness of heart, as I have said before, and should pray for all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Yet each has a special duty towards those peculiar connexions to which he stands related. I think, as a Christian, it behoves me to reprove a fault in any Christian man, whether immediately connected with me or



not; but I am under special obligations to watch over those with whom I have entered into a solemn covenant so to do. Over those we are bound to watch with tender solicitude, with brotherly love, and to consider that as a part of our charge. With them we are bound more especially to unite in worship; and it is our interest as well as our duty so to do. It is an idle notion which I apprehend many people in this city entertain—I say in this city, owing to the great number of places of worship, and the great variety of preachers—it is an idle notion that people entertain, that, being members of a church, it is an abridgement of their liberty to be obliged to attend there. In fact, your soul will never prosper if you are constantly wandering hither and thither. It is he that is planted in the house of the Lord, and he only, that shall flourish in the courts of our God; therefore, while you bear good-will to all the churches of God, to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ, of every denomination, yet do not forget building up that part of the wall that stands over against your own dwelling. Fulfil your special obligations; hereby it is that the building will rise.

4. Next to an attention to our religious connexions, follows *an attention to those who are round about us—our neighbours, particularly the poor*. God has placed us, some in one situation, some in another; but all of us see those round about us that stand in need of our help. “The poor ye have always with you.” God has wisely ordained that we should thus be linked together. The rich could not do without the poor, any more than the poor without the rich. Instead of cherishing animosity one against another—instead of the poor envying the rich, and the rich despising the poor—be as one. You might as well set at variance the eye against the hand, or the head against the feet; they are different members of the same body—they all contribute to the well-being of the whole—and, provided we cherish this spirit, we shall live as brethren, and feel ourselves to be one family; and it behoves those who are possessed, not only of opulence, but of a competency of worldly good, to study the well-being of those about them. Self-interest, or a selfish spirit, that lives only to itself, and cares for none but itself, has, I was going to say, all its enjoyments to itself; but I can scarcely say it has any enjoyments. It is in doing good to those around us that we derive good. It is by mingling souls, by feeling for the miseries of others—it is by visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction, as well as by keeping ourselves unspotted from the world—it is by dropping the tear of sympathy, with a sorrowing heart—it is by lending a hand to the children of the poor, to assist in doing that which their parents may not be able to do for them—it is by helping those around us, in things essential to their present and future happiness, that we become blessings to society and enjoy blessings ourselves.

I apprehend that if we kept the spiritual good of mankind more in view, we might be much more useful, especially in the way of visiting the afflicted poor. It is in a time of affliction, when the hand of God is heavy on a man, when death appears full in his view, that the mind is opened to serious conversation. It is then that a little temporal relief will be acceptable, and that will be the time for serious advice and expostulation. If Christians were more disposed to water those who are round about them—to visit the poor, to avail themselves of every opportunity of suggesting to their minds the principles of the gospel—who can tell what good would be done? And this is a way of doing good without any noise. It is a still, silent mode, and therefore corresponds with the representation of the kingdom of God, that cometh without noise or observation. It is thus that we are called upon to build the wall over against our own apartments. But,

II. I close the whole with A REFLECTION OR TWO.

1. *If that part of the wall which stood over against any one's apartment was not built, you know the whole city was exposed to danger:* if but one place remained unreared, the enemy might get in there. Apply this thought—whatever good may be done in the world, whatever good may be done in the church, however zealous our ministers may be, however zealous our fellow Christians, however holy and circumspect they may all be, yet if one be negligent, if you be loose, if you be worldly, sensual, and devilish, the wall is down over against your own apartment, the enemy will come in, and the whole city will be exposed, owing to your misconduct. Think then of what consequence the ill conduct of an individual may be. It was on this account that David lamented, in the fifty-first Psalm, after his awful conduct in the affair of Uriah and Bathsheba. He had, if I may so say, beaten down the walls of Jerusalem, and the enemy came in; and, in this Psalm, one part of his prayer is, “Build thou the walls of Jerusalem;” as if he had said, Lord, I have been the means of pulling them down—the enemy has hereby reproached thy name—the heathen have scoffed at the God of Israel—the walls of Zion lie desolate, through my misconduct: O Lord, heal the breaches which my sins have caused. Think, O my brethren, of the great evil to the church of God, and to society, which the wicked conduct of an individual may occasion.

2. While attentive to your own soul's concerns, to your own families, and to your neighbours, *cherish a public spirit*—keep in view the whole interest of Christ, cherish a largeness of heart; for while every man was to build the wall over against his own house, the end of it was the repairing of the whole wall—the security of the whole city was to be kept in view; and hence you will find that there was so much public spirit that some built who had no houses against which to build. We read in the second verse that some men of Jericho builded. Now as they did not live in Jerusalem, the only end they could have in view was the public good—the general good; and so we read of several others who were not inhabitants of Jerusalem; and, what is worthy of notice, some of those who had a part of the wall allotted to them were so laborious as to get this part finished first, and then to help their neighbours. They did not stand idle when they had done their share. You will read in the twenty-fourth verse, and several parts of the chapter, that they rebuilt another piece. This should teach us, while we attend to our own personal interests, and the personal interests of those immediately connected with us, to cherish enlargedness of heart. Let no time be lost in idleness; that which can be spared from our own concerns, let us apply to the well-being of the world at large. Seek the good of all mankind. Labour all that in you lies to send the gospel throughout the whole land—yea, the whole world. Let your prayers and your efforts grasp nothing less than the world itself. It is in this way that we shall glorify God and be useful in our generations.

## LX.

[Funeral Sermon, delivered Feb. 28th, 1790.]

## CHRIST OUR SUBSTITUTE IN DEATH AND JUDGMENT.

“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”—Heb. ix. 27, 28.

THE truths here taught us are the most serious and interesting. None doubt the reality of death, and few that of judgment; but many live as if they credited neither. The sum of the text is, *Christ is our substitute, both in death and judgment*; and yet we die and must appear at judgment. To make this plain, observe, we are appointed to death and judgment in two ways:—First, By our subjection to corruption, or corporeal death, and to an appearance before God in judgment. In this view the appointment takes place upon mankind in general, good and bad, and that notwithstanding the death and mediation of Christ. Secondly, By the sentence of God as a Lawgiver. It was the sentence against man: “In the day thou eatest,” &c. In this view death includes more than a *subjection to corruption*; it includes its sting: and judgment includes more than *appearing*; it includes our final condemnation. This last is the meaning of the text. It speaks not of what actually takes place, but of what *must have taken place* had not the mediation of Christ interposed. The text speaks of the penal sentence of the Lawgiver, and then of our deliverance from that sentence through Christ, our substitute; so that though in some sense it is still appointed for men to die, and to appear before God in judgment, yet not in the sense of the text. *Believers* will find death divested of its sting, and judgment of its terror, ver. 28.

From the text thus explained we may make a few remarks:—

1. That the sentence which all mankind lie under, as sinners, is no less than a subjection to everlasting ruin. Some have supposed that the threatening, “In the day thou eatest thou shalt die,” meant no more than corporeal death, or subjection to bodily corruption; but if so, the mediation of Christ does not deliver us from any part of the sentence of the law, (for we are still subject to this,) which the apostle supposes here it does.

2. That the judgment here referred to is the judgment at the end of the world. Some have supposed it to refer to that which follows death immediately; but the whole text shows the contrary: it speaks of what we are subject to in death and judgment, and of Christ as our substitute in both. Two things require our consideration:

I. THE DOOM THAT LIES ON MEN AS BREAKERS OF GOD’S LAW.—The sentence is *awful*. We may judge what death and judgment would have been to us all, by what it is to those who die out of Christ. Think what death was to the old world, Sodom and Gomorrah, Korah and his company, Saul, Belshazzar, the rich fool, Judas, and others. This for substance was the doom upon us all. Two circumstances in particular in these deaths rendered them awful.

1. They were attended with *the loss of all their enjoyments*. Their all being in this world, ’tis gone, and gone for ever! None of this beyond the grave, nor the hope of it, or of any enjoyment whatever: even wicked enjoyment is gone.

2. They had a *load of guilt upon them when they left the world*, which would sink them lower than the grave. This is the sting of death! “I said

therefore unto you, That ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." And this is an essential part of that death to which the sentence of the law subjected us. It was usual, under the law, to transfer guilt by confessing it upon the head of the sacrifice, teaching us that, if *our* guilt was not transferred to Christ our sacrifice, it must lie upon our heads when we come to die and appear before God. Oh what a thing it is to go down to the grave with our blood upon our head! Could we leave this load behind, death would be divested of its chief terror. But this is not all: the sentence exposes us to a judgment *hercafter*. Death is not a going out of existence. We are accountable creatures, and must be accountable for all we do, and must have *stood* to the issue but for Christ, and must, after all, if we die out of Christ. O my hearers, this is true! Do think what judgment will be to those that die enemies to Christ, and thence learn what it would have been to us all but for him.

Three things in particular here deserve notice:—(1.) *It is a judgment that takes cognizance of the heart.*—All impositions are at an end. How different will characters then appear to what they have here! God is not mocked! (2.) *The character of the Judge.*—God is Judge himself! His eyes are flames of fire. He cannot be deceived. A God of impartial justice, he cannot be prepossessed or bribed. A God of Almighty power, Rev. xviii. 8. (3.) *The importance of the decision.*—It is final and decisive; no appeal from it! This will be the case of sinners, on whom the sentence of the law is executed, and must have been the case of all but for what follows, ver. 28. This leads us to consider,

II. THE DELIVERANCE WHICH BELIEVERS OBTAIN FROM THAT DOOM THROUGH THE SACRIFICE AND SECOND COMING OF CHRIST.—Not from subjection to corruption, nor yet from appearing before God in judgment. In this respect the text is true of all, though that is not the meaning of it. Good and bad, young and old, healthy and afflicted, wise and foolish; all must die. We must shortly, without distinction, part with all our earthly enjoyments, friends, property, &c., and all our religious opportunities will soon be over. Our bodies will be reduced to dust, and our souls appear before God. All this we must pass through, whatever we are, and notwithstanding the mediation of Christ; but yet we are delivered by him from every thing in death or judgment that can render it truly terrible. If we inquire *how*, we have an answer in the text.

1. It is through his having died for us, "To bear the sin of many." Observe, it is sin that is the sting of death; and Christ, by his death, has removed this sting away in behalf of all that believe in him; as the sacrifices bore the sins of Israel, and bore them away, so Christ by his death "hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." He bore the wrath due to our sin. The shaft of vengeance spent itself in his heart! Hence death becomes a sleep, sleeping in Jesus—a putting off this tabernacle—a departure. Hence Christians have met death with pleasure, though in himself the king of terrors. Death was originally under the power of Satan; but Christ by death has destroyed that power of Satan over death, and death now becomes Christ's servant and theirs: "Death is yours."

2. As our deliverance from the sting of death is through Christ's death, so our deliverance from the terror of judgment will be owing to Christ's standing our friend in that day. The terror of judgment is condemnation for sin, but Christ will be our Advocate. Observe, (1.) He came before to bear sin, but now *without* sin. (2.) He comes to *salvation*; to save our

bodies from the grave, and body and soul from condemnation; to give the final blow. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" (3.) This is to them, and them only, that look for him,—that love his appearing, 2 Pet. iii. 12; 2 Tim. iv. 8.

As to the deceased, we most of us knew little or nothing of him. I only knew that he was not destitute of an expectation of being "for ever with the Lord," and I hope that expectation was not in vain. And you, my friend, who are now deprived of your only remaining relative, you are left, it is true, in a world of temptation and affliction; yet you have, I trust, a Friend and a Brother who yet liveth, and one who is said to have loved his own that were in the world, and to love them to the end.

A word to the congregation. You have got to die, and it is a very serious matter whether this sentence be executed upon you in its terror: it must—it will—if out of Christ. Death will then have its sting, and Christ will come to your confusion.

To the church. We are about to commemorate his death. He hath wrought so great a deliverance—hath borne our sins. *Look for him.* Be disengaged. Have your work forward. "The Lord is at hand."

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## LXI.

### PASTORS REQUIRED TO FEED THE FLOCK OF CHRIST.

"Feed my sheep."—John xxi. 16.

THE conversation which passed between our Lord and Peter, of which the text forms a part, was designed to administer reproof, and to communicate forgiveness. The cutting question was calculated to wound him to the quick; the kind direction amounted to a full forgiveness. He might expect he had lost his office—but no—he shall be restored—"Feed my sheep."

There are a few things suggested by these words which have of late made some impression on my mind; particularly, the love of Christ to his people—my own duty as a pastor—and the character necessary for you to sustain, if you would thrive under the word. Let me notice,

I. THE LOVE OF CHRIST TO HIS PEOPLE, discovered in this charge to Peter.—You are to view him as a shepherd—the good Shepherd of the sheep—the chief Shepherd. The time also is worthy of notice; he had just laid down his life for the sheep; nay more, he had taken it again, (Heb. xiii. 20); and being now about to leave his flock in the world, as sheep among wolves, he commits them to his under-shepherd. There is a close connexion between his having died for them and his desire to have them fed; which is afterward recognized by the apostle Paul, in his farewell address to the elders of the church at Ephesus: "Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Observe three things in particular:—

1. *The interest he claims in them:*—"My sheep"—"*my* lambs." They are his as given him by the Father, John x. 29. They are his as having purchased them with his blood, Acts xx. 28. And they are his as being the travail of his soul, the reward of his death, which "satisfied" him.

2. *The qualification he requires in their shepherd*—Love! He would not trust them with one who did not love him. One who did not love him,

a hireling, would starve them, or poison them, and flee in a time of danger, John x. 12. Give him the fleece, the flock may care for themselves. But if we love Christ, we shall love his people for his sake. We shall feel a subordinate interest in them. It is by this a good shepherd is distinguished from a hireling, John x. 11. Love will inspire vigilance and boldness in feeding the flock, and defending them from danger. David was a genuine shepherd, when he risked his life to save a lamb.

3. *The provision he has made for their being fed.*—Under-shepherds cannot furnish the pasture; the utmost we can do is to lead you into it. But Christ does more. He not only provides shepherds, but pasture—the gospel, of which he is the subject.

II. THE DUTY OF A MINISTER TO HIS PEOPLE.—It is to “feed” them. The word here rendered “feed” signifies the whole duty of a shepherd, and not merely to supply them with food—to govern them, protect them, to care for them; or (as Peter himself expresses it) “to take the oversight of them.” To discharge this duty as it demands is a great matter.

1. It requires that we be *divested of a selfish spirit.*—The description of an idol shepherd, by Zechariah, (xi. 16, 17,) has of late been much on my mind. Two evils hang over him who is his own idol, or who wishes to be idolized by his people—a blast on his labours, and a mind void of judgment.

2. It requires that we be *conversant with the gospel.*—How else can we lead others into it? If we be worldly-minded, we shall feed your evil principles and propensities, but not your graces; at best, only your mental faculties. Many are thus fed by ingenious, speculative preachers. But we must feed your best principles—your faith, hope, and love. Lord! who is sufficient for these things?

III. THE CHARACTER NECESSARY FOR YOU TO SUSTAIN IN ORDER TO THRIVE UNDER THE WORD.—You must be Christ’s sheep, or you will not know his voice, the gospel will not be the food you will relish. If you are his sheep, you will enter in at the door. Christ is the door. You will know his voice, and follow him. You will enter his fold, uniting yourself to his people; and you will go in and out, and find pasture. You will enter into the spirit of the church, as described by Solomon: “Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest; where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon,” &c.

Sustaining this character, you will not famish for want of food. The gospel is rich pasture. Having led you into it on earth, may I be able at last to give an account, both of you and myself, with joy, and not with grief!

## LXII.

[Charge delivered to a young Minister at his Ordination.\*]

### SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE NECESSARY FOR THE MINISTRY.

“He was a burning and a shining light.”—John v. 35.

In addressing you, my dear brother, on this solemn occasion, I shall not undertake so much to communicate anything new as to remind you of

\* The *ten* which follow this were also delivered on similar occasions.

what you know, and have felt already. You are aware that there are two main objects to be attained in the work of the Christian ministry—*enlightening the minds* and *affecting the hearts* of the people. These are the usual means by which the work of God is accomplished. Allow me to remind you that, in order to the attainment of these objects, you yourself must be under their influence. If you would enlighten others, you must be “a shining light” yourself. And if you would affect others, you yourself must feel; your own heart must “burn” with holy ardour. You must be “a *burning* and a *shining* light.”

It is not enough that you should be what is called a *popular preacher*. A man may have gifts, so as to shine in the eyes of the multitude, almost as bright as he does in his own eyes; and yet possess little or nothing of *spiritual light*—light, the tendency of which is to transform the heart. So also a man may burn with zeal, as Jehu did, and yet have little or no true love to God, or affection for the souls of men. *Spiritual light* and *holy love* are the qualities which Christ here commends.

You will give your candid attention, my dear brother, while I endeavour to remind you of the necessity of each of these, in the different parts of your important work:—in the great work of preaching the gospel—in presiding in the church—in visiting your people—and in your whole demeanour through life.

I. In the great work of PREACHING THE GOSPEL.—O my brother, in this department we had need resemble the living creatures mentioned by Ezekiel, (chap. i. 18,) “full of eyes.” We had almost need, in one view, to be made up of pure intellect—to be all light. I shall not attempt to decide how much knowledge is necessary, of men and things, of past and present times, of the church and the world; but shall confine myself to two or three particulars, as specimens.

1. How necessary is it to understand in some good degree *the holy character of God!*—It is this to which you will find that men in general are blind. They conceive of God as if he were such a one as themselves . . . . And hence they fancy they are not enemies to him. You will have to point out the true character of God, that the sinner may see his own deformity, and not have the enmity of his heart concealed from his eyes. A just view of the holy character of God will also be one of the best preservatives against error in other respects. Almost all the errors in the world proceed from ignorance of the true character of God. To what else can be attributed the errors of Socinianism, Arianism, and Antinomianism? From degraded views of God’s character arise diminutive notions of the evil of sin—of its just demerit—of our lost condition—of our need of a great Saviour—and of the work of the Spirit. O my brother, may you shed abroad this light with unsullied lustre! And, in order to this, commune much with God in private; since there is no way of knowing the true character of another so well as by personal, private intercourse.

2. A knowledge of *Christ, as the Mediator* between God and man, is necessary.—“This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” Here, also, men are greatly ignorant. He is in the world, and the world knows him not. It must be our concern, as ministers, to know him; and, comparatively speaking, “to know nothing else” . . . . and this that we may diffuse the knowledge of him to others. The glory of Christ’s character is such that if he were but viewed in a true light, and not through the false mediums of prejudice and the love of sin, but through the mirror of the gospel, he must be loved, John iv. 29, 39—42. Here, my brother, we need to be intimately acquainted with Christ, that we may be able on all occasions to give him a just character—that we

may be able to tell of his dignity, his love, the generous principles of his undertaking, and how nobly he executed the arduous enterprise.

3. A knowledge of *human nature as created* is necessary.—We shall be unskilful workmen, unless we are acquainted with the materials on which we have to work. It is not more necessary for a surgeon or a physician to understand the anatomy of the human body, than it is for ministers to understand what may be called the anatomy of the soul. We had need enter into all the springs of action. In particular, we must be very careful to distinguish between primary and criminal passions. God habitually addresses the former, and so should we, but not the latter; the latter being only the abuse of the principles implanted in our nature. To be more explicit, God has created us with the love of possession, but the excess of this love becomes covetousness and idolatry. God has implanted within us a principle of emulation; but the abuse of this is pride and ambition. God has created us with the love of pleasure; but this indulged to excess becomes sensuality. Now the gospel never addresses itself to our corrupt passions; but the word of God is full of appeals to those principles of our nature with which we are created. For example: in his word, God addresses himself to our love of possession; and points to “an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away”—to the principle of emulation; and presents to our view “a crown”—to our love of pleasure; and informs us that “in his presence there is fulness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore.” And, in short, in the same way, he addresses the principles of zeal, love, hatred, shame, fear, revenge, &c. And so must we.

4. A knowledge of human nature *as depraved* is necessary.—Without this knowledge, we shall be unable to trace and detect the workings of a wicked heart. Sin is a deceitful thing, and we are apt to be imposed upon by its specious names. Parsimoniousness is called frugality; prodigality, generosity; bitterness of spirit in reproving, fidelity; and resentment, a becoming spirit. We need therefore to know the root of the disease, and the various ways in which it operates. In order to effect a cure, the knowledge of the disease is indispensable; and in order to attain to this knowledge, we must study the various symptoms by which the disorder may be distinguished.

5. A knowledge of human nature *as sanctified by the Spirit* is necessary.—Without this, we shall be unable to trace the work of God in the soul; and unable to fan the gentle flame of Divine love in the genuine Christian, and to detect and expose the various counterfeits.

You will need also, my brother, a heart *warmed* with Divine things, or you will never be “a burning and a shining light.” When we are thinking or preaching, we need to *burn*, as well as shine. When we study, we may rack our brains, and form plans; but unless “our hearts burn within us,” all will be a mere skeleton—our thoughts mere bones; whatever be their number, they will be all dry—very dry; and if we do not feel what we say, our preaching will be poor dead work. Affected zeal will not do. A gilded fire may shine, but it will not warm. We may smite with the hand, and stamp with the foot, and throw ourselves into violent agitations; but if we feel not, it is not likely the people will—unless, indeed, it be a feeling of disgust. But suppose there be no affectation, nor any deficiency of good and sound doctrine; yet if in our work we feel no inward satisfaction, we shall resemble a mill-stone—preparing food for others, the value of which we are unable to appreciate ourselves. Indeed, without feeling, we shall be incapable of preaching any truth or of inculcating any duty aright. How can we display the evil of sin, the love of Christ, or any other important truth, unless we feel it? How can we preach against sin, without feeling a



holy indignation against it? It is this that will cause us, while we denounce sin, to weep over the sinner. Otherwise, we may deal in flings and personalities; but these will only irritate; they will never reclaim. O! if ever we do any good in our work, it must be the effect of love to God and love to men—love to the souls of men, while we detest, and expose, and denounce their sins. How could Paul have pursued his work with the ardour and intenseness which he manifested, if his heart had not burned with holy love?

II. Spiritual light and holy love are equally necessary in PRESIDING IN THE CHURCH OF GOD.

Wisdom and love are necessary, calmly to lay down rules of discipline—to solve difficult questions—to prepare and digest, in concurrence with the deacons, such matters as require to be laid before the church—to nip little differences in the bud—to mediate between contending parties, &c. My brother, think of the example of the Lord Jesus, who, in his intercourse with his disciples, saluted them with this benediction—"Peace be with you!" The great art of presiding in a church, so as to promote its welfare, is to be neutral between the members, always on the side of God and righteousness, and to let them see that, whatever your opinion may be, you really love them.

III. These qualities are necessary in the more private duty of VISITING THE PEOPLE.

A considerable part of the pastoral office consists in visiting the people, especially the afflicted. Paul could appeal to the elders of the church at Ephesus, that he had taught them publicly and "from house to house." It is of great consequence that, in your pastoral visits, you should preserve the character of "a burning and a shining light." Pastoral visits should not degenerate into religious gossiping—a practice in which some have indulged to the disgrace of religion. Unused to habits of reflection, they feel no relish for solitude; and therefore, to employ the time which hangs so heavy on their hands, they saunter about to see their friends, and to ask them how they are. Nor is this the worst. Satan promptly furnishes a subject where there is such a dearth; and hence gossiping has generally produced tales of slander, and practices which have proved a scandal to the Christian name! I trust, my brother, you know the preciousness of time too well to squander it away in idle visits. And yet visiting is an essential part of your work, that you may become acquainted with the circumstances, the spiritual necessities of your people. They will be able to impart their feelings freely and unreservedly; and you will be able to administer the appropriate counsel to much better purpose than you possibly can from the pulpit, and with greater particularity than would be becoming in a public address. Only let us burn while we shine. Let a savour of Christ accompany all our instructions. A minister who maintains an upright, affectionate conduct, may say almost any thing, in a way of just reproof, without giving offence.

IV. Spiritual light and holy love are necessary in YOUR WHOLE Demeanour THROUGH LIFE. May you, my brother, shine in holy wisdom, and burn with ardent love. You will need them, wherever you go—in whatever you engage—that you may walk as one of the children of light.

Allow me to point out a few things which I have found of use, to conduce to these ends:—

1. *Read the lives of good men*—the lives of such men as God has distinguished for gifts, and graces, and usefulness. Example has a great influence. The Scriptures abound with such examples. And, blessed be God, we have some now.

2. *Study the word of God, above all other books, and pray over it.*—It is

this will set our hearts on fire. There are no such motives exhibited any where as there—no such exhibitions of wisdom and love.

3. *Read men*, as well as books, *and your own heart*, in order that you may read others.—Copyists, you know, are generally bunglers. There is nothing that equals what is taken immediately from the life. We need always be making our observations, wherever we are, or wherever we go. If we get a system of human nature, or experience, or any thing else, from books, rather than from our own knowledge, it will be liable to two disadvantages. First, It is not likely to be so near the truth; for systems which go through several hands are like successive copies of a painting, every copy of the preceding one is more unlike the original—or like the telling of a tale, the circumstances of which you do not know of your own personal knowledge: every time it is repeated there is some variation, and thus it becomes further removed from the truth. Thus Agrippa showed his wisdom, when, instead of depending on the testimony of others, he determined to hear Paul himself. Secondly, If it be correct, still it will not be so serviceable to *you* as if it were a system of your own working. Saul's armour might be better than David's sling; but not to him, seeing he had not proved it.

4. *Live the life of a Christian*, as well as of a minister.—Read as one, preach as one, converse as one—to *be profited*, as well as to profit others. One of the greatest temptations of a ministerial life is to handle Divine truth as ministers, rather than as Christians—for others, rather than for ourselves. But the word will not profit them that *preach* it, any more than it will them that hear it, unless it be “mixed with faith.” If we study the Scriptures as Christians, the more familiar we are with them, the more we shall feel their importance; but if our object be only to find out something to say to others, our familiarity with them will prove a snare. It will resemble that of soldiers, and doctors, and undertakers with death; the more familiar we are with them, the less we shall feel their importance. See Prov. xxii. 17, 18; Psal. i. 2, 3.

5. *Commune with God in private*.—Walking with God in the closet is a grand means, with his blessing, of illuminating our minds and warming our hearts. When Moses came down from the mount, his face shone bright, and his heart burned with zeal for the honour of God and the good of his people. Alas! alas! for want of this. . . . See Jer. x. 21.

6. Hold forth the word of life, not only by precept, but by *a holy practice*.—“Let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is in heaven.” Without this, in vain will be all our pretensions to being “burning and shining lights.”

My dear brother, allow me to conclude with an earnest prayer, that you may long continue a “burning and a shining light” to this church; and that, after having “turned many to righteousness,” you may shine as a distinguished star in the firmament for ever and ever!

## LXIII.

## ON AN INTIMATE AND PRACTICAL ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE WORD OF GOD.

“Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.”—Ezra vii. 10.

MY dear brother, the long and intimate friendship which has subsisted between us will, I hope, render any apology unnecessary for my occupying this situation upon this solemn occasion. I should certainly have felt a pleasure in hearing some senior minister; but with your desire, on the ground of intimate friendship, I feel disposed to comply. I feel a *peculiar* pleasure in addressing *you*; for I can speak to you as a friend—a brother—an equal—an acquaintance, with whom I have often taken sweet counsel, and walked to the house of God. You will not, I am sure, misinterpret my freedom, or suppose that I wish to assume any superiority over you, or to dictate to you. You expect me to insist upon the importance of the work in which you are engaged; and for this purpose I have directed my attention to the passage I have read, and would recommend to you the example of Ezra.

Example has a strong tendency to excite us to emulation; and in Ezra the scribe you have the character of an eminent servant of the most high God held up to your admiration and imitation. Ministers in the New Testament are called “scribes, instructed unto the kingdom of heaven;” and in Ezra you have the character of “a ready scribe.” There are four things in his character upon which I shall discourse, and which I would recommend to you.

I. SEEK THE LAW, or will, of God.—I need not inform you, my brother, that the *law*, in the Old Testament especially, is commonly to be understood as synonymous with the *Scriptures*, the *word*, or the *revealed will* of God. The Scriptures were then as commonly called “the *law* of the Lord” as they are now called “the *word* of God.” So the term is to be understood here. To “seek the law of the Lord” is the same as to ascertain his mind and will in his sacred word.

You are to “feed the people with knowledge and understanding;” but you cannot do this without understanding yourself. Your lips are to “keep knowledge,” and the people are to “seek the law at your mouth;” but, in order to communicate it to them, you must seek it at the mouth of God.

I. *Seek it*, my brother.—It will never be found without. It is a mine, in which you will have to dig. And it is a precious mine, which will well repay all your labour.

2. *Seek it at the fountain-head*.—You feel, I doubt not, a great esteem for many of your brethren now living, and admire the writings of some who are now no more; and you will read their productions with attention and pleasure. But whatever excellence your brethren possess, it is all borrowed; and it is mingled with error. Learn your religion from the Bible. Let that be your decisive rule. Adopt not a body of sentiments, or even a single sentiment, solely on the authority of any man—however great, however respected. Dare to think for yourself. Human compositions are fallible. But the Scriptures were written by men who wrote as they were inspired by the Holy Spirit. Human writings on religion resemble preaching—they are useful only so far as they illustrate the Scriptures, and induce us to search them for ourselves.

3. *Seek the will of God in every part of the Bible*.—It is very true that

some parts of the Bible are more interesting than others. But "*all Scripture is profitable*" and necessary. Do not take this part and leave that. Some people foolishly talk of Arminian texts, and Calvinistic texts, as if Scripture were repugnant to itself! That system, whatever it be called, cannot be the right one, that rejects any one part of Scripture whatever.

4. Seek it *perseveringly*.—Do not reckon yourself so to have found it as to be self-sufficient. Be open to conviction from every quarter. Seek it by reading, by meditation, by prayer, by conversation—by all the means that offer. Do not reject information from an inferior, or even an enemy. In the study of the Scriptures you will always be a learner.

II. PREPARE YOUR HEART to seek the law of the Lord.—There is a preparation of heart in which we are wholly *passive*, which is, in the strictest sense, the work of God; and, without this, woe be to any of us that should dare to set up for teachers of his law and gospel!—But there is also a preparation of heart in which we are *active*; and this is the preparedness intended in the text. In this, even, God is the cause: he actuates; but then we act. Of this preparation we have to speak; and it consists in prayer, and self-examination, and meditation. Your work is a *course*, and for this you must prepare by "girding up the loins of your mind"—a *fight*, and you must "put on the whole armour of God." The work of God should not be entered upon rashly. God frequently brings his servants through a train of instructions and trials, that they may be fitted for it. Moses was forty years at court, and forty years a shepherd. These were his days of preparation. Christ prepared his disciples by his instructions during his life, and previous to their great work they prepared themselves, Acts i.

Such preparation of heart is not only necessary for your *entrance* into the pastoral office, but also for your *continuance* in it. You will find that every exercise requires it. You do not need being guarded against that erroneous notion of so trusting to the Spirit as to neglect personal preparation for your public labours. But this preparedness is not only requisite for speaking the truth in public, but as well for seeking it in private. Let all your private meditations be mingled with prayer. You will study your Bible to wonderful advantage, if you go to it *spiritually-minded*. It is this which causes us to see the beauty and to feel the force of many parts of Scripture, to which, in a carnal state of mind, we are blind and stupid. If we go to the study of the Bible wise in our own conceits, and self-sufficient, we shall get no good. When we would be taught from God's word, we must learn as little children. Again, If we go to the Bible merely, or chiefly, to find something to say to the people, without respect to our own souls, we shall make but poor progress. My brother, study Divine truth as a *Christian*, and not merely as a *minister*. Consider your own soul as deeply interested; and dread the thought of cultivating others, while you suffer your own heart to remain uncultivated. If you study Divine truth as a *Christian*, your being constantly engaged in the study will promote your growth in grace; you will be like "a tree planted by rivers of water;" you will not only bring forth fruit for the people, but your leaf shall not wither, and whatever you do shall prosper. But if merely as a minister, the reverse. I believe it is a fact, that where a minister is wicked, he is the most hardened against conviction of any character.

III. KEEP THE LAW.—"Do it." The apostle Paul, in writing to Timothy, is very particular as to personal religion, in a bishop, or pastor. "Take heed to *thyself*, and to the doctrine."—"Keep *thyself* pure."—"Be thou *an example* of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." Observe, too, the connexion in which this exhortation stands—

“Let no man despise thy youth;” plainly intimating that a holy example will render even youth respectable. Your Lord and Master both *did* and taught the will of God.

1. *Dread nothing more than recommending that to your people to which you do not attend yourself.*—You may preach with the fervour of an angel; but if your practice, your habitual deportment, be inconsistent, all you do will be in vain.

2. *More is expected from you than from others.*—A wicked preacher is of all characters the most contemptible. Even the profane despise him.

3. *You will attend to practical preaching.*—But how can you either exhort or reprove, if your people should ever have it in their power to say, “Physician, heal thyself?”—“Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?”

4. Attend not only to such duties as fall under the eye of man, but *walk with God*—in your family, and in your closet. It will require all your wisdom to bring up your children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;” and if you rule not well in your own house, you cannot expect to maintain a proper influence in the church of God. Beware also of omitting secret devotions. Conversing with men and things may brighten your gifts; but communion with God is necessary to improve your graces.

IV. *TEACH* in Israel the statutes and judgments of God.—It is not for me to dictate to you what doctrines you are to teach, or what precepts you should enforce. But I hope you will evince your sincerity by preaching in the main such things as, in your confession of faith, you have just avowed; not however to the neglect of other points, which could scarcely be expected to be introduced in such a document. The more you are acquainted with the word of God, the more you will find it abounds with truths, reviving truths too, which seldom or never have a place in confessions of faith. But, passing this, allow me to give you a few general hints on the subject of teaching.

1. *Let Christ and his apostles be your examples.*—Teach as they taught. It would be worth while to read over the Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles, if it were only to discover their manner of teaching. Dare to avow every truth which they avowed; and address your audience in such language as they addressed to theirs, and that without softening it down, or explaining it away.

2. *Give every part of the truth its due proportion.*—Preach every truth in the proportion in which it is introduced by God in his word. You will find some people attached to one class of truths, and others to another class; but be you attached to *all*. If you are habitually dwelling upon one truth, it must be to the neglect of others; and it is at your peril to keep back *any* part of the counsel of God! If you preach not the great doctrines of the gospel, such as the entire depravity of our nature, the atonement of Christ, the work of the Spirit, &c., the people of God will be famished. If you preach these doctrines, to the neglect of close practical addresses, they will be in danger of a religious surfeit. If you preach doctrinally, some may call you an Antinomian; if you preach practically, others may call you a legalist. But go on, my brother: this is a kind of dirt that won’t stick. Preach the law evangelically, and the gospel practically; and God will bless you, and make you a blessing.

3. *Dare to teach unwelcome truths.*—The Christian ministry must be exercised with affection and fidelity. Study not to offend any man; yet keep not back important truth, even if it do offend. You must not enter the pulpit to indulge your own temper; but neither are you at liberty to

indulge the humour of others. Be more concerned to commend yourself to the *consciencess* of your people than to their good opinion.

4. *Give Scriptural proof of what you teach.*—Do not imagine that mere assertion will do. Evidence ought to form the body of your discourses. Such expressions as “*I say*,” uttered in the most magisterial tone, will, after all, *prove* nothing—except the unwarrantable confidence of the preacher.

5. *Consider yourself as standing engaged to teach all that hear you*—rich and poor, young and old, godly and ungodly—“warning the wicked, lest his blood be required at your hands.” Seek the salvation of every man’s soul. This was the apostolic method; “warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom.” Whether every individual of your congregation *will accept* your message is another question. *Your* concern should be, not to intermeddle with what is not revealed, but to “preach the gospel to every creature;” and to pray for *all*, as Paul did for Agrippa and his court, without distinction: “I would that—*all that hear me* this day were—altogether such as I am.”

6. *Teach privately* as well as publicly.—Make your visits among your people subservient to instruction and edification. Take the example of Paul, Acts xx. 20. Let a savour of Christ accompany you in your intercourse with your flock. This will greatly contribute to your public usefulness.

My brother, seek the law of God—seek it with a prepared heart—reduce it to practice—and teach it diligently; and you will be, not only, like Ezra, a “ready” scribe; but “a scribe well-instructed in the kingdom of God.”

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#### LXIV.

##### MINISTERS APPOINTED TO ROOT OUT EVIL, AND TO CULTIVATE GOOD.

“I have this day set thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, and to build, and to plant.”—Jer. i. 10.

THIS language, my brother, is not in every sense applicable to the present occasion. The prophet’s was an extraordinary, yours is an ordinary office. His was to be exercised over nations and kingdoms, yours over a church and congregation. Yet, even in his case, there was no civil power—he was no pope—nor was he invested with the authority of a modern bishop. All the power he had pertained to his office as a prophet; he had no secular authority; he pulled down and built up *prophetically*. And though you have no such power as this, by extraordinary inspiration, yet, in a way of declaring the truths of God’s word, “whosoever sins you remit, they are remitted, and whosoever sins you retain, they are retained.”

Your labour is less than the prophet’s was, but the nature of your work is much the same; and the same spirit of faithfulness is required over a few things as over many things.

Your work is divided into two parts. One is, to discourage evil: “to root out, to pull down, to destroy, and to throw down.” The other is, to encourage good: “to build, and to plant.”

The imagery, you perceive, is of two kinds—that of a house, and that of a garden.

The church is God’s house, God’s building; and you are appointed to be a labourer “together with God,” to pull down, and destroy, and throw down the rubbish, and then to build upon a new and good foundation.

The church is also God's garden; and you are appointed to work in it, and keep it in order, to root out the weeds, and to plant and cultivate the goodly fruit:

Give me your attention, my dear brother, while I inquire what are the evils you are to oppose, and the good you are to encourage, and the methods to be adopted in pursuing these objects. Let us,

I. Inquire WHAT ARE THE EVILS AGAINST WHICH YOU MUST CONTEND, AND THE METHODS YOU ARE TO ADOPT IN THIS OPPOSITION.

1. *By your public ministry root out errors in doctrine.*—Overturn them—not by empty declamation, but by solid Scriptural evidence—not by the wild fury of a bigot, but with the pure love of the Christian pastor, whose care it should be to preserve his charge from things that tend to the ruin of their souls. Particularly, if you love *God*, you will be concerned to root up every thing that opposes the glory of his character and moral government. Vindicate the ways of God to men against all their hard thoughts and speeches. Vindicate his law, both in its precepts and penalty. You have observed, I doubt not, that this is the foundation for the grace of the gospel. If you love *Christ*, you will root up those principles which degrade his dignity and set aside his atonement. If you love *your people*, you will root up those principles which endanger the salvation of their souls; such as self-righteousness and presumptuous hope. There is plenty of work to remove the covering and to pull down the vain expectations of sinners . . . You have seen, and will see, many whose habitual deportment proves them enemies to the cross, who yet entertain hopes of heaven: try and find out the delusive ground of their hope, and expose it; only be careful to avoid personalities, which will irritate rather than convince.

2. *By leading the church, in the exercise of faithful discipline, root out evil-doers.*—Churches which in former years have been respectable and prosperous are fast falling into decay for want of discipline. Some have pleaded the parable of the wheat and tares as an excuse for negligence in discipline; but this is a perversion. The field is the *world*, not the *church*. The application of the principle to the church would render all the rules of the gospel superfluous.

3. *By rendering your occasional visits subservient to the purposes of conviction and correction.*—You may in this way root up many evils which you cannot by either of the other means. There are cases which you cannot touch in the pulpit, on account of their singularity and minuteness, without being personal, which, as I just said, will irritate rather than reclaim. There are also cases which do not fall under church censure, which yet should come within the cognizance of a faithful pastor. This, I confess, is a difficult part of your work; and some, for fear of giving offence, have declined it: but suppose offence were given, if you are in the path of duty, what have you to fear? Some will say, "If such and such persons are offended, the cause will sink." Then let it sink. You may safely leave that, however, to Christ; if it should therefore sink, he will not blame you. But what cause must that be that is upheld by such unworthy means? After all, however, there is a way of managing these things by which offence is seldom or ever given. The great secret is to mingle love with your fidelity. This was Paul's method with the Corinthians. Consider the peculiar temptations and constitutional or educational tendencies of the party, and mingle counsel and encouragement with censure. We proceed to inquire,

II. WHAT IS THAT GOOD WHICH YOU ARE TO ENCOURAGE, or what is the work denoted by building and planting? This is a much more agreeable part of the subject than the other, though not more necessary.

In general, encourage and impart *just sentiments*. The truth has ever been God's honoured instrument in doing good. Encourage and cultivate *holy tempers and dispositions*. Labour to build up your people in these things. That is not always the best ministry that draws the most followers, but that which does the most good. When I see a company of modest, humble, upright, lovely, diligent, holy people, I see the best evidence of a good minister. But let me be a little more particular.

*First, AS A BUILDER—*

1. *Be sure that you lay a right foundation.*—Christ is the foundation of God's laying, the foundation of the apostles and prophets; and you must lay him, as the foundation of faith and holiness. All true holiness is built upon faith in Christ. Many preachers who profess to entertain a great regard for a holy life, and deal much in moral declamations, omit this part of their work.

2. *See that your materials be fitly framed together,* Eph. ii. 21. Three things belong to this: (1.) That the materials be *hewed and squared*. What would a company of proud, self-willed, prejudiced professors do together with the godly? These sins must be cut off. They ought to be like the stones of the temple before you lay them in the house of God. (2.) That they be *formed by the same rule*. The stones must not only be cut even, but so as to fit the foundation and each other, or they cannot be fitly framed. Whatever variety there may be in some respects, there must be uniformity in others. No society can exist without similarity of views. Our hearts must be renewed after the image of Christ; and if they fit and fall in with his gospel and government, they will fit one another. But all attempts to build men into religious society without this will be vain. "For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" &c.—See 2 Cor. vi. 14—18. "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" (3.) That, in being placed in the building, *every one be put in that situation for which he is formed*.—Some have splendid gifts, and are like stones in the front of the building, for ornament and strength. Others have more private excellences; but, though less conspicuous, they may not be less useful. Some are like Barnabas, affectionate; and excel in seeking out obscure humble inquirers, Acts ix. 27. Others are wise in counsel and grave in deportment. Every gift should be so disposed of as that it shall be of the greatest use to the whole, otherwise the building will not be fitly framed together. Where offices are filled with men because they are men of property, it is often otherwise.

3. *So frame the whole as that it may be a fit habitation for God.*—It must be God's house, not yours. Beware that you go not about it as Nebuchadnezzar went about Babylon—"This is the house which *I* have built"—this is *my* house! I trust you have no greater desire than that God would take up his abode with you. Well—build you but upon his foundation, and by his rule, and he *will* dwell with you. All buildings are with a view to habitation.

*Secondly, AS A PLANTER,* prepare the soil by searching and convincing doctrine.—Sow "wholly a right seed." When you see the plants growing up, give attention to them. Cultivate them by every means, and pray that they may be watered by the Holy Spirit.

Allow me a word or two, my brother, particularly applicable to yourself individually.

1. While you root out and pull down, and build and plant, in *God's* house and vineyard, *do not overlook your own*. Personal religion is of the utmost importance to a minister.



2. Take into consideration that you are "a labourer together with God." He that employs you will reward you. Look, my brother, beyond the grave for your reward. We have but little here; but if we had much, it would be an awful thing to receive that for our reward!

## LXV.

## MINISTERS SHOULD BE CONCERNED NOT TO BE DESPISED.

"Let no man despise thee."—Titus ii. 15.

My brother, I feel a pleasure in the work of this day, partly from the love I bear to you, and partly from the love I feel towards the church. I trust you will receive a word of advice on this solemn occasion with candour and attention.

You will observe the passage is not an address to the people, not to despise their minister; but to the minister, not to be despised by the people. If you ask how you are to prevent this, I answer, Contempt is not a voluntary feeling. It is not in the power of men to despise *some* characters. They may dislike them; they may affect to ridicule them; but they cannot in their hearts despise them. If a minister conducts himself in character, no man will be able to despise him. This, then, is the sentiment which I wish to impress upon you.

Your work as a pastor may be distinguished into three departments—the pulpit, the church, and the world—in each of which I hope you will so conduct yourself as that no man shall be able to despise you. Let me offer to your consideration a few particulars under each.

I. What concerns you IN THE PULPIT, or in the work of preaching the gospel.

1. *Avoid all affectation in your manner.*—Do not affect the man of learning by useless criticisms: many do this, only to display their knowledge.—Nor yet the *orator*, by high-sounding words, or airs, or gestures. Useful learning and an impressive delivery should by no means be slighted; but they must not be affected, or men will be sure to despise you.

2. *Avoid self-seeking in your ends.*—Preach not yourself, but Christ Jesus. Seek not the approbation of men for yourself, but for your doctrine. Study to commend the gospel to the consciences of your hearers, rather than your own orthodoxy, or ingenuity, or zeal, to their admiration. If, instead of endeavouring to secure their reception of the gospel message, you are concerned to recommend yourself to their applause, you will be sure to be despised.

3. *Avoid vulgarity and low wit.*—Though the pulpit is not the place for affected pomposity, neither is it the place for mean and low language. Few men are more contemptible than those who study to introduce vulgar nonsense and jocose anecdotes, to make people laugh. Sound speech, sound sense, and the greatest seriousness, adorn the pulpit. Without these, you will be despised.

4. *Do not advance sentiments without being able to support them by Scripture evidence.*—Many content themselves with assertions without proof, and make vehemence supply the place of evidence. But this will cause you to be despised by men of understanding.

5. *Beware that you do not preach an unfelt gospel.*—If you do, it will be seen, and you will be despised. It will be seen that, though you affect to

be in earnest, you do not feel; and that you scarcely believe your own doctrine. We may get into a habit of talking for the truth, and pleading for holiness, and yet be dead ourselves; and if so, we shall be sure to be despised.

6. *Let not the fear of man deter you from declaring the whole counsel of God.*—Insist on every Divine truth and duty. Where interest or friendship stand in the way, it may be trying; but if you yield, the very parties to whom you yield will despise you. Speak but the truth in love, and speak the whole truth, and you will commend yourself to every man's conscience, when you can do no more.

7. *Never degrade the pulpit by indulging in personalities.*—These are for private admonition. "Rebuke with all authority;" but let your personal rebukes be private. To introduce them in the pulpit is unmanly, and would render you despicable. Let us apply the language,

II. TO YOUR BEHAVIOUR IN THE CHURCH, AND AMONG YOUR FELLOW CHRISTIANS.

1. *Do not lord it over God's heritage.*—You will have to preside in the church, and direct its measures; but never assume the lordly priest. Expect your judgment, in some cases, to be overruled, and learn to yield with cheerfulness when the measures you wish to introduce appear to be opposed to the opinion and desires of the majority of your brethren. It is not with a minister of the gospel as with a minister of state—that he must have a majority, or he cannot stand his ground. If we "look on the things of others," we may, in non-essentials, after speaking our minds, yield and be happy. But if we are determined to carry every point which appears to us desirable, in spite of the opinion of our brethren, though we may not always succeed, we shall invariably be despised for the attempt.

2. *Yet have a judgment of your own.*—This will become you on every subject; and where it is of importance you ought to be firm and resolute. A minister must not be borne down by the capriciousness of a few. He who is easily turned aside from a good object, and will bear insult without a proper manifestation of his displeasure, will be despised as much as a lordly high priest. If a minister be not firm, discipline will, in many cases, be neglected. People have their friends, and relatives, and favourites; and very few, though the operation be bloodless, have sufficient regard for rectitude to act upon the principle of the sons of Levi.—See Exod. xxxii. 17—29. But you must, or you will be despised.

3. *Do not affect the gentleman in your visits.*—Do not assume airs of consequence, and take liberties in families, as if, because you are a minister, you are therefore superior as a man. I do not say, do not *be* a gentleman; but do not *affect* the great man. Real gentility, and urbanity, and politeness are no mean or despicable attainments. There was much Christian politeness in the apostle Paul. But the affectation of the fine gentleman is great folly; and no men are more despised than those who strut about with lordly dignity, and give themselves consequential airs. You had much better feel yourself a Christian, and consider that you are associating with your fellow Christians, or with those who expect you to exhibit a pattern for their imitation.

4. *Yet preserve a dignity of manner and demeanour.*—There is no occasion for you, in order to avoid the affectation of gentility, to sink into low buffoonery, vulgarity, or drollery. My brother, the fear of God, and a deep sense of religion, will effectually preserve you from these extremes, and render you respectable, instead of contemptible.

5. *Beware of being a loiterer.*—Do not acquire a habit of wandering about and doing nothing. Visit, and visit "from house to house." But look

well to your visits: "*preach* from house to house." There is work enough in a congregation for a minister to do; but nothing renders him more contemptible and despised than a habit of religious gossiping. Let us apply the text,

III. To your general deportment IN THE WORLD.

1. *Let your conduct correspond with your preaching.*—Men will watch you. You may put off the preacher in mixed company; but you must never put off the man of God—the Christian. Whatever you may be in the pulpit, if in the world you be frothy, vain, contentious, captious, unfeeling, unjust, or make engagements you cannot fulfil, you will be despised. On the contrary, consistency of character will wear, and live down opposition.

2. *Never be ashamed of religion in any company.*—There is no need to introduce it on all occasions, and in all companies. This would render you despised one way. But be not the subject of cowardly timidity. That would render you equally, if not more, despicable. There is nothing in true religion but what admits of a rational defence. There wants nothing to defend religion but firmness of mind. But if you are ashamed of the cause you have espoused, its opponents will heartily despise you.

To CONCLUDE.—If the contempt of *men* be such a matter of dread, how much more the contempt of *God!* Then so conduct yourself that you may not be ashamed, and not be despised, at *his* coming!

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## LXVI.

### MINISTERS FELLOW LABOURERS WITH GOD.

"We are labourers together with God."—1 Cor. iii. 9.

My dear brother, in every address of this kind I wish to be understood as assuming no kind of authority whatever; but simply as concurring in the work of the day, and as presenting to the consideration of my brother in the ministry a few observations suited to the occasion.

The words we have selected afford us an important view of the Christian ministry—co-operators with God! Not, indeed, as co-ordinate, but as subordinate. We labour under him. It is not our husbandry, nor our building, but God's; and the design of the apostle was to cut off the vain-glorious in men to which the Corinthians were so addicted, saying, I am of Paul, or I am of Apollos, or I am of Cephas. Yet it affords a most honourable and animating view of the Christian ministry—fellow labourers with God! I shall consider the passage in two views; viz. as affording us a directory as to the nature of our work, and an encouragement in our performance of it.

I. As affording us a DIRECTORY AS TO THE NATURE OF OUR WORK.

Our work is *a labour*.—If any man enter upon the ministry from a desire to live an easy, idle life, he is under a great mistake. He may make such a life of it, but he will not fulfil his work. And let him take heed lest he be rejected at the last: "Cast ye out the unprofitable servant into outer darkness." A proper discharge of the Christian ministry must be a labour. This will appear if we consider a few of the principal parts of which it is composed.

I. A leading part of this work consists in *our becoming acquainted with the mind of God in his word.*—We must "labour in word and doctrine."

We cannot "feed the people with knowledge and with understanding," unless we possess them. Truth is a well—full of water, but deep. A mine—rich, but requiring much labour to dig up the precious ore. Such a depth is there in the word of God, that inspiration itself does not supersede the necessity of close application, Psal. xxvii. 4. We must be perpetually *inquiring* and *searching*, 1 Pet. i. 10—12. We must, "give ourselves" to the word of God and prayer. The very angels are perpetually gospel students, "desiring to look into" the things that are revealed. Unless we labour in this way, there can be no proper food or variety in our preaching. "Meditate on these things: give thyself wholly to them." The truths of God's word are worthy of being our meat and drink. . . . Digging in these mines is very pleasant work when we can enter into them. But there are seasons when it is otherwise; and yet we must go on, though we scarcely know how; this is *labour*.

2. Another part is *communicating the mind of God so as to apply it to the cases of the people*.—It belongs to the work of the ministry to apply truth to the circumstances and consciences of the hearers, as well as to teach it; and, in order to this, we must study men as well as things. We must trace the workings of a depraved heart, in order to detect its shiftings and subtrefuges—the doubts and difficulties of a desponding heart, in order to remove them, and to point out the way of life—and the general operations of a gracious heart, in order to distinguish between genuine and spurious religion, lest, while we comfort the real Christian, we should soothe the hypocrite."

For these important purposes, it is necessary that we should avail ourselves of two grand sources of information—experience and observation. That which is derived from these sources is taken from life, and is generally more profitable than that which is copied from even the most judicious writings of men, at second-hand. But all this requires labour. I may add, much of the labour that attends this part of our work arises from the state of those with whom we have to deal, and our want of success.—In preaching to sinners, we have to attack the strong holds of Satan—ignorance, prejudice, pride, self-righteousness, hardness of heart, unbelief, and aversion from God. Our work here is like having to dig through a rock of flint—we have much labour, and make slow progress. Sometimes we espy a downcast look and a falling tear, and this inspires courage; but these hopeful appearances often subside. Many a character, of whom we have hoped well for years, is still hanging between God and the world, and we know not what will be the issue. These are the things which occasion those pains of labour of which the apostle speaks: "My little children, of whom I travail in birth, until Christ be formed in you."

3. Another part of our ministry consists in *following up the work of preaching, by close conversation in our private visits*.—Paul taught at Ephesus "from house to house." It is painful and laborious to a feeling mind to tell persons of their faults, and yet we cannot fulfil our duty without. To introduce personal reflections in public, where no answer can be made, and where the tendency is to expose rather than to reclaim, is mean and unmanly; but it is not so in private; there we must be faithful, and, in order to be faithful, we must be personal. But this is hard work. Ministers, as well as other men, have their feelings. They love peace, and they wish to retain the friendship of their people. But if a minister tell the truth, there is great danger of his being counted an enemy, and treated as such. Faithful reproof, therefore, must be self-denying work. The grand secret, I think, to render this part of our work as easy as possible, is to love the souls of the people, and to do every thing from pure good-will, and with a view to

their advantage—"speaking the truth in love." The man that can be offended by such treatment, and leave his place in the house of God, can be no loss to a minister or to a congregation.

4. Another part of our work is, *presiding in the church in the character of a pastor*.—And this is labour. Those who preside in a large community find it very difficult to manage amidst such a variety of spirits and tempers; and those who preside in a small one may find it still more difficult, where individuals are of more consequence, and therefore, perhaps, more assuming and litigious. A large church is like a large family, in which there is a necessity for constant labour and continual attention, to keep things in proper order. But a small church may be compared to a little boat, floating on the waters—a single wrong movement may upset it. In either case we had need be endued with righteousness, godliness, faith, love, meekness, patience, and forbearance. The less we have of self-importance and of tenaciousness in carrying a point, and the more of respect and disinterested regard for our brethren, the less labour will it be to us.

Having considered the Christian ministry under the idea of a *labour*, I may observe that we are further directed as to its nature, by considering ourselves as "*labourers together with God.*"

By this we are taught to labour in the same cause and to the same ends as God. God, in all his operations, keeps certain important ends in view, and we must join with him: for example—to glorify his Son . . . to abase the sinner . . . to alarm the wicked . . . to comfort the believer . . . and we must unite with God in all this. We must habitually exalt the Saviour and humble the pride of man. Our constant message must be—it shall be well with the righteous, but it shall be ill with the wicked. We must never comfort those whom God would alarm. When God brings a sinner under concern, it is our business to forward the work. If a man tell me he is a great sinner, it is not for me to soothe him, and to persuade him that he sees things in too strong a light; but rather to convince him that he is a much greater sinner than he conceives, and that the heart of man is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." The only comfort I am authorized to offer him is, by pointing him to a great Saviour—one who is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, and who will never cast out any that apply to him for mercy. It is dangerous, as soon as we perceive concern, to smile and tell the party that this is a good sign, and all will soon be well. It is a good symptom, *if it be genuine*; but if, before we can ascertain the reality of the repentance, we begin to soothe and console the sinner, we shall be in danger of causing him to be satisfied, instead of urging him to an application where alone he ought to take up his rest; and, instead of being labourers *together with God*, we shall be found to be labouring *against* him. God calls him to mourning, and weeping, and lamentation; and it is at our peril to comfort him by any thing short of an exhibition of the free grace of the gospel. We proceed,

II. To consider the passage as affording us, not only a directory as to the nature of our work, but AN ENCOURAGEMENT IN THE DISCHARGE OF IT.—And this is derivable from the latter clause—"labourers *together with God.*" If we be with God, God is with us; and that is the greatest encouragement we can have. "Lo! I am with you always, to the end of the world."

1. If we be with God, God will be with us *to assist us in our private labours*.—There is much in the prayer of the apostle Paul on behalf of Timothy—"The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit." It is this that will sweeten our labour. Solomon speaks of a joy in labour, and certainly, of all labour, none is so productive of joy as digging in the mines of everlasting truth—especially when the Lord Jesus is with our spirit.

2. God will be with us *in blessing our public labours*.—Had Moses gone to the rock without God, he might have spoken, and have smitten it, but it would not have cleaved asunder: the rock would have broken the rod, rather than the rod the rock. The same may be said of our labours on the hearts of men. But with God we shall “do valiantly.” “The weapons of our warfare are mighty through God.” God, we may be certain, will not labour in vain; and if we labour with him, neither shall we. “Thanks be to God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and always maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us.” My brother, if we be faithful labourers, we shall in no wise lose our reward.

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## LXVII

### THE NATURE OF THE GOSPEL, AND THE MANNER IN WHICH IT OUGHT TO BE PREACHED.

“Praying for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ,—that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.”—Col. iv. 3, 4.

My dear brother, I have chosen this passage, on the present occasion, as expressing not the whole of your work, but an important part of it—preaching the gospel. For the discharge of this, an apostle besought the prayers of his brethren, and so should we.

The words imply that, *to do justice to the gospel, or to preach it as it ought to be preached, we need a special Divine influence, and consequently the prayers of our brethren*. I wish at this time to call your attention to the work itself—the manner in which the gospel ought to be preached; and then to offer a few motives to your consideration.

I. I shall call your attention to THE MANNER IN WHICH THE GOSPEL OUGHT TO BE PREACHED.

It is not my wish to dismay your spirit, but yet I desire to impress you with a sense of the importance of the work of the ministry, that, like the apostle, you may cry to Him who alone can give you strength to discharge it. That we may form some idea of the manner in which the gospel ought to be preached, it is necessary to consider some of its leading properties. We may mention four or five:—

1. *The gospel is a message which implies a disagreeable and heavy charge against those to whom it is addressed, and therefore requires great faithfulness*.—It supposes that all mankind are the enemies of God, and exposed to his righteous displeasure. You will have to do with the wicked as well as with the righteous, and you must not flatter them. It is at your peril to say any thing soothing to the wicked. It will be very painful to keep them at a distance, and to exhibit to them the threatenings of God’s word against them. They will be trying to shift the blame, and to invent excuses; but you must follow up your charges. Their hearts may rise against you, and they may be displeased with your preaching; but you must not desist.

If we could go with a message of approbation and applause—if we could tell our auditory that they are amiable and virtuous beings, with only a few imperfections, which God will doubtless overlook—it might be much more pleasing and agreeable to ourselves as men. We can feel no pleasure in accusing our species. But woe unto us if we speak not the truth! The wicked will perish, and their blood will be required at our hand! Ezek

iii. 16—21. Then beware of softening matters, either with the unconverted or the backslider. Beware of giving up the authority of God over the heart, and of allowing either that the heartless services of the unconverted are pleasing to him, or if not, that the fault is not in them. Beware of countenancing their own views of themselves, that they are poor pitiable creatures instead of sinners. The wound must be probed, or your patient will be lost! O! if we preach the gospel as we ought to preach it, what fidelity is here required! You must, my brother, side with God against an ungodly world. You must follow the windings of their evil hearts; you must detect them in all their refuges of lies, that they may flee to the only refuge set before them in the gospel. However it may pain you, or offend your hearers, if you would preach the gospel as you ought to preach it—you *must be faithful*.

2. *The gospel is a message in which we have truth and justice on our side; and therefore we ought to be firm and fearless of consequences.*—Speak boldly, Eph. vi. 19, 20. If a man's cause be bad, it must render him timid; but to be timid in the cause of God and truth is unworthy. When, however, I recommend boldness, I do not mean that which is opposed to modesty and respectful feeling, nor yet that dogmatical rant which deals in assertion without evidence; but that which is opposed to mercenary fear and cowardice. You must not calculate consequences as they respect this life. If you would preach the gospel as you ought to preach it, the approbation of *God* must be your main object. What if you *were* to lose your friends and diminish your income; nay, what if you lose your liberty, or even your life—what would this all be, compared with the loss of the favour and friendship of *God*? Woe unto us, if we shun to declare any part of the counsel of God! He that is afraid or ashamed to preach the whole of the gospel, in all its implications and bearings, let him stand aside; he is utterly unworthy of being a soldier of Jesus Christ. Sometimes, if you would speak the whole truth, you may be reproached as unsound and heterodox. But you must not yield to popular clamour. If you have *truth* on your side, stand firm against all opposition.

3. *The gospel is a message full of importance, and therefore you must be in earnest.*—If your message respected the health of your hearers, or their temporal interest, or their reputation, it would be thought important. But what are these compared with the salvation of their souls! Salvation by Jesus Christ is God's last remedy—his ultimatum with a lost world, Mark xvi. 16; Acts iv. 12. There remaineth no other sacrifice for sins. Then do not trifle on such subjects as these, lest you lose your own soul. What can be thought of you if you employ your time in making pretty speeches, and turning elegant periods, instead of endeavouring to “save yourself and them that hear you!” What if, instead of beseeching sinners to be reconciled to God, you should crack jokes before them, to excite a laugh! What can be thought of you if you trifle with *principles*, and join the sneer of the poet, when he says,

“For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight;  
He can't be wrong whose life is in the right!”

Your hearers will doubtless conceive that you are insincere, and that you do not believe the message you are appointed to deliver.

4. *The gospel is a message that abounds with deep wisdom, and therefore we ought to possess a deep insight into it, and to cultivate great plainness of speech.*—The gospel is “a mystery,” and a mystery that requires to be made manifest. A mystery is something hidden, or secret. Such are the great things of God. They are “hid from the wise and the prudent, and

revealed unto babes."—"Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God." Much of it, indeed, was hidden from Old Testament believers, Eph. iii. 5. Nor is it known even to New Testament believers but by the Spirit, 1 Cor. ii. 7. Nor is it fully comprehensible to any; for it is called "unsearchable riches." "Great is the mystery of godliness." Even angels make it their study. Then to make these things manifest must require great insight into them, and great plainness of speech. Do not be content with superficial views of the gospel. Read and think for yourself on every subject. Read the Bible, not merely for texts, but for Scriptural knowledge. Truth attained in this way is like property—it will wear the better for having been acquired by dint of industry. To preach the gospel as we ought to preach it requires, not the subtilty of the metaphysician, but the simplicity of the Christian.

5. *The gospel is a message of love, and therefore it ought to be preached with great affection.*—Never were such messages of love announced to the world before. "God so loved the world," &c. "Come ye out from them, be ye separate," &c. This is fitly called "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." It is an overflow of his blessedness. To preach these things with an unfeeling heart is not to preach "as we ought" to preach. Cultivate the affectionate. Not indeed an affectation of feeling, but genuine feeling. Christ wept over sinners, and so must we. If we trifle with men, or be careless about their salvation, or deal forth damnation with an unfeeling heart, we do not preach "as we ought."

II. Let me offer A FEW MOTIVES to this duty of preaching the gospel as it ought to be preached.

1. Consider *the examples held up for your imitation.*—You have Peter . . . . Paul . . . . John . . . . in each of whom these things are exemplified. Nay, more—you have *Christ*. Nor have you examples in distant ages only; but you have seen some, even among you . . . . Pearce!

2. Consider *the examples exhibited for your warning.*—Some have sunk into indolence and self-indulgence; sauntering about and gossiping, instead of preaching, from house to house; and there has been an end of them. Some have risen into pride and priestly insolence, and there has been an end of them. Some have trifled with the truth, and God has given them up to destructive error. Others have plunged into political speculations, which have eaten up all their religion: aiming to govern the world, they have lost the government of their own souls, and of their peculiar charge.

3. Consider *the effects that may follow.*—If you were deputed to negotiate a peace between the contending powers of Europe, you would tremble lest the curses of many should fall upon you. My brother, be faithful, and you shall receive a crown. If you be not, the eternal curse of God awaits you!

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## LXVIII.

### THE WORK AND ENCOURAGEMENTS OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER.

"His lord said unto him, Well done; thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."—Matt. xxv. 21.

SUCH is the solemn and important charge, my brother, allotted you, that if you were to contemplate it merely as it relates to its difficulties, you



might shrink at the thought of it; but I rejoice to say you enter upon your pastoral work under favourable auspices. You have the hearts of your people; and *that* point gained is more than a thousand. You could never expect to do them good, unless you were interested in their affections.

I feel a pleasure in complying with your desire that I should address you on the present interesting occasion, and shall request your candid attention to a few observations founded on a part of the parable of the talents.

It is worthy of notice, that, as our Lord approached the close of his ministry, his preaching partook of an increasing solemnity. This chapter concludes his ministerial discourses, and is all upon the subject of the last judgment. The parable of the virgins, and that of the talents, both lead to the same point. And these are followed by a solemn representation of the final judgment. The world is convened, and the Son of God distributes everlasting salvation to his people, and everlasting destruction to his enemies.

Such was the close of our Saviour's ministry; and from one of these representations I shall address you, that you also may be prepared for his second coming.

The occasion of the parable of the talents is given by Luke. He tells us, that when our Saviour came near to Jerusalem, many thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. But it was a temporal kingdom that occupied their minds; and, in order to destroy their vain conceits, our Lord described himself under the parabolical form of a certain nobleman, who went into a distant country to receive a kingdom, and delivered his goods to his servants in trust, of which trust, or of the manner in which they had fulfilled it, they were each one to give an account. This was, in effect, saying to his disciples, "It is true, I am going to receive a kingdom, but not here; and you shall partake of that kingdom, but not yet." Thus he led them to expect that until his second coming their business was not to amuse or agitate themselves about what post of honour they should occupy, but to bend their attention to a solemn and important trust committed to them.

We may remark here, (1.) The talents do not mean *grace*, but *gifts*, or things to be improved. Grace is that by which we improve them. One man had a talent, and yet turned out an unprofitable servant. He never had the grace of God in truth, but had a gift or trust imparted to him, for the abuse of which he was finally condemned. (2.) These talents are dispensed in different degrees—some have five, some two, and some one. (3.) Every man is called to occupy what he has—and must give an account of it—and no more. He that had two talents received the approbation of his lord, just as he who had five.

We may collect, from the whole, the important work of the Christian ministry, and the encouraging motives to a faithful discharge of it.

I. We have an interesting view of THE WORK OF A CHRISTIAN MINISTER. You are here represented as a servant—you are required to be a good and faithful servant—and you must not make light of your charge, though it extend only to a few things.

1. *You are a servant of God.*—You are intrusted with a portion of his property, of the use or abuse of which, another day, you will have to render an account. God has put a talent into your hands, and says, "Occupy till I come."

Many things might be mentioned as included in the talents intrusted to you, as time, property, knowledge, influence, opportunity: for all these you must give an account. But we pass over these as common to you and others, and shall confine our attention to those which are peculiar to us as

ministers. There are two in particular which constitute our ministerial trust—the gospel of Christ, and the souls of the people.

*The gospel of Christ.*—This is impressively recommended by Paul to Timothy, in the close of his First Epistle: “O Timothy!—(and Paul never dealt in interjections without feeling his subject to be one of vast importance)—O Timothy! keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called. The gospel is a most sacred trust, and you must keep it. Not keep it back, but keep it safe; hold it fast in your mind and your ministry. The best way to hold fast the truth as a minister is to live upon it as a Christian. Attempt to keep it any where but in your heart, and it will go. If it be merely in the memory, it is not safe. He that is reasoned into the truth may be reasoned out of it. It is living upon the truth as a Christian that will cause the heart to be established with grace.

*The souls of the people.*—These also are a part of the property committed to your trust, of which you must give an account. You may say, perhaps, There’s such a one, and such a one—they have attended my ministry; but I have never been able to discover any thing in them friendly to the cause of Christ.—But the question which may be addressed to you is, Did you warn them? Did you deal faithfully with them? In a word, Did you discharge your trust?—If you have, your soul shall be delivered, and their blood shall be on their own heads. But if not, though they perish in their iniquity, their blood will be required at your hands. My brother, you must “watch for souls as those that must give an account.”—You may have to allege, with regard to others, They would not receive the doctrine I taught; they were always opposing it, always cavilling at it, and have often caused my heart to ache.—But the question for your consideration is, Did you teach them in love? Did you bear and forbear with them? If they have gone astray like lost sheep, have you searched after them with a desire to restore them? Did you preach “publicly, and from house to house?”—My brother, let it be your concern to give your account “with joy, and not with grief.”

2. You are not only a servant of Christ, intrusted with an important charge; but are required to discharge that trust as a “good and faithful servant.” The term “good” stands opposed to “unprofitable.” A good and faithful servant is a profitable servant. True, we cannot profit Christ absolutely, but we may relatively: he has an interest in the world, and we may profit that—a people, and we may profit them: and he will consider every thing done to them for his sake as done to him; and thus you may be a profitable servant. It is not enough that you do no harm. It is true, many are injurious; but others, who are not injurious, are “cumberers of the ground,” and as such are unprofitable, and as such will be cast out. The servant in the parable is not cast out for what he did, but for *not* doing what he ought to have done.—You are to be a “faithful” servant. Faithfulness is absolutely required of a servant of Christ. You are not required to be *successful*: your Lord and Master was not very successful; but he was faithful, and so must you be. There is great need of faithfulness. People love that their ministers should “prophesy smooth things.” They love a flesh-pleasing, flattering doctrine. This may not be true of all, but it is of many. They love preaching that soothes, and that cherishes hope and comfort, and ease and peace, whatever be their character and their state: hence multitudes will tell you that they cannot *profit* under a preacher, when the whole secret is that they cannot be *comforted* in their sins. Probably, if the preacher were to comfort them, it must be at the expense of the gospel; he must preach false doctrine, and cry, Peace, when there is no ground for

peace. So do not you. They may complain that you do not *feed* them: well, nor should you: you are not required to feed men's lusts, but their graces. Be faithful.

Still your faithfulness must be tempered with love. There is such a thing as unfeeling fidelity—and preaching *at* people, rather than *to* them. Our Lord himself, who is a perfect pattern of faithfulness, and was particularly severe against the hypocritical Pharisees, yet wept over sinners, even while denouncing judgments against them. "Speak the truth in love."

3. *You must not think it beneath you, though your lot should be to take the charge of "a few things."*—I have often thought of this passage in reference to a small people, and these perhaps chiefly poor. I am aware that it is flattering to human vanity to have large congregations, and on some accounts it is also desirable; but should it be otherwise with you,—if yours should be only a small congregation, consisting of a few people, and these chiefly poor, and this for many years to come,—what then? . . . Just think of the commendation of your Lord, "Well done, good and faithful servant; forasmuch as thou hast been faithful over *a few things*, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Is not this enough? And ought we not, as ministers, to be more concerned to execute well that trust which we have than to be always seeking after a larger? I abhor the spirit that shall send for an orator, merely for the purpose of gathering a respectable congregation. A faithful discharge of the trust which God gives us is the way to have that trust increased. Instead of being anxious for a large charge, we have reason to tremble lest we should be found unfaithful in that which we have. There are times in which the spirits of a minister will flag, on account of the fewness of his hearers. The sight of empty pews must prey on his peace and comfort. But be not discouraged; remember that the thinnest assembly is made up of immortal beings, and chiefly perhaps of those who are yet in their sins; and you have an object of greater magnitude within the possibility of your compass than was ever presented to the grasp of an Alexander, a Cæsar, or a Buonaparte. The salvation of one soul is of more worth than the temporal salvation of a world—a soul, purchased by the Son of God himself. Think of this, my brother, and be not discouraged, even though you should have comparatively few to hear, unless, indeed, the cause exist in your own deficiency. Be "faithful over a few things," and you shall eventually be "ruler over many things."

I proceed to consider,

II. THE IMPORTANT MOTIVES which are here presented to us for the discharge of our trust.

1. *You will receive the approbation of your Lord.*—Place yourself in idea, my brother, before your Lord and Master, at the last day, and anticipate the joy of receiving his approbation. This is heaven. We should not study to please men so much as to please God. If we please him, we shall please all who love him, and, as to others, they are not on any account worthy of being pleased at the expense of displeasing God. It is doubtless gratifying to receive the "Well done" of a creature; but this in some cases may arise from ignorance, in others from private friendship; and in some cases men may say, "Well done," when, in the sight of Him who judges the heart, and recognizes the springs of action, our work may be ill done. And even if we have done comparatively well, we must not rest satisfied with the approbation of our friends. Many have sat down contented with the plaudits of their hearers, spoiled and ruined. It is the "Well done" *at the last day* which we should seek, and with which only we should be satisfied. There have been young ministers, of very promising talents, who

have been absolutely nursed to death with human applause, and the hopes they inspired blighted and blasted by the flattery of the weak and inconsiderate. The sound of "Well done" has been reiterated in their ears so often, that at last (poor little minds!) they have thought, Surely it *was* well done; they have inhaled the delicious draught, they have sat down to enjoy it, they have relaxed their efforts, and, after their little hour of popular applause, they have retired behind the scenes, and become of little or no account in the Christian world; and, what is worse, their spirituality has declined, and they have sunk down into a state of desertion, dispiritedness, and inactivity, as regards this world, and of uncertainty, if not of fearful forebodings, as to another . . . My brother, you *may* sit down when *God* says, "Well done!" for then your trust will be discharged; but it is at your peril that you rest satisfied with any thing short of this. Keep *that* reward in view, and you will not, I trust, be unfaithful in the service of your Lord.

2. *Your honour and happiness in the world to come shall be greatly enlarged.*—If you have been "a good and faithful *servant*" here, you shall "*rule*" there; and if here you have been faithful over "a *few* things," there you shall be a ruler over "*many* things." There will be a glorious augmentation of honour and blessedness. The language is figurative. The idea may be expressed by an allusion to David's worthies, who followed him in his trials, and whom he promoted when he came to the throne: those who, to procure him a little water, fought their way through the opposing army, were highly rewarded. And so Jesus assured his apostles, "Ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

Of course we are not to understand this *literally*; but the idea conveyed appears to be this—That a faithful discharge of the trust committed to us in this world will contribute to our honour and blessedness in the world to come. In fact, if this idea is not conveyed, it will be difficult to determine what is.

Nevertheless, the best services we can render are mingled with sin, and therefore, instead of *deserving* a reward, need forgiveness. The reward we shall receive will be a reward of grace, not of debt. Were it not for the sake of Christ, nothing we do could be accepted, there being so much sin cleaving even to our best services. The Lord accepted Abel and his offering. First he accepts our persons for the sake of Christ, and then our services. And our services, being accepted, become also rewardable for his sake: our future honours are a part of Christ's reward. If you are instrumental in saving a soul, it will be impossible for you to meet that soul in heaven, and not rejoice over it; it will, in fact, be your crown of rejoicing. So your honour and blessedness will form a part of Christ's reward.

It is an unscriptural and irrational notion, that all will have an equal degree of happiness in heaven. All will be perfectly happy, but some will not have so large a capacity for happiness as others. Every vessel will be full, but some vessels will contain more than others. "One star differeth from another star in glory." The apostle Paul must enjoy more in heaven than a soul caught up from infancy; since part of the happiness of heaven will consist of remembrance of the past . . . But the diversity most important for *our* consideration is that which will arise from the manner in which we have performed our trust. In proportion to the degree of fidelity with which we have discharged the trust committed to us in this world will be the honour and happiness conferred upon us in the next.

3. *You will participate in that joy of which your Lord partakes:—* ‘Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.’ You will “sit down with him on his throne.” Whatever the joy is that was “set before him,” and for which he “endured the cross, despising the shame,” in that joy, if you have “run with patience the race which is set before you, looking unto him,” you shall partake. That which rejoices Christ’s heart will rejoice yours—the glory of God in the salvation of sinners. He will not rejoice alone; but admit to his joy all those who have had any share in the great work to accomplish which he humbled himself unto death.

My brother, let this thought encourage you amidst all your trials—that you are to enter into the joy of your Lord. “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.”

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## LXIX.

### PREACHING CHRIST.

“We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.”—2 Cor. iv. 5.

A REMARK which I once heard from the lips of that great and good man, the late Mr. Abraham Booth, has often recurred to my recollection. “I fear,” said he, “there will be found a larger proportion of wicked ministers than of any other order of professing Christians!” It did not appear to me at the time, nor has it ever appeared since, that this remark proceeded from a want of charity, but rather from a deep knowledge of the nature of Christianity, and an impartial observation of men and things. It behoves us, not only as professing Christians, but as ministers, to “examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith.” It certainly is possible, after we have preached to others, that we ourselves should be cast away! I believe it is very common for the personal religion of a minister to be taken for granted; and this may prove a temptation to him to take it for granted too. Ministers, being wholly devoted to the service of God, are supposed to have considerable advantages for spiritual improvement. These they certainly have; and if their minds be spiritual, they may be expected to make greater proficiency in the Divine life than their brethren. But it should be remembered, that if they are *not* spiritual, those things which would otherwise be a help would prove a hinderance. If we study Divine subjects merely as *ministers*, they will produce no salutary effect. We may converse with the most impressive truths, as soldiers and surgeons do with blood, till they cease to make any impression upon us. We must meditate on these things as *Christians*, first feeding our own souls upon them, and then imparting that which we have believed and felt to others; or, whatever good we may do to them, we shall receive none ourselves. Unless we mix faith with what we preach, as well as with what we hear, the word will not profit us. It may be on these accounts that ministers, while employed in watching over others, are so solemnly warned against neglecting themselves: “Take heed unto *yourselves* and to all the flock,” &c.—“Take heed unto *thyself*, and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee.”

Preaching the gospel is not the only work of a Christian minister; but it is a very important part of his duty, and that which, if rightly attended

to, will be followed by other things. To this, therefore, I shall request your attention.

You cannot have a better model than that which is here held up to you. The example of the apostles and primitive ministers is for our imitation. Three things are here presented to our notice: what they did not preach—what they did preach—and what they considered themselves.

I. WHAT THE APOSTLES DID NOT PREACH:—"We preach not ourselves." It might be thought that this negative was almost unnecessary; for, except a few gross impostors, who would ever think of holding up themselves as saviours, instead of Christ? "Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized into the name of Paul?" Very true, in this gross sense, few men in the present day will be found to preach themselves. But self may be an object of preaching without being expressly avowed, and even while with the tongue Christ is recommended. And there is little doubt that self is the great end of numbers who engage in the Christian ministry. . . . For example:—

1. If *worldly advantage* be our object, we preach ourselves.—It is true there is but little food for this appetite in our congregations. Yet there are cases where it is otherwise. Men have made their fortunes by preaching. And if this have been their object, they have had their reward. If this had not been a possible case, Paul would not have disavowed it as he does:—"Not for a cloak of covetousness, God is witness."

2. If we make the ministry subservient to a life of *ease and indolence*, we preach ourselves rather than Christ. We may get but little for our labour, and yet, being fond of a life of sloth, (if a *life* it can be called,) it may be more agreeable to us than any other pursuit. It is from this disposition that many ministers have got into the habit of spending a large part of every week in gossiping from house to house; not promoting the spiritual good of the people, but merely indulging themselves in idle talk. I might add, it is from this disposition and practice that a large proportion of the *scandals* among ministers have arisen. Had there been no danger from these quarters, we should not have met with another of Paul's solemn disavowals:—"Our exhortation was not of uncleanness." Such a declaration as this was not without meaning. It describes the false teachers of those times, and of all times.

3. If the *applause* of our hearers be the governing principle of our discourses, we preach ourselves, and not Christ. To be acceptable is necessary to being useful, and an attention to manner with this end in view is very proper; but if the love of fame be our governing principle, our whole ministry will be tainted by it. This subtle poison will penetrate and pervade our exercises, till every one perceives it, and is sickened by it, except ourselves. It will inflate our composition in the study, animate our delivery in the pulpit, and condescend to fish for applause when we have retired. It will even induce us to deal in flattering doctrine, dwelling on what are known to be favourite topics, and avoiding those which are otherwise. It is a great matter to be able to join with the apostle in another of his solemn disavowals:—"For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know,—nor of men sought we glory."

4. If our aim be to make *proselytes to ourselves*, or to our party, rather than *converts to Christ*, we shall be found to have preached ourselves, and not him. We certainly have seen much of this species of zeal in our times—"Men speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." Nor do I refer merely to men who would be thought singularly evangelical, and even inspired of God—who are continually holding up themselves as the favourites of Heaven and the darlings of Providence and denouncing judg-

ments on all who oppose them; and the tenor of whose preaching is to persuade their admirers to consider themselves as the dear children of God, and all who disapprove of them as poor blind creatures, knowing nothing of the gospel. Of them and their followers I can only say, "If any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant." But men who have paid great attention to the Scriptures, and who have preached and written many things on the side of truth, have nevertheless given but too evident proof that the tenor of their labours has been to make proselytes to themselves, or to their party, rather than converts to Christ.

II. WHAT THE APOSTLES DID PREACH:—We preach "Christ Jesus the Lord." This is the grand theme of the Christian ministry. But many have so little of the Christian minister about them, that their sermons have scarcely any thing to do with Christ. They are mere moral harangues. And these, forsooth, would fain be thought exclusively the friends of morality and good works! But they know not what good works are, nor do they go the way to promote them. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." . . . Preach Christ, or you had better be any thing than a preacher. The necessity laid on Paul was not barely to preach, but to preach Christ. "Woe unto me if I preach not the gospel!" . . . Some are employed in depreciating Christ. But do you honour him. Some who talk much about him, yet do not preach him, and by their habitual deportment prove themselves enemies to his cross . . . If you preach Christ, you need not fear for want of matter. His person and work are rich in fulness. Every Divine attribute is seen in him. All the types prefigure him. The prophecies point to him. Every truth bears relation to him. The law itself must be so explained and enforced as to lead to him. . . . Particularly,

1. *Exhibit his Divinity and glorious character.*—The New Testament dwells much on his being the Son of God—equal with God. It was this that heightened the gift of him, John iii. 16. Hence the efficacy of his blood, 1 John i. 7. Hence the condescension of his obedience, and the dignity of his priesthood. Heb. iv. 14—16. Hence the greatness of the sin of rejecting him, John iii. 18; and of apostacy, Heb. x. 29.

2. *Hold up his atonement and mediation as the only ground of a sinner's hope.*—It is the work of a Christian minister to beat off self-righteous hope, which is natural to depraved man, and to direct his hearers to the only hope set before them in the gospel. Be not concerned merely to form the manners of your congregation, but bring them to Christ. That will best form their manners. The apostles had no directions short of this: "Repent, and believe the gospel." They never employed themselves in lopping off the branches of sin; but laid the axe to the root. Your business with the sins of mankind is, to make use of them to convince your hearers of the corruption of their nature, and their need of a radical cure.

3. *Hold up the blessings of his salvation for acceptance, even to the chief of sinners.*—"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." The gospel is a feast, and you are to invite guests. You may have many excuses and refusals. But be you concerned to do as your Lord commands. And when you have done your utmost, there will still be room. Dwell on the freeness, and fulness, and all-sufficiency of his grace, and how welcome even the worst of sinners are, who, renouncing all other refuges, flee to him.

4. *Preach him as "the Lord," or Lawgiver, of his church,* no less than as a Saviour.—Christ's offices must not be divided. Taking his yoke, and learning his spirit, are connected with coming to him. Believers are "not without law unto God, but under the law to Christ."

The preaching of Christ will answer every end of preaching. This is the doctrine which God owns to conversion, to the leading of awakened sinners to peace, and to the comfort of true Christians. If the doctrine of the cross be no comfort to us, it is a sign we have no right to comfort. This doctrine is calculated to quicken the indolent, to draw forth every Christian grace, and to recover the backslider. This is the universal remedy for all the moral diseases of all mankind . . . We proceed to notice,

III. IN WHAT LIGHT THE APOSTLES CONSIDERED THEMSELVES:—"Your servants for Jesus' sake." Ministers are not the servants of the people in such a sense as implies inferiority, or their having an authority over them. On the contrary, what authority there is is on the other side: "Obey them that have the rule over you." Nor are ministers the servants of the people in such a sense as to be directed by them what to preach. In these respects one is their Master, even Christ. But ministers are the servants of their people, inasmuch as their whole time and powers require to be devoted to their spiritual advantage—to know them, caution, counsel, reprove, instruct, exhort, admonish, encourage, stimulate, pray, and preach. Study to promote their spiritual interests as individuals, and their prosperity as a people.

Nor should ministers think it too much to lay themselves out in this work. They do it "*for Jesus' sake.*" This was the motive addressed to Peter. "Lovest thou me?—Feed my sheep. Feed my lambs."—"Feed the church of God, *which he hath purchased with his own blood.*" . . . Let Christ be not only the theme of my remaining ministry, but the exaltation of him and the enlargement of his kingdom the great end of my life! If I forget THEE, O my Saviour, let my right hand forget; if I do not remember THEE, let my tongue cleave to the roof my mouth!

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## LXX.

### THE INFLUENCE OF THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST ON A MINISTER.

"The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit."—2 Tim. iv. 22.

IN addressing you, my brother, on this interesting portion of Scripture, I shall simply offer a few remarks on the blessing desired, and consider its influence on the discharge of the Christian ministry.

I. Let us offer a few remarks on THE BLESSING DESIRED.—If we were addressing ourselves to persons who were strangers to experimental religion, we might despair of being understood on this part of the subject; and even among Christians it is more easily felt than accurately described. We know nothing of Divine influence but by its effects. We know we are created, but we know nothing of creative power. We know we are supported, but we can only feel ourselves upheld. We know Christ promised to *be with* his servants to the end of the world, and I hope we have felt the effects of it. We feel our wants hitherto supplied, our strength renewed, and our work in some measure succeeded; and we are taught to what to ascribe it. . . . But more particularly,—

1. The blessing here desired is *something different from gifts.*—God has favoured you with gifts; but so he did Judas. Many shine and figure away with these, with whose spirits the Lord Jesus Christ holds no communion. Gifts are the gold of the temple; but communion with Christ is that which sanctifieth the gold. Without this, gifts will be injurious both to you and to your people.



2. This blessing is *more than grace itself, considered as inherent*.—I need not tell you that our graces have no separate subsistence. We are the branches living on the Vine. Paul said, "I live"—(and surely he had a right to say so, if any man had!)—and yet he checks himself, and adds,—“yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God.”

3. It is a blessing *which you shall enjoy in common with your Christian brethren*.—It is not peculiar to you as a minister, but common to all Christians. And is it the better (you may ask) for this? Yes, it is. The best blessings, are those common to Christians, Psal. xxvii. 4; Phil. iii. 8. The Romish priests have contrived to secure the cup exclusively to themselves: but it was not so from the beginning: “Drink ye *all* of it.” And not only the cup, but the thing signified, is common to all Christians. And the blessings which are common to Christians as such are of the greatest importance to us as ministers. If we study, and pray, and preach merely as ministers, we shall make poor work of it; but if as Christians, we shall prosper. . . . We proceed,

II. To consider THE INFLUENCE OF THIS BLESSING ON THE DISCHARGE OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.—Knowing that without him we could do nothing, our Lord has assured us, “Lo! I am with you always, to the end of the world.” And now, by his strengthening us, we can do all things. . . . Observe,

1. *It is this that will render the doctrine of Christ familiar to us, and our favourite theme*.—The Spirit of prophecy is called the Spirit of Christ, because it testified of his sufferings, 1 Pet. i. 11. And if Christ be with our spirit, though only in an ordinary way, it will lead us to delight in the doctrine of Christ, Eph. iii. 17, 18. When Christ dwells in the heart, see what follows! This is the unction by which we know all things. And this is the doctrine which God blesses to the building of his church.

2. *It is that which gives a Divine energy to our preaching*.—It imparts a much greater energy than the greatest eloquence, natural or artificial. And though it will not in itself convert sinners, yet God usually honours such preaching. And it is a *means* of conversion. The apostle “*so* spoke that a great multitude believed.” And where such preaching does not convert, it yet commends itself to the conscience. “They were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he (Stephen) spoke.” Apollos, who was “*fervent in the Spirit*,” by his preaching “*mightily convinced the Jews*.” The preaching of Paul was “*not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power*.”

3. *It is this that will render our visits profitable*.—It is difficult to turn conversation into a savoury and useful channel. But if the Lord Jesus Christ be with our spirit, all difficulty will vanish. Without this every thing will be forced and constrained; and we shall feel especially at a loss in our directions to inquirers.

4. *It is this that will sustain your heart under trials*.—You are aware you must expect these. You will see things in your people towards *God* that will grieve you. This will enable you to reprove them in love. You will see things in them towards *each other* that are decidedly wrong. This spirit will cause you to be a peace-maker. You will experience painful things towards *yourself*: some will not receive your doctrine; some will misconstrue your conduct, and pervert your statements: but if the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, you will not sink under the heaviest trials. You may have to lament your want of success. But go on, and be of good cheer. If the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, though Israel be not gathered, you shall not go unrewarded.

## LXXI.

## HABITUAL DEVOTEDNESS TO THE MINISTRY.

“Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.”—1 Tim. iv. 15, 16.

MY dear brother, you will find many things in these Epistles worthy of your attention. With a view of showing the connexion of the text, let us notice what is said in the preceding verses.

Ver. 12. Timothy was a young man, and was charged to let no man despise his youth. But how could he prevent that? By being “an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” Then, whoever might dislike him, no one could despise him.

Ver. 13. It is supposed that Paul expected shortly to see Timothy, when he would have many things to say. Meanwhile he directed him how to spend his time to good purpose. In *reading*.—God knows all things; but we must receive ere we impart. *Exhortation*.—He was not to hide, but to communicate his knowledge of Divine things, as he received it: the reading of a minister should be for his people, that he may be furnished with sentiments suited to their cases. Exhortation seems to be that kind of teaching which is from house to house, consisting of counsels, cautions, &c. *Doctrine*.—He was to dig in this mine, that he might enrich others.

Ver. 14. He was supposed to have a *gift*, an *extraordinary* gift, foretold in prophecy, by some of the New Testament prophets, and imparted by the laying on of hands. Yet even this was a talent to be improved, and not neglected. Then how much more *ordinary* gifts!

Ver. 15. This verse expresses *how* his gift was to be improved. It is a shameful abuse of the doctrine of Divine influence to allege it as a reason for neglecting diligent study for the pulpit. Yet such things are; and the advocates of this perversion can quote Scripture for it; as—“Take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither premeditate; but whatsoever shall be given to you in that hour, that speak ye; for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.” But this has no application to pulpit exercises, or ordinary ministrations. It was very suitable for the persecuted Christians; for how *could* they know what to answer, before they were questioned by their persecutors: it was therefore greatly calculated to encourage them, and relieve them from all anxiety. But to apply this direction to our ordinary ministrations is a shameful perversion. See Ecces. xii. 9—11.

Give me your attention, my dear brother, while I endeavour to illustrate the different branches of the exhortation of the text, and consider the motives held up to enforce it.

## I. Let us endeavour to ILLUSTRATE THE EXHORTATION.

*The things* on which you are called to meditate are what you “*read*,” the things to which you “*exhort*,” and the “*doctrine*” of Christ. Or on the *Scriptures*—on the *precepts* contained in them, and on the *doctrines* to be deduced from them.

“*Meditate* on these things.”—There is a depth in them that requires it. You may read the Scriptures a hundred times over, and yet be only on the surface, far from having fathomed them. They are able to make us wise, *through faith*; but to believe without searching argues great indifference, and is building without a foundation. The Scriptures were always considered a deep mine, even when they consisted of only the five Books of Moses.

David meditated in the law of the Lord "day and night." It was to his spiritual growth as water is to a tree.

Do not imagine you understand *enough* of the Bible; or because you have assented to a few truths, therefore you are in possession of all.—Paul desired to know yet more. Angels desire to look into the things revealed there. David intimates that the law contains "wondrous things," and prays that his mind might be enlightened to comprehend them. A spiritual state of mind is the best expositor, and more is discovered with it, in a few verses, than in whole chapters without it.

Do not be content with *general* truth.—Study the Scriptures minutely, and for yourself, and pray over your study. This will make it *your own*; and it will be doubly interesting to yourself and your people, than if you adopt it at second hand.—Read and think, not merely as a minister, but as a Christian.

"*Give yourself wholly to them.*"—No man can excel in any art or science, but by giving himself wholly to it. Why is it one understands law? Because he gives himself wholly to it. Why is it another understands physic? Because he gives himself wholly to it. Why do rulers understand government? Because "they attend continually upon this very thing." And though Divine knowledge differs in some things from that which is natural and worldly, yet not in this. It is by constant application and use that our senses discern truth from error, and good from evil, Heb. v. 14. And you must not only give your whole *time* to this study, but your whole *heart*.

"*Be thou in them.*"—It is a shocking thing to be engaged in a work which is against the heart. It is not what we think *officially*, but *spontaneously*, that proves what we are: not what we do at certain appointed seasons; but the bent of our minds in common, in our leisure hours, when we sit in the house, or walk by the way. Engaging in the work without the heart is the forerunner and cause of many scandals. Time hangs heavy on their hands—they saunter and gossip from place to place—scandalize and listen to scandal—and not seldom terminate their career by impurity.

"*Take heed to thyself.*"—It were an awful thing to guide others to the right way, and not walk in it ourselves. See that all is right between God and your own soul. Public religion, without that which is private and personal, is worse than no religion. We had better be any thing than preachers of the gospel, unless we be personally interested in it.

"*And to thy doctrine.*"—There is great danger of going off from the gospel—perhaps *in submission to great authorities*, or *to please the people*. That minister who makes the taste of his hearers the standard of his preaching may go on, and succeed in pleasing them and himself; but, at the coming of his Lord, it will be said to him, Thou hast had thy reward!

There is also danger of going off from the gospel by *leaning to our own understanding*. Consult your own understanding; but remember you are liable to err; therefore do not *lean* to it, in opposition to the Scriptures.

Finally, "*Continue in these things.*"—That only is true religion which endures to the end.

II. Let us consider THE MOTIVES BY WHICH THE EXHORTATION IS ENFORCED.

1. *Your growth in gifts and graces will be hereby apparent.*—"That thy profiting may appear to all." The meaning is much the same as the parable of the talents—five, by improvement, gaining other five. It holds true in temporal things even, Prov. xxii. 29. There is, however, this difference between their pursuits and yours: they labour to obtain an earthly good; you a heavenly, spiritual, and eternal one. If worldly profit or honour were your object, you might study the embellishments of style, or the arts of the

partisan; but if you would be the servant of God, your heart must be in your work. A diligent minister will be a useful one.

2. *Your own salvation is involved in it:*—"Thou shalt save thyself." This language does not denote that we are *the cause* of our own salvation any more than of the salvation of others. But as we may be instrumental in the latter, so we may be active in the former, Acts ii. 40. Take refuge in the Saviour you recommend to others. The expression may also have reference to that particular kind of salvation which consists in being delivered from the blood of souls.

3. *The salvation of your people may be involved in it.*—A spiritual, diligent minister is commonly a fruitful one, and a blessing to his people. Consider these exhortations, and the motives by which they are enforced, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things. Thus thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee.

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## LXXII.

### AFFECTIONATE CONCERN OF A MINISTER FOR THE SALVATION OF HIS HEARERS.

"We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: so, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us."—1 Thess. ii. 7, 8.

MY dear brother, you have requested me to address you on your appointment to the important office of pastor over this people; and I know of nothing more impressive on the subject of the Christian ministry than this whole chapter, both as to what a minister should *not* be, and as to what he *should* be. Not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile, nor as pleasing men; but gentle, affectionate, laborious, disinterested, holy. Let us, however, confine ourselves to the words we have selected as a text, in which the apostle compares his own ministrations and those of his colleagues to the gentle solicitude of a nurse, whose concern is to impart warmth and strength to her children. "*So* we, being affectionately desirous," &c. Three things here require your attention: the feeling of a true minister of Christ towards the people of his charge—the subject-matter of his ministry—and the manner in which he must dispense it.

I. THE FEELING OF A TRUE MINISTER OF CHRIST TOWARDS THE PEOPLE OF HIS CHARGE. This is an affectionate concern after their salvation, one of the most important qualifications for the ministry. True, it is not the only one. There are gifts, both natural and acquired, which are necessary, since, without them, we cannot be said to be "apt to teach." But this qualification is that without which the greatest gifts, natural and acquired, are nothing as to real usefulness. Genius may amuse, but "love edifieth." A strong mind and a brilliant imagination may excite their admiration, but this will attract the hearts of the people. Look at the men who have been the most honoured; and you will find that they are not the brightest geniuses, but the humble and affectionate.

Look at the example of Paul. Observe how he felt towards his poor, *unbelieving countrymen*, who sought his life: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they may be saved." Even his zeal for the conversion of the Gentiles bore an aspect towards his brethren after the flesh: "I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify my office; if by any means I may provoke to emula-

tion them which are my flesh, and might save some of them." He speaks as a humane seaman would in a wreck; who, when he found he could not save all, would do what he could, plunging into the sea and saving at least some of them. Here, my brother, is an example for your imitation, towards the unbelieving part of your hearers.

See also how he felt toward *those Christians who had sinned*.—Witness his Epistles to the Corinthians. How anxious he was to reclaim them! how dissatisfied with any thing short of their restoration! looking upon them as lost children, 2 Cor. ii.; xiii. 2.

Look at the example of *John* towards the rising generation.—“I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in the truth.”—And look at the example of our apostle, in connexion with the text, towards all to whom he wrote. He could not be satisfied with any reward short of their eternal salvation. All other hope, all other joy connected with them, he considered as of small account; and he looked forward to them as constituting the brightest jewels in his future crown.

Most of all, look at the example of your *Lord and Saviour*.—How did the kindness and love of God our Saviour appear! What did he not forego, and do, and suffer! May the love of Christ constrain you!

II. Consider THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF HIS MINISTRY:—“The gospel of God.”

1. *It is a blessed errand to go on.* Good news to a lost world. Angels were visited with wrath, but men with the cup of salvation. There is a pleasure in being an almoner, even of earthly blessings: but you have the unsearchable riches of Christ to impart; you are the herald of peace, and pardon, and reconciliation. How a man, bearing such tidings from an earthly sovereign, would be hailed by a number of convicts!

2. *But what is the gospel?* It is not merely the privilege of believers; for then it would not be for every creature. It is a declaration of what Christ has done and suffered, and of the effects; exhibiting a way in which God can be “just and the justifier of the ungodly.” It is not merely to convince of sin, but also to point to the remedy.

3. *Make a point, then, of distinctly and habitually preaching the gospel.* Do not suppose your people are so good, and so well informed, as not to need this. Visit the sick, and you will be astonished how little they know, compared with what it might reasonably be expected they should know. Many sermons are ingenious essays; but if they bear not on this great object, they are not the gospel. Woe unto you if you preach not the gospel! Do not suppose I have any particular suspicion that you will not. But I feel the importance of the exhortation, “Preach the gospel.” Study the gospel—what it implies, what it includes, and what consequences it involves. I have heard complaints of some of our young ministers, that though they are not heterodox, yet they are not evangelical; that though they do not propagate error, yet the grand, essential, distinguishing truths of the gospel do not form the prevailing theme of their discourses.

I love a sermon well laden with Christian doctrine. I love to find young ministers well learned in the Scriptures. Then their preaching will not be dry, but good news and glad tidings. Complaints have been made of some preaching as *too* doctrinal; and a preference has been manifested for experimental and practical preaching; but that doctrinal preaching which I would recommend should include both. The doctrines of the Scriptures, Scripturally stated, are calculated to interest the heart, and to produce genuine evangelical obedience. You need not fear that you shall be limited. You may take a wide range. There is a great variety of subjects which may be introduced; as—the purity and spirituality of the law, the evil of sin, the

wrath of God against it, and many others: but then all these naturally lead to an explicit declaration of "the glorious gospel of the blessed God."

III. Consider THE MANNER IN WHICH A MINISTER SHOULD DISPENSE THE GOSPEL:—"Willingly;" and so as, while imparting the gospel, to impart their own souls with it. Some have supposed that it is the matter, and not the manner of preaching, that God blesses. But I see no ground for this distinction. I allow that the matter is of the first importance; but the manner is not of small account. For example: the apostle prays that he might make the gospel manifest, "*as he ought to speak*," Col. iv. 4. And this relates to manner, not to matter. You may preach even the gospel dryly. It must be preached faithfully, firmly, earnestly, affectionately. The apostle *so* spoke that many believed. Manner is a means of conveying truth. A cold manner disgraces important truth. "Willingly."—Where the ministration of the word is connected with external honours and great temporal advantage, there is no test of this; but where it is attended with self-denial, there is. . . . "Our own souls."—This is expressive of the deep interest the apostles and their colleagues took in the gospel, and their earnest desire that their hearers should embrace it. Hence we speak of pouring out our souls in prayer. How would you feel in throwing out a rope to a drowning man, or in lighting a fire in a wilderness to attract the attention of one who was dear to you, and who was lost? How did Aaron feel during the plague, when he stood between the dead and the living? O my brother, enter into these feelings. Realize them. Let them inspire you with holy, affectionate zeal. Souls are perishing around you; and though you cannot "make an atonement for the people's sins," yet you can publish one, made by our great High Priest; and, receiving and exhibiting this atonement, you may hope to save yourself and them that hear you.

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### LXXIII.

#### THE NATURE AND ENCOURAGEMENTS OF THE MISSIONARY WORK.

[Charge delivered to the first Missionaries of the Baptist Missionary Society at the parting Meeting at Leicester, 1793.]

"Peace be unto you: as my Father sent me, so send I you."—John xx. 21.

MY very dear brethren, every part of the solemnities of this day must needs be affecting; but if there be one part which is more so than the rest, it is that which is allotted to me, delivering to you a solemn parting address. Nevertheless, I must acknowledge that the hope of your undertaking being crowned with success swallows up all my sorrow. I could myself go without a tear, so at least I think, and leave all my friends and connexions, in such a glorious cause. Impressed, therefore, with these sentiments, I can the more readily and cheerfully part with you.

My dear brethren, let me address you in the words of our Lord Jesus to his disciples, "Peace be unto you: as my Father sent me, so send I you!" The whole of this language was sweet, especially considering the troubles of their hearts to whom it was primarily addressed. The preface is sweet: "Peace be unto you"—as if he had said, All is well as to the past, and all shall be well as to the future. The commission itself is sweet. Nothing could well be more grateful to those who loved Christ than to be employed by him on such an errand, and to have such an example to imitate.

There is to be sure a great disparity between your mission and that of Christ. He came to offer himself a sacrifice for sin, and by his blood to obtain eternal salvation for poor lost sinners. Yet, notwithstanding this disparity, there are various points of likeness between your undertaking and that of your Lord and Master. I shall single out three or four, which I would wish to impress upon your minds. These are—the objects you must keep in view—the directions you must observe—the difficulties you must encounter—and the reward you may expect.

First, There is an analogy between the OBJECTS of Christ's mission and those of yours. The great objects of his mission were to glorify God, and to seek and to save lost souls; and yours are the same. Men and devils have dishonoured God; they had virtually called him a hard master; had thrown off his yoke, and represented him, in the punishment of sin, as a Being whose ways were not equal. But Christ by his obedience and death rolled away these reproaches. By the former, that is, by making it his meat and drink to do the will of his Father, he proved in the face of a rebellious world that his yoke was easy and his burden light. By the latter, that is, by enduring the full penalty of the Divine law without a murmuring thought, he manifested its equity, declaring in effect that God was in the right, and that man deserved to fall a sacrifice to his justice. You also, my brethren, have to glorify God, and that both by your cheerful obedience to his will, and by patiently enduring affliction. The heathen will judge of the character of your God, and of your religion, by what they see of your own character. Beware that you do not misrepresent your blessed Lord and his glorious gospel. It is a great encouragement to be engaged in the same cause with Christ himself. Does he ride forth as on a white horse, in righteousness judging and making war? Rev. xix. You are called, like the rest of the armies of heaven, to follow him on white horses, pursuing the same glorious object, that India may be conquered by his truth. May you be able at the close of your lives to say, after the example of your Lord, "I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Christ was sent of the Father, not only to glorify his name, but to seek and to save that which was lost; and such, my brethren, is your errand. Go then after your Saviour's example, go in pursuit of the lost sheep; follow after them, search and find them out, that they may be brought home to his fold, from the dark mountains whither they have wandered, and gathered from the dreary deserts whither they have been scattered in the dark and cloudy day; that they may be delivered from the errors and abominations of the heathen, and be brought to the knowledge and enjoyment of God.

Secondly, Christ, in the execution of his mission, WAS UNDER THE DIRECTION OF HIM THAT SENT HIM, and you must be the same. As Mediator, he always acted as the Father's servant. Though a Son, and as such equal with God, yet in his *official* capacity he learned obedience.—It is emphatically said of him, he both *did and taught*; and in both he inflexibly adhered to the directions of him that sent him. "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him who sent me."—"I have not spoken of myself, but the Father who sent me; he gave me commandment what I should say, and what I should speak."

Christ acted as the Father's servant; and you are the servants of Christ. There is a woe upon any minister if he preach not the gospel of Christ, but especially upon those whose business it is to preach the gospel among the heathen. Among *us*, if *you* do not preach the gospel of Christ, others will; but there all, under God, will depend upon you. When the Lord first planted the Israelites in Canaan, he planted them *wholly a right seed*. Be

exceedingly careful to follow this example. See that the doctrines you teach, and the duties you inculcate, be not yours, but his who sent you. A right seed is necessary to a profitable harvest. You must likewise do the will of Christ as well as teach it, and that after his example. He pleased not himself. Perhaps no men must expect to have their wills so often crossed, or to meet with so frequent calls for self-denial, as those who embark in such an undertaking as yours. This leads me to observe,

Thirdly, Christ, in the execution of his mission, had GREAT DIFFICULTIES AND TRIALS to encounter, and you must expect the same. The trials of your Lord were partly from *pain*, and partly from *contempt*. Great were the hardships he had to undergo. Foxes had holes, and birds had nests, but he had not where to lay his head. And, notwithstanding all that your brethren can do to make you comfortable; you may expect to taste of the same cup. Your Lord was also exposed to contempt. He is mad, said they, why hear ye him? If these things were done to the green tree, what may be expected of the dry? But Jesus "endured the cross, and despised the shame." May you be enabled to follow his example. He met with trials, not only from open enemies, but from pretended friends. Those who ate of his bread lifted up the heel against him. Betrayed, denied, and forsaken, he yet persevered; nor did he desist till he could declare, "It is finished." Then, when he could appeal to him who sent him, saying, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do," then he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost! What an example for you to follow!

Fourthly, Christ was not sent forth in his undertaking without a PROMISE OF SUPPORT IN IT, AND A GLORIOUS REWARD FOR IT. It was predicted of him, "He shall not fail or be discouraged till he have brought forth judgment unto victory." This implied that he would meet with much to discourage him. If many waters could have quenched his love, it had been quenched; but Divine Omnipotence supported him. And as his Father sent him, so sends he you. Faithfully has he promised to be with you always to the end of the world. The Divine Father promised him souls for his hire; that he should see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied. And herein, as the Father sent him, so sends he you. You also shall have your reward. The joy set before him encouraged him to endure the cross; you also shall enter into the joy of the Lord. Keep that joy in your view. For "it is a faithful saying, If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him." Harken to the promise of your Lord and Master, for his sayings are very true, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit down with me in my throne, as I also have overcome, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

Go then, my dear brethren, stimulated by these prospects. We shall meet again. Crowns of glory await you and us. Each, I trust, will be addressed at the last day, by our great Redeemer, "Come, ye blessed of my Father;—these were hungry, and you fed them; athirst, and you gave them drink; in prison, and you visited them;—Enter ye into the joy of your Lord." Amen.



## LXXIV.

[Addressed to two Missionaries and their Wives.]

## THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY A GREAT WORK.

“I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you!”—Neh. vi. 3.

My dear young friends, it would have been more agreeable to my feelings if this address had been delivered by one of our brethren in London. I submit, however, the more cheerfully, from the persuasion I have that you will receive what I say in love. I shall found a few observations on the words I have read. Let us review the occasion of them.

We may consider the chapter as a fulfilment of what Daniel had foretold about a hundred years before. “The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.”

It shows, in a striking light, how all great undertakings for the church of God are accompanied with difficulties and strong oppositions. When Judah returned, all their difficulties seemed at an end: they imagined, now they were liberated, they had only to go to work and rebuild the temple; but they soon discovered that they had new enemies.

The conduct of Sanballat and Geshem shows how the most iniquitous designs are concealed under friendly pretences. “Come, let us meet together in one of the villages—but they thought to do me mischief.”

The answer of Nehemiah discovers a union of wisdom and firmness. He saw through their designs, but did not reveal his suspicions. His answer would have been proper even had they meant as they said.

But wherein was the greatness of the work of Nehemiah? The building of a wall would not seem to be a mighty matter. But then it must not be considered in itself, but in its effects—it was to secure a city, where the worship and cause of God were to be carried on for ages; and in this view it was a great work, and greatly interested the hearts of the godly. Hence the people had “a mind to work,” night and day, with a tool in one hand and a weapon in the other. In short, with respect to the *principle*, it was the same as that which has attracted the hearts of the godly in all ages—love to Zion, or the cause of God. It was that which dictated the 137th Psalm, when times went ill; and the 29th chapter of the Second Book of Chronicles, when things went well. Such was the public spirit of those times.

But, passing the work of Nehemiah, I shall not be thought to misapply the subject if I apply it to the work in which you are engaged. You have a great work, and you may expect great difficulties and oppositions in its execution, and great encouragements. It is a work which will occupy your whole attention.

I. Let me remind you of a few things relative to THE GREATNESS OF YOUR WORK.—Such a view of it may, in one sense, dismay you, and induce you to exclaim, “Who is sufficient for these things?” But in another sense it is necessary; and remember, for your encouragement, that “they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.”

1. It is the work of *saving souls*.—Light as this is made of by the world, it is great. The temporal salvation of an empire is great and interesting; but the salvation of one soul exceeds all this; for the soul is capable of eternal happiness or misery. “What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his soul?”

2. It is the work of *introducing the gospel where it has never been.*—There is great importance attaching to this, whether in a country, city, town, or village. It is lighting a candle which may burn for ages. When Paul and Silas first entered Europe, they might have no conception of the effects. But what they taught was a light that has never been extinguished.

3. It is a work to *which you may expect great opposition.*—Satan will dispute every inch of ground with you, and his opposition will be varied. It is true, your brethren who have gone before you have had difficulties to encounter which you will probably escape; but do not expect that all opposition has ceased. The more God blesses you, the more opposition you may expect, not from Brahmins only, and Hindoos, but from Europeans. Expectations of ease and honour are utterly unworthy of a Christian missionary.

4. It is a work *that must occupy your whole attention.*—Nehemiah could not be diverted from his work, nor must you. You must not go with a divided heart. You may wish to attend to other things; but every thing must be done in subserviency to your great work. Never lose sight of this. If politics or worldly speculations invite your attention, you must reply, “I am doing a great work: why should the work cease whilst I come down to you?” Always consider an attention to any thing that would divert you from the grand object you have in view as “going down;” and say, I am doing a great work, and I cannot come down.

II. But while yours is unquestionably a great work, it is also a work IN WHICH THERE ARE GREAT ENCOURAGEMENTS.—Under this head we may remark,—

1. It is a work the foundation of which has been laid at a *great expense.*—When God would save a nation, he sent Moses and Aaron: he gave Egypt for them. When he would restore them, he sacrificed Babylon. But to lay the foundation of *this* work he sacrificed his Son!

2. It is a work which *occupies a first place in the designs of God.*—All his other works are subservient to this. They were not only made by Christ, but *for* him. The revolutions of empires are permitted for the sake of the people of God. Babylon was raised up to chastise them, and destroyed to deliver them. The invasion of Britain and other nations was permitted for the gospel’s sake; and who can tell but this may be the end which God intends to answer in permitting British armies to subdue India? Even slavery itself may be permitted for the gospel’s sake.

3. It is a work in which *the hand and heart of God will be with you.*—If ever you incline to despond, remember—“The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform it.”

4. It is a work which *involves the happiness of your species.*—Whence spring all the miseries of mankind? “Whence come wars and fightings?” From the state of their hearts. The gospel is the remedy, and the only remedy, Psal. lxxvii.

III. Let me conclude with a few REMARKS:—

1. *The greatest work requires attention to a multitude of little things.*—It is composed of little things. Great works are not accomplished by a single exploit, but by a series of labours—by leaving no stone unturned. Look at Nehemiah. He inquires, weeps alone, prays, speaks to the king, obtains favour and a commission; but still he returned to labour, even in the night, and took a calm and deliberate view of the work; and when he communicated his intentions, his friends joined him; and thus, by a multitude of operations, the work is accomplished. He was laborious, firm, disinterested, patient, and persevering; and looked for his reward to God.

2. *A great work may be hindered and stopped by little things.*—Little fol-

lies will spoil the whole, Eccles. x. 1; such as the dispute of the disciples who should be the greatest; and little discords; and self-will. A great character will imitate Him who "pleased not himself." Abraham's condescension to Lot is a fine example.

*My dear sisters*, yours is a great work. In the first ages, there were women who helped to advance the good cause; and we are indebted nearly as much, under God, to the services of your sex as to those of our own. It is for you to strengthen the hands of your companions, by a cheerful demeanour under their various discouragements, by conversing with the native females, by keeping order in the family, by setting an example of modesty and affection, by economy and industry.—You may be of service on your voyage. It was remarked of one of our dear sisters, during her voyage, by an officer, that he never saw her equal in sweetness of disposition, calmness, kindness, and firmness in danger. This was a powerful recommendation of the gospel.—You may be members of a large family—conform to its rules; make yourselves useful; beware of jealousy, whisperings, envies.—You may be called to preside in a small station—conduct every thing in the fear of God. Bear and forbear, and forgive. Keep near to God. Seek your own happiness and interest in that of the whole.

Dear brethren and sisters, we shall be with you in heart. We shall pray for you. And we trust we shall meet you in the world above. Meanwhile my brethren and companions, assembled to bid you farewell, will cordially unite with me in the fervent prayer—Remember them, O our God, for good!—The Lord Jesus Christ be with their spirits.

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## LXXV.

[Addressed to the Students of the Bristol Education Society.]

### FAITH IN THE GOSPEL A NECESSARY PREREQUISITE TO PREACHING IT.

"We believe, and therefore speak."—2 Cor. iv. 13.

THE words immediately preceding those on which I shall found a few observations on the important work of the ministry are a quotation from the 116th Psalm. David, under his troubles, believed in God, and therefore spoke. And the apostles, under persecutions and reproaches, believed in the gospel, and therefore spoke. They spoke boldly in the name of Jesus, whatever might be the consequence. They might be slain, as Christ was. But then like him, too, they would be raised, ver. 14. If they suffered with him, they would also reign with him.

I shall comprise what I have to offer under two heads of discourse—the subject-matter of the Christian ministry, and the necessity of believing it.

I. THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.—It is *that which we have believed*. It is of the first importance to a messenger to know his errand. Without this, whatever be our talents, natural or acquired, we are unqualified for the Christian ministry. Without this, the most fascinating eloquence is in danger of becoming an engine of mischief. The subject-matter of the apostle's preaching is variously described: it is called "the faith"—"the truth"—"the truth as it is in Jesus"—"Christ crucified"—"the gospel"—"the word of reconciliation," &c. In these descriptions, we see our work.

It does not follow that the dictates of reason and conscience are to be rejected or disused in preaching. The light of nature itself teaches some truth—such as the being of God, the accountableness of man, the fitness of doing to others as we would they should do to us, our being sinners, or what we ought not to be. These are truths which the gospel supposes, and which require to be enforced in subserviency to it.

But several important particulars *do* follow; as,

1. *That we must not deal in curious speculations*, which have no foundation in the Scriptures.—Some have been turned aside by such an indulgence to false hypotheses, and made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. A large proportion of the objections to Divine truth are of this kind: “*How* can a man be born when he is old?” “*How* are the dead raised, and with what body?” *How* can one be three, and three one? *How* could Christ be both God and man? *How* can the certain efficaciousness of grace consist with free agency and the accountableness of man? Paul would not answer such questions as these by opposing conjecture to conjecture, but in the spirit of the text—“We believe, and therefore speak.”

2. *That we must not deal in private impulses or impressions*, which have no foundation in the Scriptures.—One founds a doctrine on his own experience; but experience ought to be judged by the Bible, not the Bible by experience. “The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord.”—Another swears that, as God liveth, such a thing is true; but what does this prove, save the impudence and profanity of the preacher?

3. *That the person and work of Christ must be the leading theme of our ministry*.—In this, if we be Christians, we have believed; and this we must preach to others. For example: We must preach him *as Divine*. How else could we know whom we had believed? We must preach him *as having assumed our nature*, and thereby qualified himself to be our Saviour, Heb. ii. 14, 15. We must preach him *as dying for our sins*, &c., 1 Cor. xv. 1—4. We must preach him *as the Saviour of the lost*, taking the place of the chief of sinners. We must preach him *as the only way of acceptance with God*. “Being justified freely by his grace, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” In short, he is suited to all our wants. To whom else shall we go? He hath the words of eternal life. So preach Christ.

Every sermon, more or less, should have some relation to Christ, and bear on his person or work. This is the life of all *doctrine*, and it will be our own fault if it is dry. Do not consider it as one subject among others, but as that which involves all others, and gives them an interest they could not otherwise possess. Preach not only the truth, but all truth, “*as it is in Jesus*.” However ingenious our sermons may be, unless they bear on Christ, and lead the mind to Christ, we do not preach the faith of the gospel.

As all doctrinal religion meets here, so does all *practical*.—The Scriptures draw every thing from the dying love of Christ. “Feed the church of God, *which he hath purchased with his own blood*.”—“Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, *even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you*.”—“Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”—“Let this mind be in you *which was in our Lord Jesus Christ*.”—“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he *laid down his life for us*: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”—“Husbands, love your wives, *as Christ also loved the church*.”

The same may be said of *experience*.—Christian experience clings to Christ and his gospel. The religion of some, who talk of experience, goes

to idolize their own feelings and admire their supposed graces. But true Christian experience thinks little of self, and much of Christ, John vi. 68.

II. THE NECESSITY OF BELIEVING THE GOSPEL before we preach it:—"We believe, and *therefore* speak." It does not follow that every believer should be a preacher; but every preacher ought to be a believer; for,

1. *This is the only motive that will render preaching a delight.*—How can we discourse on subjects which we do not believe? If we have not tasted the grace of God, we shall feel no pleasure in proclaiming it to others. Is it any wonder that faithless preachers call preaching "doing duty?" or that they peach other men's sermons? and that in delivering them they are uninterested by them? But if we speak because we believe, our preaching will be the utterance of a full heart, and our work its own reward. We must taste of truth as Christians, before we preach it. Studying it merely as ministers will never do. Believing belongs to us as Christians.

2. *It affords ground to hope for usefulness to others.*—What effect will the sermons of those ministers have, who, by their frothy conversation, loose deportment, or avaricious spirit, are always counteracting them? The hearers will say, and say truly, He does not believe his own doctrine. He may talk of truth, or of holiness and practical religion; but all is vain.—If, on the other hand, we feel and practise what we preach, this must at least recommend it to the conscience; and it often does more. The one resembles a man persuading you to embark on board his vessel, assuring you it is safe, while he himself stands on the shore. The other has embarked himself and all he has; and, like Moses to Hobab, invites you to accompany him.

3. *It will render the work of the ministry compatible with common honesty.* The world has long accused ministers with being hypocrites. This is malicious enough; but while men engage in this work from indolence, avarice, pride, or any other worldly motive, rather than from the principle expressed in the text, they are furnished with a pretext for such reproaches. If we believe not ere we speak, we only deceive, and the sooner we throw off the deception the better.

4. *No other motive will bear the test.* What an account will faithless ministers have to give when asked, "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth?" One may have to answer, *The vanity of my parents* led them to educate me for the ministry, and when I grew up I was fit for nothing else. Another may have to answer, *My own vanity* influenced me: having a taste for learning, and public speaking, and esteeming it a reputable and genteel mode of life, I took to it. Another may have to say, It was my own *conceit and arrogance*: having a large portion of native effrontery, I made my way, and was caressed by the people. Oh how different these from the apostles!—"We have believed, and therefore speak."

But why do I thus speak? I am not addressing a society which pretends to train graceless characters for the ministry, or to make men ministers by mere education. They are aware of the necessity of their pupils being believers; and if any of them prove otherwise, they have deceived their patrons. They do not so much as pretend to impart gifts; but merely to improve those which Christ appears to have imparted. They wish to enable the aged and experienced part of our ministers, like Aquila and Priscilla, to expound to the younger brethren the way of the Lord more perfectly.

And as to you, my young brethren, I have no particular jealousy of you; only as we ought to be jealous with a godly jealousy, "looking lest any one fail of the grace of God." You are likely, another day, to occupy stations of much greater importance than if each were a minister of state. Our churches look to you. Many aged ministers are gone. Those

that remain will soon follow. God has begun a great work in our day. May you take it up, and carry it on. It is but the other day since *we* were youths, looking up to those who are now no more. Now the load lies on us. Soon it must lie on you, or on some others. Should you prove yourselves unworthy, God will find others. Deliverance will arise from some other quarter. O men of God, "Flee youthful lusts, and follow after righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart!"

I ought not to conclude without recommending to the audience that Saviour whom we have believed. We have found rest for our souls. Come ye. Forsake the world and your own righteousness. We have worn his yoke, some of us for forty years, and it has never galled us. Take his yoke, and learn of him, and you shall find rest for your souls. His yoke is easy, and his burden is light.

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## LXXVI.

[Addressed to the Students of the Stepney Academical Institution.]

### THE YOUNG MINISTER EXHORTED TO MAKE FULL PROOF OF HIS MINISTRY.

"But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand."—2 Tim. iv. 5, 6.

BEING requested to address a word of exhortation to my younger brethren, I doubt not but I shall be heard with candour and attention; and that not only by those immediately addressed, but by all my younger brethren in the ministry. You will not suppose, then, that I mean to compare myself to an apostle, or you to evangelists; but the work is in substance the same, whether it be in the hands of extraordinary or ordinary men: and as Paul argued the importance of Timothy's work from his own approaching dissolution, I may be allowed to enforce it upon you from kindred considerations; namely, that many of your elder brethren are gone, and others are going the way of all the earth.

You will not expect me, my dear young men, to discourse to you on the advantages of literary acquirements. I might do so indeed, and that from experience. I know the value of such acquirements, both by what I have been enabled to attain, and by the want of that which I have not attained; but it is more congenial with my feelings to speak of things of still greater importance. Three things in particular are suggested by the passage which I have read, and these I shall recommend to your serious attention; namely, the work itself to which you are devoted—the duties inculcated as necessary to the discharge of it—and the considerations by which it is enforced.

I. THE WORK ITSELF to which you are devoted.—It is called a "ministry." The word signifies, as you are aware, *service*. The leading character of a minister is that of a servant. This is an idea that you must ever bear in mind. It is a service, however, of a special kind. Every Christian is a servant of Christ, but every Christian is not a minister of the gospel. A deacon is a servant, as the word also signifies; but his service respects temporal things; yours is that on account of which the office of deacon was appointed, that you should "give yourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." It is that which Jethro assigned to Moses—"Be

thou for the people to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God." Your living under the gospel dispensation renders this a pleasant work: it must, if you enter into the spirit of it, be pleasant to study and impart the gladdening doctrine of salvation.

I have observed two extremes relative to this work; one on the part of ministers themselves, and the other on the part of the people. That on the part of ministers has been an abuse of their office of *ruling*, a fondness for power, aspiring to the exercise of dominion over their brethren. It has always grated in my ears to hear such language as this:—*My church, my deacons, &c.*, as if churches were made for them, rather than they for churches. Do not emulate this empty swell. True greatness will revolt at it. He that will be great, let him be the servant of all. Think of the woe denounced against the idol shepherd: "The sword shall be upon his arm, and his right eye shall be darkened." Think especially of him who said, "I have been amongst you as one that serveth."

The extreme on the part of the people is this: from the idea of ministers being servants, some of them seem to have imagined that they are their masters. It is true they have a Master, and one to whom they must give account; but it is not to the people of their charge. As Christians, they are accountable to one another, the same as other Christians; but as ministers, to Christ only. In serving the church of God, you will act as a faithful steward towards his lord's family; who renders service to them all, but is accountable to his lord only. Serve the church of Christ for his sake.

II. Let me direct your attention to THE DUTIES INCULCATED AS NECESSARY TO THE DISCHARGE OF THE MINISTRY. These will be found to consist in four things:—

1. *Vigilance*.—"Watch thou in all things." This is a general quality that is required to run through all our work. If any of you enter the ministry as furnishing you with a genteel post in society, you will be at best a drone, and had better be any thing than a preacher. You are watchmen, and must be awake when others are asleep.

2. *Patience*.—"Endure afflictions." If you cannot bear these, you had better let the ministry alone. If you be good ministers of Jesus Christ, you will not only be afflicted in common with others, but the afflictions of others will become yours. "Who is offended, and I burn not?" You must care for all, and expect on some occasions, when you have done, to receive evil for good.

3. *Activity* in the great work of evangelizing men:—"Do the work of an evangelist." Without considering you as evangelists in the full import of the term, there is a portion of the work pertaining to that office which is common to us all as ministers. Wherever Providence may station you, my dear young men, be concerned to evangelize your neighbourhood. Look at the situations of a number of the ejected ministers, and see if the effects of their evangelical labours do not remain to this day. Who can look over the churches in Cambridgeshire, without seeing in them the fruits of the labours of Oddy and Holcroft? Who can review those of Bedfordshire, and not perceive in them the effects of the labours of Bunyan—labours for which he suffered twelve years' imprisonment? The same remarks might be made respecting other parts of the kingdom. Emulate these men of God in evangelizing your respective neighbourhoods.

*Fidelity* in discharging your trust:—"Make full proof of thy ministry." The word means thoroughly to accomplish that which you have undertaken. Such is the import of Col. iv. 17, "Say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it." Were you to present a soldier with a sword, and bid him make full proof of it, he

could not misunderstand you. Would you see an example, look at that of the great apostle in the context: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

But here allow me to be a little more particular. If you would make full proof of your ministry, you must attend,

(1.) *To personal religion.*—This is often inculcated by the apostle.—"Take heed to *yourselves*, and to all the flock."—"Take heed to *thyself* and to thy doctrine," &c. Many people will take our personal religion for granted; as though a man who teaches others must needs be religious himself: but woe unto us if we reason in this way! Tremble at the idea of being a graceless minister—a character, it is to be feared, not very unfrequent! To what is it owing that some of our churches have been prejudiced against an educated ministry? I may be told, to their ignorance; and in part it is so; but in part it is owing to other causes. The lightness, the vanity, the foppery, and the irreligion of some young men have produced not only this effect, but an abhorrence of the very worship of God, as by them administered. Who were ever known to be prejudiced against a Pearce, a Francis, or a Beddome, on account of their education? If there were individuals of this description, let them be disregarded as ignorant, and let them be told that vicious characters are found among the uneducated as well as the educated. But be it your concern, my dear young men, to shun these evils. The instructions which you receive, if consecrated to Christ, will be a blessing to you; but if your object be to shine before men, they will be a curse.

(2.) Let the time allotted you for education be employed in acquiring *a habit of useful study.*—To make full proof of your ministry, you must give yourselves continually to prayer, and the ministry of the word. "Meditate on these things, and give yourselves wholly to them;" and this to the end of your lives. Let no one imagine that he will leave his present situation fully qualified for the work. If, by prayer and a diligent application to study, you acquire such a habit of close thinking as that on entering the work it shall be your delight to prosecute it, this is all that will be expected of you. It is for the want of this habit of study that there are so many saunterers, and have been so many scandals amongst ministers.

(3.) In every stage of literary improvement *be concerned to have it sanctified and subordinated to God as you go on.*—On this depends its utility. It were desirable that the study of languages and sciences should commence in early youth, and that religion should come after it to make the last impression, seeing it is this that ordinarily stamps the character. Could we be certain that the faith of Christ, and the gifts suited to the ministry, would follow an early education, this would be our course; but as this cannot be, our dread of an unconverted ministry makes us require religion as the first qualification. Only pursue learning that you may be better able to serve the Lord, and all will be well. It is thus that our brethren in India, though their attainments were not made in the earliest stages of life, have retained their spirituality and increased in usefulness. Let me conclude by noticing,

III. THE CONSIDERATION WITH WHICH THESE EXHORTATIONS ARE ENFORCED:—"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." This language denotes an anxiety in the apostle that the work of God might go on when he should have fallen asleep; and if we be worthy of the name of Christian ministers, we must feel a portion of the same. Dear young men, to you we look for successors in the work. It is not for me to say how long your elder brethren may continue; but we have seen stars of no ordinary magnitude set within a few years! It seems but yesterday since they were with us and we were the juniors amongst them. Now



we are obliged to take their place; and you, beloved youths, will soon have to take ours. We do not wish to hold ourselves up as your examples; but the *cause* in which we have been engaged, and in which the Lord has not frowned on our attempts, we do most earnestly recommend to your tender and solicitous regards.

Your elder brethren may be spared a little longer, and yet be able to do but little more. We feel the force of the wise man's counsel; may you feel it too—"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."

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## LXXVII.

[Addressed to the Church at Moulton\* on the Ordination of Mr. (afterwards Dr.) Carey, August 1, 1787.]

### IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIAN MINISTERS CONSIDERED AS THE GIFT OF CHRIST.

"Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."—Psal. lxxviii. 18.

SOME think it refers to God's goings forth in behalf of his people Israel, leading them forth to victory, taking their enemies captive, and enriching them with the spoils. Suppose it be so, we are warranted to consider it as mainly referring to Christ, for so the apostle Paul has applied it, Eph. iv. 8.

The apostle not only applies it to Christ, but *proves* it applicable. Thus he reasons, ver. 9, 10, "Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended," &c.? The captivity which he led captive was our spiritual enemies who had led us captive—Satan, death. And, having obtained the victory, he proceeds to divide the spoils. *Gifts to men.*—As David made presents. And hence come our ordinances, ministers, &c. There was a glorious fulfilment immediately after his ascension, in a rich profusion of gifts and graces to his church, like David's presents. Here it is "*received*;" in Ephesians "*gave*." He received that he might give, received the spoil that he might distribute it. But as I wish to appropriate the passage to the work allotted me, the whole of that to which I would at this time call your attention will be contained in two things:—

#### I. THE GREAT BLESSING OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

1. Ministers are *received for* and are *given to* you by Christ.—As men, and as sinful men, ministers are as nothing, and wish not to make any thing of themselves; but as the gifts of Christ it becomes you to make much of them. (1.) If you *love Christ*, you will make much of your minister, on account of his being *his* gift. A gift designed to supply Christ's absence in a sort. He is gone, ("ascended,") but he gives you his servants. By and by you hope to be with him, but as yet you are as sheep in the wilderness. He gives you a shepherd. (2.) If you *fear God*, you will be afraid of treating your pastor amiss, seeing he is the gift of Christ. God took it ill of Israel for despising Moses, Numb. xii. 8. He is *my servant*.

The *nine* which follow this were addressed to other churches on the ordination of their respective pastors.

2. Ministers are not only given to but *received for* you of God the Father, as a covenant blessing, among the spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. In this view consider that Christ received nothing at his Father's hand but what cost him dear—cost him his life. Or if the allusion be to the dividing of the spoils, suppose we say, He received them as a conqueror receives the spoils at the hand of the foe. Your minister was one of those who, like yourselves, were brands consuming in the fire. Christ took him from your enemies, and gives him to you. Make much of the gift on this account. "This I received of the Amorite."

3. Consider your unworthiness of such a blessing. You are *men*, mere men, and, what is more, *rebellious* men, who had joined with Satan. And must you share the spoils? It is not usual to divide the spoils amongst rebels . . . Men that put him to death had these gifts given to them. And we should all have done the same. Some of you, it is likely, have been vile and abandoned characters, and yet, &c. . . .

4. The end of it:—"That the Lord God might dwell among them." "But will God indeed dwell with men?" God had not dwelt with the world, nor in it, while sin bore the rule; but Christ's mediation was for the bringing it about. "Will God indeed dwell with men?" He will; and how? It is by the means of ordinances and ministers. A church of Christ is God's house, and where any one builds a house it is a token that he means to dwell there. What a blessing to a village, a country, for God to build a house in it. It is by this that we may hope for a blessing upon the means to the conversion of our children and friends, and for the edification of believers.

II. POINT OUT SOME CORRESPONDING DUTIES AS ANSWERING TO THESE YOUR PRIVILEGES.

1. Constant and diligent attendance at the house of God. If the house of God be God's dwelling, let it be yours, your home. If God gives you a pastor, do you thankfully receive and prize him. He hath not dealt so with every village.

2. Cheerfully contribute to his support. Christ has given you freely, and you ought to give him freely. Consider it is not as a gift, but as a debt; and not as done to him, but to Christ.

3. Follow those things which make for peace, with which the presence and blessing of God are connected.

4. Shun those things that tend to provoke the Lord to withdraw his gifts, and to cease to dwell among you.

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## LXXVIII.

### NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIAN LOVE.

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."—John xiii. 34, 35.

THE counsels of a dying friend have peculiar weight; those especially which arise from love, and a regard to our well-being. Such was this. It was the counsel of the greatest and best Friend we have; and the advice is calculated, more than any thing else, for our good. And what better than this can I advance on the present occasion? To enter into all the particular duties of a people to a minister and to one another would be far too

wide a field. If therefore I dwell on *the principle*, I hope it will suffice, and prove beneficial. If you ask, What are our duties to our minister? I answer, Love him. If you ask, What are our duties to each other? I answer, Love one another. Learn this lesson well, and every thing else will follow. We shall endeavour to ascertain wherein consists the nature of Christian love, and why it is called a new commandment—to consider its importance in Christian society—and to state a few means and motives to cherish it.

I. Let us endeavour to ascertain THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN LOVE, AND WHY IT IS CALLED A NEW COMMANDMENT.—We may remark,

1. It is not mere *good neighbourhood*, or civility between man and man. We may meet as neighbours, and practise the little civilities dictated by a sense of propriety, and regard each other indifferently; and yet be strangers to *love*.

2. It is not mere *friendship*.—This belongs to us as men. Heathens are capable of this. But there is no religion in it. It is not *Christian* love.

3. It is not mere *respect on account of religion*.—I never remember being without that. That was found in Saul to David, and at times in Pharaoh to Moses, and in Balaam to Israel. But there was no religion in it—no *love*.

4. It is not mere *party attachment*.—A good man will, of course, unite himself with that denomination of Christians whose sentiments he believes to be nearest the truth; but he will not limit his affection to a party, but love all who love Jesus Christ. A man may be a zealous partisan, and the party whose cause he espouses may be nearest the truth, but he, nevertheless, may be destitute of *love*.

5. It is not that *excessive and mistaken attachment* which shall lead us to idolize and flatter a minister, or to exempt each other from the exercise of faithful discipline. This, in fact, is hatred. “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.”

6. It is not mere *benevolence* itself.—There may be that without Christianity.

*Then what is Christian love?*

It is *complacency in the Divine image*.—It is a union of *heart*, like that of Ruth to her mother-in-law. Christian love is *love for Christ's sake*.

This last remark, I suppose, furnishes a clue for its being called “a *new* commandment.” The old commandment required benevolence, or love to our neighbour; but this is complacency in Christ's image, or the love of Christians as such. And being introductory to the New Testament or gospel dispensation, under which the church should be composed of believers only, it is suited to it. Personal religion is now to be the bond of union. This was never so expressly required before. This is more than love to our neighbour, or benevolence; this is brotherly love, or complacency in each other as brethren in Christ, Rom. xii. 10; Heb. xiii. 1. This is genuine *charity*, 1 Cor. xiii.

II. Let us consider THE IMPORTANCE of this principle in Christian society. This new commandment is the most extensive of any that could be given. Love is a most comprehensive principle; it is the fulfilling of the whole law; it is the grand cement that unites the spiritual building. Without this, any wind will blow it down. More particularly,

1. With respect to *the duties* of social religion.—Only *love* your pastor, and every thing of consequence will follow. You will attend early and constantly on his ministry. You will pray for him. You will take well his brotherly admonitions. And if you see faults in him, you will not unneces-

sarily expose him; but if the nature of the case allow, mention them to him alone. You will, in return for your spiritual privileges, cheerfully impart to him of your natural good things. You will, in a word, treat him respectfully, tenderly, and with affectionate fidelity. Only *love* your brother, and you will cast in your lot with him, and the house of God will be sweet to you. You will consider yourselves as intimately united to Christians, and, after the interruptions of business or the world, you will rejoice, as did the primitive disciples, to return to "your own company." The return of opportunities will be welcomed. You will have an interest in each other's prayers. You will give and receive reproof. You will be kind to the poor, and particularly to those of "the household of faith." You will sympathize with the afflicted. You will "bear one another's burdens." You will bear and forbear, and forgive.

2. With respect to *its privileges and advantages*.—These are nothing without love. To be "fellow citizens with the saints," to unite at the Lord's table, and a variety of other privileges, without love, will be privileges in name only. With love, the company, counsels, and prayers of Christian friends will be valued; but not otherwise.

III. Let us mention a few MEANS AND MOTIVES to cherish this Divine principle.—As *means*,

1. *Avoid those things which tend to damp it*,—as sarcastic speeches, and unkind reflections.

2. *Be concerned to be spiritually-minded yourselves*, or others cannot love you as Christians. If any err from this rule, let us beware that we do not make their conduct the rule of our own, returning evil for evil.

Consider as *motives*,

1. *The love of Christ*.—"As I have loved you, so love ye one another." Let your love be ardent and self-denying.

2. This may *comfort you under the world's hatred*.—If you be like Christ, the world will hate you, John xv. 17—19. Then when they hate you do not be without any source of comfort; but love one another.

3. Brotherly love is *the grand recommendation of religion*.—Young beginners are drawn by it. But if they cannot perceive this, they will be damped and discouraged, and the Holy Spirit will be grieved.

4. All love to one another *will turn to our own account*.—While self-love defeats its own ends, this will be sure to benefit us. Seek another's good, and in it you shall find your own. "By this ye shall know that ye have passed from death unto life, because ye have love one to another."

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## LXXIX.

### CHRISTIAN CHURCHES FELLOW HELPERS WITH THEIR PASTORS TO THE TRUTH.

"We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow helpers to the truth."—3 John 8.

THE ordination of elders over the churches was a practice among the primitive Christians, Acts xiv. 23. And I hope it will never be dispensed with in our churches. Besides being sanctioned by apostolical example, it is a guard against the introduction of improper characters, who, by getting an artificial majority in a church, may intrude themselves on a people to their great injury. Hence the exhortation, "Lay hands suddenly on no man." It also furnishes an opportunity of solemnly addressing both par-

ties on the intimate relation into which they have entered. In compliance with this custom, I would affectionately address the members of this church on the present interesting occasion.

The language of the text, I allow, has respect to Christian missionaries; but that which is said of them, and the treatment due to them, will in a great degree apply to settled pastors; for,

1. *They* went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles; and *these* give up all worldly prospects and pursuits for Christ's name's sake, and to serve your spiritual interests.

2. *They* were engaged in a great work, even the evangelization of the world; and so are *these*. God promised Canaan to Abraham, but Israel must take it; and the world to Christ, but Christians must conquer it." "Go ye into all the world," &c. Of this army, Christian missionaries and ministers are the leaders.

3. *They* wanted help from their brethren, and it was to the honour of private Christians to help them; for in so doing they became fellow-helpers, not to them only, but also "to the truth." And so do *these* need help, and it is for you, by helping them, to be fellow helpers to the truth.

To illustrate and enforce the duty which is here enjoined upon you, we shall take a view of the work of a pastor, and observe, as we go along, how you are to be fellow helpers in it.

In general, it is *spreading the truth*.—This is a name by which the religion of the Bible is very properly designated, since it is not only true, but emphatically *the* truth; being the only true doctrine ever given to the world under the name of religion. All that went before it were false, and tended to mislead and destroy the souls of men, on the true character of God and of men, and on the true way of salvation.

The apostle spoke not the language of conjecture, but of assurance; as one having been in a mine, coming to the light of day: "We believe and are sure."

It is the work of your pastor to spread the heavenly truth, and yours to be fellow helpers to the truth. Particularly,

I. It is his work to PREACH THE GOSPEL to you. There are many ways in which you may be his fellow helpers.

1. In *your prayers to God for him*.—I have lately read of a man who despised the prayers of a people. But so did not Paul. "Brethren, pray for us." "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me." Prepare the way to God's house by prayer. Do not expect to profit else. It is a great mercy that God sends to us by men like ourselves; men whose everlasting interests are involved in their doctrine. But they are sinful creatures, subject to temptations in common with others, and to some peculiar to themselves; they therefore need your prayers.

2. By *an early and constant attendance, and spiritual attentiveness to the word*, you may be fellow helpers.—What an effect do empty pews, and yawning, sleepy hearers, produce! How delightful for a minister to enter his pulpit, as Paul speaks of coming to Rome,—in the hope of being comforted by the faith of his hearers! Rom. i. 12. Where faith is seen to glisten in the eyes of an attentive audience, it produces feelings and thoughts more interesting and affecting than could ever have been produced in the study: while the contrary has a tendency to chill and freeze the feelings of the soul, and to reduce a minister to a situation resembling a ship locked in by islands of ice near the poles.

3. By *rendering his circumstances as easy as possible, so that his mind*

may not be harassed by worldly cares, you may be fellow helpers.—I never felt it a hardship to be dependent on a people who loved me. I have thought it an honour to be so supported. The expressions of love are sweet. But if love be wanting, all goes wrong. Little is done, and that little is not done heartily.

4. By enabling him by your habitual deportment to speak strongly as to the holy effects of religion, you may be fellow helpers.—He will wish to be able to point the world to the people of his charge, and say—There are my epistles of commendation, known and read of all men! And to address you boldly in their hearing, in the language of the apostle—“Such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” But if your conduct does not answer the description, who will believe him?

II. Another part of your pastor's work is VISITING HIS PEOPLE FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE, AND ENCOURAGING HOPEFUL CHARACTERS TO STAND FORWARD ON THE LORD'S SIDE. And in this you may be fellow helpers.

1. By welcoming him, and teaching your children and servants to respect him.—Much depends on this. They will form their opinion of him by the sentiments they hear you express towards him; and if they do not think highly of him, it cannot be expected they should profit under his ministrations. On the contrary, if they witness in you a high esteem for his character and his talents, they will attend his ministry greatly prepossessed in his favour, and with minds prepared to receive his instructions.

2. By noticing those in the congregation who are inquiring after the way of salvation, and directing them to the good old way, you may be fellow helpers.—There are some who, like Barnabas with Saul, get acquainted with and assist converts in the Divine life, and introduce them to the church, Acts ix. 27. Such persons are great blessings in a church, and great helpers to the pastor. Be friendly with the poor; encourage the modest and timid; visit the sick, and converse and pray with them. This will strengthen the hands and cheer the heart of your pastor, and greatly promote the interests of the truth.

III. Another part of his duty is THE MAINTENANCE OF A STRICT AND FAITHFUL DISCIPLINE. And in this you may be fellow helpers. He must reprove, and rebuke, and sometimes separate from the church some of whom he once thought well. This is a painful duty. But it is a duty, and it is your duty to stand by him. Say to him, as the people said to Ezra, “Arise; for this matter belongeth unto thee: we also will be with thee: be of good courage, and do it.” Do not consult relationship, or worldly interests, or private friendships. Do not weaken his reproofs by siding with the sinner. Act in unison. “Have no fellowship with such a one, no, not to eat!”

You especially who are deacons, you must be fellow helpers. You must be to your pastor as Aaron and Hur were to Moses. Encourage him to advise with you. It is customary in some of our churches, and I wish it were in all, for the pastor and deacons to meet and consult on the affairs of the church an hour or two, some evening immediately preceding the monthly meeting of the church. These meetings, in connexion with the stated meetings of the church, constitute a happy union of Christian wisdom with Christian liberty.

Thus, my dear brethren, I have pointed out, very briefly and plainly, a few ways in which you and your pastor may be fellow helpers to the truth. Consider what I have said as dictated by love and a desire for your own welfare, and for the promotion of the cause of our common Lord; and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.

## LXXX.

## CHRISTIAN STEDFASTNESS.

“We live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.”—1 Thess. iii. 8.

If I wished to be impressed with a pattern of a Christian minister, I would study the second chapter of this Epistle; and if I wished to see a pattern of a Christian people, I know not where I could look, better than to the church of the Thessalonians, chap. i. 5—10. They were a very amiable people, but greatly persecuted; and this excited the sentiments and conduct expressed in the third chapter.

The amount of the text is, that *stedfastness in a Christian people is the life of a Christian minister*. We shall notice, therefore, the nature of Christian stedfastness, and its influence on the happiness of a minister.

I. Let us inquire WHAT IS THAT SPIRIT AND CONDUCT IN A PEOPLE EXPRESSED BY “STANDING FAST IN THE LORD.”

We may remark in general, (1.) The language supposes they are “*in the Lord*.” It may be thought, perhaps, my hearers, that I should take this for granted of you. And I hope I may of some, and of many; but can I of all? It will not be wise for you to take it for granted. It will be well if there be no profane person among you, as Esau. There is great force in that exhortation—(Heb. xii. 15)—“Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.” Beware therefore what members you receive. If the world be allowed to mingle with the church, it will soon become corrupt . . . Rome . . . National churches . . . And even the best formed churches are liable to impositions, and in danger of imbibing a worldly spirit. (2.) The language itself is *military*. Its import is similar to the advice of the apostle to the Corinthians: “Watch you, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.” It supposes the army of the Lamb subject to many onsets from opposing forces, which tend to break their ranks and to put them to flight. This is the object of Satan, who knows that if an army be thrown into disorder, it is defeated. The great onset of that day was persecution. We have of late years been exempted from this in public; but still we may expect family and individual persecution. They that will live godly, and thus oppose the current of public opinion and public practice, must still expect to suffer persecution. But the chief things against which we are called to make a stand are the temptations of the world. Then let me be a little particular here, and apprise you of your danger in three quarters—in doctrine, discipline, and spirit.

1. *Beware of being moved from the simplicity of Christian doctrine.*—Christian doctrine is the foundation on which the church is built. Christians feel it to be so, and therefore will follow it wherever it is preached. The church has been attacked by infidelity, by gross corruptions, by false candour, and spurious zeal. If we be rooted and grounded in Christian doctrine, we shall not be materially wrong in any thing. The doctrine of the cross involves and will draw after it all evangelical truth, and holy discipline, and holy practice. But if that be given up, all will go to ruin. For example, If you give up the Divinity and atonement of Christ, the life-blood of Christianity is gone, and you become a dead, putrid mass. Or if, without openly rejecting these truths, you yet, under the specious pretences of candour, liberality, and charity, give up their importance, their effect will be the same. They that hold the truth with a loose hand will soon let it

go; and they that receive not the love of the truth will soon be given up to believe a lie.—Or if, under the pretence of being favourable to practical religion, you make light of its leading principles, the effect will be the same. This would be razing the foundation to rear the structure, or tearing up the root to produce the fruit.—Or if you introduce such notions of the gospel as are at variance with the holy government of God, you in fact introduce another gospel. Such are a kind of religious gluttons, with a large appetite, but no spiritual taste. They may call themselves orthodox, and count all those who differ from them enemies to the gospel, and stun you with their effrontery; but what saith Paul?—"Many walk, of whom I tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ."—Or if you reduce the doctrine of the gospel to mere speculation, you will become conceited and litigious, thinking you know something while you are deplorably ignorant; and the effect will be the same. O my brethren, we beseech you by the love of Christ, and by the miseries and mischiefs occasioned by corrupt doctrine in the churches, "stand fast in the Lord!" Next to doctrine,

2. *Beware of sinking into a relaxed discipline.*—As an army without good order and discipline cannot stand their ground, so neither can a Christian church. Great forbearance should doubtless be exercised in small matters. There would be endless divisions if a uniformity of opinion were required in minor things. In such things we must bear and forbear. But we must be firm and resolute in opposition to much of the liberality and candour of the present age. The church at Ephesus is commended because she "could not bear them which were evil." There are not only wicked characters, but evils even in good men, from which the church is to be purged. There is plenty of work to be done by those who are spiritual. Many churches have sunk into ruin by slothfulness, and by worldly policy—retaining opulent sinners from a dread of losing their patronage, or from perverted notions of our Saviour's meaning when he told the Jews that they who were without sin should cast the first stone, or from false tenderness, and sometimes from a wish to be excused in their own turn; thus agreeing together to tempt the Lord. My brethren, stand fast here. Whatever pleas may be urged, have no merely nominal members; but all effective men, whose hearts are with you, and whose prayers are with you. If any habitually absent themselves, try and restore them; but if they will not return, dissolve the union. If any man set himself against discipline, such a man had better be out of the church than in it. If any man forsake the gospel, restore him if you can; but if you cannot, where the bond of union is broken the form is not worth preserving, nor ought it to be preserved. The candour of modern times has in it a large portion of indifference to truth and uprightness, and is in direct contradiction to the counsel given to the seven Asiatic churches.

3. *Beware of sinking into a worldly spirit.*—This is a great temptation. In times of outward ease and affluence, many individuals have been carried away, and many churches melted down and lost in worldly conformity. The most dangerous feature of this evil is, that it may prevail in a person, and yet he shall maintain a respectability of character. Let a man fall into gross immoralities, and the world will soon let you know. But "men will praise thee when thou doest well for thyself." And therefore many are entrenched in this evil, and yet fancy themselves good Christians all the while. This is one of the grand onsets of your mighty foe. My brethren, stand fast! . . . We proceed,

II. TO CONSIDER THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIAN STEDFASTNESS ON THE MIND AND LABOURS OF A FAITHFUL MINISTER.

There is something supposed in this as well as in the former part of the



subject; viz. that the minister be a man of God; otherwise, so long as you stand fast with him, he will be regardless whether or not you "stand fast in the Lord." This is a good rule for trying the spirit. See that in all your steadfastness you have an eye to *the Lord*, and to his cause. Where a minister preaches himself, so long as a people stand fast with him, he will praise them, and they will be sure to be the people of God! But the life and joy of a true minister of Christ will be, that you "stand fast *in the Lord*." If your minister be the friend of God, as I trust he is, he will join with me in charging you to stand fast with *him* no longer, and no further, than he stands fast "*in the Lord*." If he leave Christ, in doctrine or in practice, it is at your peril to follow him . . . We may notice the influence of Christian steadfastness on a minister,

1. *In his manner of preaching*.—The effect on the mind is very great. If the people are often absent, late, inattentive, or sleepy, it is death to him. But if constant, early, attentive, affectionate, and spiritual, it is life.

2. *In the matter of his preaching*.—Christian steadfastness will enable your minister to state all the genuine effects of the gospel, and to point to you as exemplifications without fear of contradiction. But except you "stand fast in the Lord," in vain will your minister present to the attention of his hearers, for their admiration, the Church as the building of God, Psal. cxxvii. 1. My brethren, enable your pastor to refer to you as his "epistles," his letters of recommendation "known and read of all men."

3. *In the success of his ministry*.—This greatly depends on the co-operation of his people, on their knowing one another, and provoking one another to love and good works, and on each one being willing to take some part in active service. This would be convincing to sinners, winning to inquirers, encouraging to your fellow Christians, and life to your minister. But if every thing be left to him, his heart will die, and his work will die in his hands.

It is not difficult to account for this, for your sanctification and salvation are his reward. If we have not this, what have we?

After all, my brethren, this is of greater concern to you than to your minister. For if he be faithful, he shall have his reward, whatever become of you. Though Israel be not gathered, yet will he be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and his God shall be his strength. His loss may be made up, but yours will be irreparable.

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## LXXXI.

### CHURCHES WALKING IN THE TRUTH THE JOY OF MINISTERS.

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."—3 John 4.

THE connexion of pastor and people, in dissenting churches, is altogether voluntary. There are no bonds to bring them together, or to keep them together, but love. The great point, therefore, in this connexion, is the maintaining of brotherly love, and to render each other holy and happy. You wish to render your minister happy, or you can expect no religious happiness yourselves. I have selected the text as pointing out the course of conduct that will accomplish this end. "Walk in the truth."

I take it for granted that your minister can adopt the language of the text. If, indeed, he were a mercenary or an ambitious man, many other

things would afford him much greater pleasure. But I trust, in this respect, his heart is one with the apostle's. In pursuing this subject, I shall,

I. Offer SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE DUTY ITSELF OF WALKING IN THE TRUTH.—In order to this, we may observe that *the truth* is of a practical nature; other truths may be speculative, but not this. But what is truth? To this question I would reply generally and particularly.

1. *In general*—(1.) The truth is a system of *love* and *goodness*—an overflow of Divine blessedness. Then walk in love to the church, and bear good-will even to enemies. (2.) The truth is a system full of *joy*—“good news, and glad tidings of great joy.” Then be cheerful and happy, not morose and gloomy. (3.) The truth is a system of *reconciliation*. Then let it be your concern to live peaceably, and to exercise forgiveness. (4.) The truth is a system of amazing *condescension*. Then “let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.” (5.) The truth is a system of *purity*—“a highway of holiness.” Then “be ye holy, in all manner of conversation.” (6.) The truth is a system *full of importance*. Then be you in earnest. “Strive earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.”

2. *More particularly*—(1.) Divine truth includes *the existence of God*, as a Being of infinite excellence and glory; “holy, just, and good.” Then live in the love and fear of God. (2.) It includes *the Divine authority of the Holy Scriptures*. Then make them, and not interest, or inclination, or fashion, the rule of your faith and practice. (3.) It includes *the guilty and lost condition of men as sinners*. Then, in all your dealings with God, approach him in that character—as ill and hell-deserving. (4.) It includes the doctrine of *redemption by the blood of Christ*. Then remember that you are “not your own,” but his. (5.) Divine truth teaches us, that if we are saved, it is in consequence of *sovereign and discriminating grace*. It traces our salvation to electing love, and informs us that the great end that Christ had, in laying down his life, was “that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” And to walk in this truth is to be such people, to be distinguished by zeal and uprightness. Let it never be asked concerning us, “What do ye more than others?” (6.) It includes the doctrine of *efficacious grace*—“My people shall be willing in the day of my power.” “The righteous shall hold on his way.”—Then to walk in this truth is to *prove* that grace is efficacious by a perseverance in all holy conversation and godliness. (7.) It includes the doctrine of *eternal life*, as infinitely outweighing all the pleasures and all the ills of the present life.—“I reckon that the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed.” Then be dead to the world, and alive to God. Look not at the things that are seen and are temporal; but at those which are unseen and eternal.

My brethren, if the truth thus dwell in you, and operate, you will naturally be attentive to all relative duties; you will love your *pastor*, for the truth's sake which he preaches; and if you love him, you will make a point of attending his ministry, of contributing to his support, and of consulting his peace and happiness in every possible way.—And if the truth dwell in you, you will also love *one another*, for the truth's sake. You will watch over one another in the Lord, and follow the things that make for peace.

II. I proceed to notice THE CONNEXION BETWEEN SUCH A COURSE OF CONDUCT IN A PEOPLE, AND THE JOY AND HAPPINESS OF A MINISTER.

1. If he be an upright man, *it will be the great object of his life that the people of his charge should be conformed to Christ*; and it must needs be a

matter of joy to see this great end answered. He must needs rejoice over the prosperity of those with whom he travailed in birth, till Christ was formed in them.

2. Such a course of conduct in a people would *greatly assist a minister in his public work*.—It recommends his preaching to the world. It speaks louder than language, when he can say of his people, “Ye are my epistles, known and read of all men.” It enables him to be bold in declaring the holy efficacy of truth; and to answer the enemies in the gate, who would reproach the grace of God as tending to licentiousness.

3. *Your sanctification and salvation are his great reward*:—“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming?” As to any other reward, you well know that the prospects of Dissenting ministers, generally speaking, are any thing but inviting. And if his pecuniary reward were ten times greater, if he be a Christian, it would not satisfy him. It is not *yours*, but *you*, that must make him happy. He will long to present you before the throne, and to be able to say, “Here, Lord, am I, and the children which thou hast given me.”

Young people, your minister longs also for *your* salvation. He looks upon you as rising plants, destined, he hopes, to occupy the places of those who must soon die. You have no conception how much you can add to his joy. He can have no greater joy than to see you walking in the truth. Then do not disappoint him. Remember that his joy and your joy are involved in the same course of conduct. Then, while others wander in the mazes of error, be it your concern to walk in the truth.

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## LXXXII.

### CHURCHES SHOULD EXHIBIT THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL.

“These things saith he . . . who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.”—Rev. ii. 1.

MY dear brethren, that part of the solemn exercises of this day which you have allotted to me, is to give a word of advice to you, as a church of Christ. I confess it is with pleasure I accept of this service, partly because I see you once more happily united in the choice of a pastor, and partly because I believe you will receive the word of exhortation with candour and attention.

The language of the text, though figurative, is sufficiently explained in the preceding verse: “The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.” The allusion in the latter figure is doubtless to the candlestick in the Jewish tabernacle, which was made of solid gold, Exod. xxv. 31—37; Zech. iv. 2. It is described as a candlestick with a bowl, or fountain, from which oil was conveyed, through pipes, to the several lamps which branched out from it.

It is observable, that, under the Old Testament dispensation, the church is represented as *one* candlestick, though with divers branches; but under the New as *seven distinct* candlesticks: which may denote the different kinds of church government under the different dispensations. Under the first the church was *national*, and so was represented by *one* candlestick.

Under the last the churches were *congregational*; and the seven churches are represented by *seven* distinct candlesticks.

The gospel is "a light shining in a dark place." . . . To view God as having lighted up a candle to a benighted world is a cheering thought; and to consider yourselves as instrumental in holding it forth—as being that to the gospel which a candlestick is to the candle—is as interesting as the other is cheering.

You may consider yourselves, therefore, brethren, as INSTRUMENTS IN HOLDING FORTH THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL TO A BENIGHTED WORLD. This is the thought I propose to dwell upon, and this only.

The end of your existence, as a church of Christ, is to "hold forth the word of life." There are two ways of doing this, to both which I hope you will religiously attend: First, by supporting the preaching of the gospel: and, secondly, By recommending it in your spirit and practice.

I. BY SUPPORTING THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL.—I scarcely need inform you that to do this you must support him that preaches it: and now give me your attention while I mention a few different ways in which it is your duty, interest, and honour to support your pastor:—

1. By a *diligent and constant attendance on his ministry*—if possible, at all the services of the sabbath, and in the week. And those who live in neighbouring places may support the cause essentially by receiving their minister at their houses, for the purpose of village preaching.

2. By a *free and affectionate carriage towards him*.—Treat him as a friend and a brother. If in his preaching he should occasionally make a mistake, do not magnify it. Do not make him an offender for a word. You are as likely to mistake in judging as he is in advancing a sentiment. If you perceive faults in his department, do not whisper them about, but kindly mention them to *him*. Do not give ear to every report concerning him. He has a right to expect this as a brother, but especially as an elder. "Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father." That is, an elder *in office*; and though your pastor may be your junior in years, he is your elder in office, and as such has an especial claim on your forbearance and protection. Ministers are the objects of envy, and if every report against them were encouraged, they would be unable to stand their ground. Under *trials and afflictions*, especially, you should manifest great tenderness towards them. God often afflicts ministers for the good of the people—that they may be able to comfort those who are afflicted; surely then it becomes the people to be very affectionate towards them under their trials. . . . You that are officers in the church should especially be concerned to bear up his hands, as Aaron and Hur stayed the hands of Moses.

3. By *treating him with becoming respect*, and teaching your children and servants to do the same.—This will conduce to your own advantage. So long as he deserves your respect, you ought to show it; and no longer ought he to continue to be your pastor.

4. By *acknowledging his instrumentality in your edification*.—There is great danger of extremes here. Some are always feeding a minister's vanity by telling him how well he preached at this time and that; and, by the by, at the same time displaying their own vanity, by wishing him to consider what good judges they are of an ingenious discourse! Others, to avoid this extreme, will never speak to him in the language of encouragement. Surely there is a way of acknowledging ourselves to have been edified and profited, which does not tend to feed a minister's vanity, but to encourage him in his work.

5. By *giving him a place in your prayers*.—Think much on the greatness of his work. It is to enlighten a benighted world. Pray that he

himself may be enlightened. It is to "feed you with knowledge and understanding." Pray that he himself may be fed. It is to stand between God and men. Pray that he may be kept humble. It is to disturb the carnal security of men. Pray that he himself may be kept awake. It is to break the hard heart. Pray that he may be tender-hearted. It is to rouse the listless soul to action. Pray that he may be alive himself. It is to trace the windings of the human heart, and to describe the genuine operations of grace in the true believer. Pray that he himself may increase in Christian experience. From what your pastor has this day heard, methinks I hear him sigh and say to himself—"Who is sufficient for these things?" Think of this, my brethren, and you will not forget him in your near addresses to God.

6. *By not hindering, but helping him, in the exercises of his pastoral office.*—Be not of a touchy temper, so as to prevent him from freely giving you advice and caution, and even reproof. It would be to his dishonour to deal in personal reflections in the pulpit; but out of it, it will be to your dishonour to be offended with plain and close dealing. If you are of such a temper that you cannot bear to be told of your faults, you will hinder him in the discharge of his office. Be at the same time also willing to take your share in the exercise of discipline. In cases of personal offence, it may be well for your pastor in some instances to be excused, lest the parties contract a prejudice against him, and so prevent the success of his ministrations. But where he cannot be excused, be you always ready to join him, to stand by him, to sanction and encourage him in the execution of the laws of Christ; even though the offenders be among your relatives and acquaintance. Let the deacons in particular stand by him; and never let a church censure have so much as the appearance of being passed by the influence of the minister. The address of the elders of Israel to Ezra, in a most painful case of discipline, will furnish you with a good example: "Arise, for this matter belongeth unto thee: *we also will be with thee*: be of good courage, and do it."

7. *By liberally contributing to the support of his family.*—It is to the honour of Protestant Dissenters that what they contribute to their ministers they contribute *freely*, without constraint; but it is greater honour still, if they contribute *liberally*. Consider your minister's salary, not as a gift, but as a debt; and not as done to him, but to Christ. Give liberally, or you will lose the liberal reward. Give it as due to the cause of Christ, or Christ will take no favourable notice of it. A generous and punctilious regard to God's servants, even in their temporal character, was a feature of the great reformation in the days of Nehemiah, chap. xii. 43—47.

II. We proceed to observe, that the end of your existence, as a church of Christ, is to "hold forth the word of life" by RECOMMENDING IT IN YOUR SPIRIT AND PRACTICE.—"Be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain." This is a powerful way of preaching the gospel. It speaks louder than words—louder than thunder. Your ministers may assure those who are strangers to religion that religion is a matter of infinite *importance*, and you may say so too; but if they see you light and frothy in your conversation, indifferent and negligent in your duties, do you think they will believe you? No, (say they,) they don't believe it themselves! Again, you may tell them what an evil and bitter thing sin is; but if they see you loose and vain in your deportment, you cannot expect them to believe you. You may dilate upon the vanity of the world; but if you are covetous and oppressive,

what will your servants and workmen say? You may assure the gay and thoughtless that religion is the happiest life; but what can they think, if they see you melancholy in the service of God, and cheerful only when engaged in other pursuits? . . . There are various Divine truths, besides the above, which you believe, and which you wish others to believe. For instance, justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ; then disprove the calumny that this doctrine leads to licentiousness, by letting them see that your personal righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees. The near relation of Christians to God as their Father; then be of a child-like disposition. The work of the Holy Spirit; then bear its fruits. Efficacious grace; then prove it by your perseverance. . . . There are three things I would here recommend as to your spirit, and then draw to a close.

1. Cultivate a *humble, savoury* spirit, rather than a censorious or a curious one.—A curious and censorious temper is almost always the mark of a little mind, and has no tendency to recommend the gospel. A humble, savoury Christian will speak the loudest.

2. Cultivate a *peaceful, sincere, affectionate* spirit to each other.—“Be ye all of one mind.”—All of a piece, like the golden candlestick. If jarring, and strife, and contention be kindled among you, the scandal will not be confined to you, but will extend to the whole body, yea, to religion itself. It is in a time of peace that a people are prosperous. The heavenly Dove “flies from the abode of noise and strife.” Let me especially recommend you,

3. To cultivate *godly sincerity*.—If there is any one leading idea held forth in your being compared to a golden candlestick, it seems to be this. The candlestick was to be *all gold*—no washing, no deception; yea, of *beaten gold*—that no part should be *hollow*. It was what it appeared to be—the same within as without. Let this be your character. The great art of church government is to love in sincerity.

My brethren, Christ walketh among you! This should—(1.) Impress you with *fear*.—His eye is upon you! (2.) Inspire you with *courage*.—What could you do without him? (3.) Induce you to *imbibe his spirit*.—A meek and benevolent spirit to all mankind.

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### LXXXIII.

#### A PEACEFUL DISPOSITION.

“Let us, therefore, follow after the things which make for peace.”—Rom. xiv. 19.

MY dear brethren, in complying with your request to address you, on the present occasion, I shall study plainness of speech. I shall not divert your minds with curious speculations, or irrelevant remarks, but endeavour at least to recommend such things as I conceive your circumstances immediately require; and for this purpose I have selected the text as the foundation of a few observations: “Let us, therefore, follow after the things which make for peace.”

There is scarcely any blessing more desirable than peace—true, well-grounded peace. It is so intimately connected with prosperity, that the Hebrew word which is commonly translated “peace” signifies also prosperity. “*Peace* be within thy walls, and *prosperity* within thy palaces.” The Hebrew word is the same in both instances.

I am requested on the present occasion to give you a word of advice, as respects your deportment to your pastor and to one another. All I shall attempt will be to explain and to enforce the exhortation contained in the text; and if peace be with you, prosperity will follow as a matter of course.

I. EXPLAIN THE EXHORTATION.—In general, I may observe, we do not wish you to be so fond of peace as to sacrifice *truth* to preserve it. If your pastor desert those grand essential truths which he has this day confessed, you ought to desert him, or rather to desire that he would leave you.—Nor do we mean that you are to maintain peace at the expense of *righteousness*—a peace consisting in the neglect of discipline, and the passing over of such evils as ought to be exposed and reprov'd. It is the glory of a man to pass over an injury done to himself, but not to be pliable in matters which relate to God's glory. It is lamentable, however, to reflect that in general men are less severe against sin towards God than against an injury done to themselves. The rule of Scripture is this—"First pure, then peaceable." Let this be your rule.

Some of the observations I have to make will more immediately respect your conduct towards your pastor; and others your conduct towards one another.

*First*, Endeavour by all means to preserve a good understanding with YOUR PASTOR. His peace of mind is essential for his happiness and your "edification."

1. *Let your stated attendance on his ministry be constant and candid.*—If you are negligent, or late, it will affect his peace of mind. He will think his labours are unacceptable. . . . And if you should discover any mistakes in his preaching, consider human frailty. Do not talk of them to others, nor among yourselves; but to him, and that with modesty and tenderness.

2. *Let the vigilance you exercise over his conduct be characterized by the same tenderness and candour.*—Enemies will watch him with a desire for his halting; but do not you. Be not hasty in taking up or falling in with reports to his disadvantage.

3. *Let your contributions for his support be distinguished, not only by their liberality, but also by the cheerfulness with which they are given.*—Let it be a tribute of love. . . . Do not imagine that your contributions entitle you to scrutinize and dictate in his family arrangements. . . . His being a minister does not destroy his privilege as a man. Ministers also have peculiar feelings in reference to such subjects. If one of you were to intermeddle with the domestic arrangements of another, you would be told to mind your own concerns, and not to interfere with his, seeing he does not come to you for what he has. But your minister would feel a delicacy on this point, and a difficulty, which it should be your study to render unnecessary. And, after all, you have no more right to inspect his concerns than he yours.

4. *Let your exercise of discipline be prompt, and such as shall preserve him from prejudice.*—Always unite with him, that *he* may not have to endure all the prejudice and odium consequent on strict discipline. In many cases you may relieve him altogether from the painful duty, and thus prevent his ministrations from being rejected. Take as much of this from him as you can, "that the gospel of Christ be not hindered."

These are some of the things, an attention to which would greatly contribute to his peace of mind and to your edification.

*Secondly*, Let me exhort you to endeavour, by all means, to preserve peace among ONE ANOTHER.

1. *Be careful to cultivate a spirit of love.*—There is nothing more conducive to peace than this. Provoke not one another to anger, but "to love and good works." Be examples of love, striving who shall excel in acts of

kindness and sympathy. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

2. *Beware of sin.*—There is nothing more opposed to Christian peace than this. Where this is nourished, peace will be banished; for though it be private, it will work, and work mischief. It will be a wedge, gradually widening the breach between God and your souls, and between one another.

3. *Beware of a disputatious temper.*—Debates *may* be productive of good . . . . But they too often originate in captiousness and pride. Think of the account of them in God's word. "A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes."—"If any man consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words; whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth. From such withdraw thyself."

4. *Avoid a spirit of groundless jealousy.*—Godly jealousy is necessary, when we consider what we all are, and by what influences we are surrounded. But an ill opinion of others is the source of much mischief. From this suspicious disposition, words are misconstrued, and actions imputed to wrong motives. If we indulge in this, we shall be unable to believe one another, or to place confidence in the most explicit declarations. "Jealousy is cruel as the grave!" It devours the happiness of those who cherish it. How opposed to true charity! Charity suspecteth no evil, hopeth the best, believeth the most favourable representations . . . . In general, a spirit of jealousy would seem to indicate a dishonest heart. Its possessors seem to know themselves to be bad, and therefore think none others can be good. Probably this made Satan so suspicious of Job's sincerity. Beware lest you imitate him!—and lest your suspicions should originate in the same cause!

5. *Beware of a spirit of envy.*—The members of a church are like the stars. One excelleth another. Then beware of envy. Saul envied David for his superiority, when David "behaved himself wisely." Some excel in gifts and graces, and consequently obtain a greater degree of esteem. Beware of envy. Some exceed others in worldly property, and consequently, though not always deservedly, receive greater respect. But beware of envy. Do not imagine that religion cancels the obligation to treat men according to their rank and station in society. Let not envy lead you to think much of every instance of respect shown to a superior, and to reflect, If *I* had been *rich*, he would have visited *me*! Certainly, a minister should visit all his flock; but there may be reasons, apart from outward circumstances, why one shall be visited more than another. "Charity envieth not."

6. *Do not intermeddle with each other's temporal affairs.*—What I just now said respecting your conduct towards your pastor, I would repeat concerning your conduct towards one another. Different people have different ways of managing their domestic affairs; and if your brethren do but act so as to be honourable in the world, what right have you to interfere? If indeed their deportment be inconsistent with their character as professed Christians, and in any sense involve the honour of God; if, for example, they be indolent, and disgrace the cause—or extravagant, and therefore become unable to pay their just debts—then, indeed, it will be right to interfere; but even then it is neither friendly nor wise to make their faults the topic of common conversation.

7. *Guard against a touchy temper.*—Charity is not soon angry.



“For every trifle scorn to take offence ;  
It either shows great pride or little sense.”

8. *Repeat no grievances, especially when acknowledged.*—“He that repeateth a matter separateth very friends.”

9. *Strive to heal differences.*—It is a great honour to be a peace-maker. True, it is often very difficult ; for “a brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city : and their contentions are like the bars of a castle.” But by how much the more difficulty there is, by so much the more honour will there be. Do not abandon the attempt for a few hard sayings. Those who interfere in an affray commonly receive a few blows from both sides. But do not be discouraged. Pray, and try again. And let the saying of our Lord, “Blessed are the peace-makers, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,” weigh more with you than a little temporary difficulty and discouragement.

10. *Encourage no talebearers.*—Persons that make it their business, and feel it their delight, to go about telling secrets to the disadvantage of their neighbours, deserve the deepest marks of censure. Are you at variance with a brother ? Mark the man who by his insinuations and innuendoes would make the breach wider, and shun him. There are cases indeed, in which, in our own vindication, we are compelled to speak to the disadvantage of others ; but to blacken the character of another unnecessarily, and intentionally to widen a breach existing between friends or neighbours, is infernal ! If blessed are the peace-makers, cursed are these peace-breakers, and peace-preventers ! One cannot always shut one’s doors against such characters, but we can and ought to shut our ears against them ; and if we do this, we shall deprive them of their excitement and their highest gratification. “Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out ; so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth.” . . . And if you would not encourage talebearing in others, be sure you are not guilty of it yourselves. If you hear one speak ill of another, don’t go and tell him, unless indeed it affect his moral character, and the cause of religion ; and never assist in propagating evil reports.

11. *Be ready to forgive.*—Without this heavenly temper we cannot expect to live long in peace. There is a very mistaken notion of honour existing among men, as if it lay in not yielding, but in resenting an injury ; whereas it is very plain that true honour consists in the very opposite. “The discretion of a man deferreth his anger ; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression.” Our own interest should lead us to this ; for in some things we shall need the forgiveness of our brethren ; and, what is of greater consequence still, we all need the Divine forgiveness. But Christ assured his disciples, “If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you trespasses.”

These, my brethren, are some of the dispositions, the cultivation of which will make for peace. Some of them may appear to you little ; but great rivers flow from little springs. “How great a matter a little fire kindleth !”

These things you are to “follow after.” Sometimes you may be inclined to despair of obtaining peace by any means. But be not discouraged—“follow after.”

II. Having thus explained the exhortation of the apostle, I shall endeavour to ENFORCE IT.

1. Consider *how invaluable a blessing peace is.*—It is closely connected with *church prosperity* ; for the heavenly Dove “flies from the abodes of noise and strife.” And to *soul prosperity.*—“Live in peace ; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.” See the blessedness of peace in those churches which have been careful to cultivate it . . . and see the wretched state of those where peace has been infringed upon . . . “Look upon Zion,

the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down," &c.

2. Consider *what it cost our Lord Jesus Christ to obtain it.*—Peace between us and God—between us and all holy intelligences—was brought about by Christ; and all our peace with one another is the price of his blood. "It pleased the Father, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself."

3. Consider *its influence on spectators.*—Friends . . . . enemies . . . . other churches . . . young converts!

## LXXXIV.

## CHRISTIAN CHURCHES GOD'S BUILDING.

"Ye are God's building."—1 Cor. iii. 9.

Who can help admiring the disinterested spirit of the apostle Paul? The Corinthians were divided into parties, at the head of each of which was some great man. Paul himself was one. But he disdained such a distinction. "Who is Paul? or who is Apollos?" "Ye are *God's building.*" The emphasis of the text is here. "Ye are *God's husbandry, God's building;*" not *ours*. Then be not called after our name, but God's. We are rather yours than you ours, ver. 22.

The building here alluded to is that of the temple, ver. 16, 17. The apostle expatiates upon the same idea in Eph. ii. 20—22, which may be considered as the key to the text, and of which, in discoursing from it, I shall avail myself. "Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ—himself being the chief corner-stone, in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together, for a habitation of God, through the Spirit."

This description will apply either to the Christian church at large, or to a particular church. There are four things observable in the apostle's account of a building, each of which is applicable to a Christian church: it must be reared on a good foundation—it must be fitly framed together—it is supposed at present to be incomplete, but in a growing state—and the end for which it is built is, that it may be a habitation of God, through the Spirit."

I. IT MUST BE REARED ON A GOOD FOUNDATION.—On Jesus Christ, himself being the chief corner-stone. This is the foundation that God hath laid in Zion, Isa. xxviii. 16. And all after builders must follow his example. The Jews refused it. They went on to build: but they were no longer "*God's building.*"—The doctrine of Christ crucified was the foundation of the apostolic churches, and continued so for ages. When this doctrine was deserted and corrupted, men might call themselves the church, and greatly increase; but they ceased to be "*God's building.*"—This was the foundation laid at the Reformation; and while these continued, though accompanied with "wood, hay, and stubble," God blessed the churches. But when these reformed churches went off into a mere heathen morality, God forsook them. They were no longer "*God's building.*" Look at particular churches. It is this doctrine that God blesses for conversion. The building will not rise without it. Where Christ is left out as the foundation, he will say, as he did to the Jews of old, "As for your house, it is left

unto you desolate." I trust, my brethren, your minister will lay this foundation, and exalt the Saviour, and that you will encourage him in so doing.

II. IT MUST BE FITLY FRAMED TOGETHER.—A *building* is not a mere assemblage of a heterogeneous mass of materials. This were a heap rather than a building. There are three things necessary to a building's being fitly framed:—

The materials must be *prepared* before they are laid in it. Such were the orders concerning Solomon's temple. There was to be no noise there, 1 Kings vi. 7. You are few in number, my brethren; but do not be so anxious after increase as to lay improper materials. What if you could obtain hundreds of members, and they men of property; yet if they were haughty, self-willed, and worldly, how could they fit in with the humble, meek, and heavenly-minded?

2. That they be formed *by the same rule*. It is not enough that the roughnesses and protuberances of their characters should be smoothed down and polished off; they must be made to fit the foundation—and each other; if the members of churches fit in with the foundation—with Jesus Christ, in his gospel, government, and spirit—there would be little danger of disunion among themselves. The great means of promoting religious union among Christians is, not by dispensing with disagreeable truth, but by aspiring to a conformity to Christ. Religious uniformity is like perfection in other things; we are not to expect it in this world; still it is our duty to aspire after it. There is no union any further than we agree; and no Christian union any further than that in which we agree is the mind of Christ. It will be of no account to be of one mind, unless that mind be the mind of Christ. The way therefore to promote Christian union is for each to think more, to read more, to pray more, to converse more, on the principles of the doctrine and example of Christ. God builds by rule. He conforms to the image of his Son; and so must you. The house must not be built according to your fancy, or your inclination, but according to the rules contained in the word of God. "See thou make all things according to the pattern."—"Keep the ordinances as they are delivered unto you." A neglect of holy discipline is the bane of the present age; but you must exercise a holy vigilance here, or you will not be *God's* building.

3. That each shall occupy *his proper place* in the building. Some are formed to teach; others to be taught: some to lead; others to be led: some to counsel; others to execute. See that each is in his place, the situation for which he is formed, or you will not be in *God's* building.

III. It is supposed at present to be *INCOMPLETE, BUT ADVANCING*:—"It *groweth* unto a holy temple." This is applicable to the church at large: it resembles Solomon's temple—widest at the upper end, 1 Kings vi. 6. The church has been widening from the commencement, and will still extend. And may we not hope that there will be some resemblance to this in particular churches? If you would answer to the spiritual model—be chaste, not admitting any rivals in your affections; zealous, spiritual, and faithful—and you will be *God's* building, and you must increase.

IV. THE END FOR WHICH THE BUILDING IS REARED—"For a habitation of God." When men build a house, it is that it may be inhabited. So it is with God. If you are *God's* building, it is that you may be the habitation of God. This is a vast blessing. "Will God in very deed dwell with men?" Yes. Christ "gave gifts to men, that the Lord might dwell among them." He hath given you a pastor—that he might dwell among *you*. . . . .

## LXXXV.

## THE SATISFACTION DERIVED FROM GODLY SIMPLICITY.

“Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.”—2 Cor. i. 12.

SUCH was the declaration of Paul, in behalf of himself and his brethren; and a great thing it was to be able to say, especially when accused of being crafty and designing men. That they were so accused is evident from the twelfth chapter; and the declaration of the text nobly repels all such insinuations.

I do not mean to assume this language in behalf of myself or my brethren; but would rather apply it in a way of self-examination. By “fleshly wisdom” is meant the wisdom of this world, worldly policy, that wisdom which has carnal and worldly ends in view, or is aimed and exercised for our own interest, honour, or gratification. By “the grace of God” is meant that holy wisdom which is from above, or that line of conduct which the grace of God teaches—“simplicity and godly sincerity.”

I. Let us state a FEW CASES IN WHICH THESE OPPOSITE PRINCIPLES WILL, ONE OR THE OTHER OF THEM, INFLUENCE OUR CONDUCT.—It may be too much to say that all men are governed by the one or the other. Some have neither. Their way is fleshly; but it is fleshly *folly*. The principles of the text, however, are very common. Particularly,—

1. In *preaching the gospel*.—We are mostly governed by one or other, as ministers.

They give a character to the *matter of our preaching*.—If we are influenced by the former, our preaching will partake of the wisdom of this world. It will savour of the flesh. There will be little or no spirituality in it. It will favour some other gospel. But if we are influenced by the latter, our preaching will savour of Christ and heaven. It will be wisdom, but not the wisdom of this world. The doctrine we preach will not be selected to please the tastes of our hearers, but drawn from the Holy Scriptures. We shall declare “the whole counsel of God.”

These principles will also give a character to the *manner of our preaching*.—If we are influenced by the former, our preaching will be merely an art, with “enticing words of man’s wisdom.” But if by the latter, it will be characterized by simplicity; not thinking of ourselves, but of Christ and the salvation of souls.

Finally, These principles will give a character to our *motives*.—If we are influenced by the former, we shall study to be approved of men, and to have it understood that we are men of consequence. “Giving it out that he was some great one.” But if by the latter, we shall seek, “not yours, but you.” The love of God, of Christ, and of souls will constrain us.

1. In *reading the Scriptures, and hearing the gospel*.—Here, also, we are for the most part governed by one or the other of these principles.

There is the spirit of the world, and the Spirit which is of God. It is of great consequence with which spirit we take up our *Bibles*.—If with the former, it will be no wonder that we err, and stumble, and perish. “A scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not.” Paine read the Scriptures to pervert and vilify them. We may be acquainted with the original languages, and be able to criticise texts; and yet not discern the mind of the Spirit. “Spiritual things must be spiritually discerned.” This will be

especially the result, if we form a system of our own, and go to the Scriptures to have it confirmed, instead of deriving it in the first place from the unerring oracles. But if we are influenced by the opposite principle, we shall pray, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." And, coming with the simplicity of children, we shall have the mind of the Spirit revealed to us, Matt. xi. 25.

So in *hearing* the gospel.—If we hear merely as critics on the preacher, full of conceit and fleshly wisdom, whatever the preaching may be, it will do us no good. But if we hear as Christians, in simplicity and godly sincerity, we shall hear the word to profit. Take heed how ye hear, lest by and by you become regardless of what you hear, or even prefer the flesh-pleasing doctrines which lead to perdition, 2 Pet. ii. 1—3.

3. In *church fellowship and discipline* we are governed by one or other of these principles. Particularly,

In *receiving members*.—If we are governed by the former, we shall catch at the rich, and covet respectability, and be more ambitious to increase in number than in conformity to Christ. But if by the latter, we shall rejoice in the accession of the meanest Christian, and of Christian graces, though they shine in those whom the world despise.

In *choosing officers*.—If we are governed by the former principle, ministers will be chosen on account of their popularity, and deacons on account of their opulence. But if by the latter, we shall fix our eye stedfastly on the qualifications required in Scripture; and if we cannot find men who attain to the full standard, we shall be so much the more concerned to choose those who approach the nearest.

In *exercising discipline*.—If we be governed by the former, we shall be concerned to be great and respectable. If by the latter, we shall strive after conformity to Christ. If by the former, our discipline will be partial, screening our favourites. But if by the latter, we shall be no respecter of persons, but act with impartial fidelity, with a single eye to the glory of God.

4. In *deciding in our various worldly concerns* we are commonly influenced by one or other of these principles.—If by the former, the question will be, in all cases,—Is it wise? Is it *politic*? What will people say? But if by the latter, the question will be,—Is it *right*? The former is the spirit of all worldly men, and all mere nominal Christians; the latter, of the genuine Christian. If we are governed by the former, in forming our various *connexions*, the question will be,—Will this promote my *worldly* interests? But if by the latter, the question will be,—Will it contribute to the prosperity of my *soul*? My friends, think of the fruits of Lot's well-watered plain; and shudder at the thought of choosing situations for yourselves or your children, without a supreme regard to the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

II. Observe THE SATISFACTION ARISING FROM BEING ABLE TO ADOPT THE LANGUAGE OF THE APOSTLE.—He speaks of his consciousness of simplicity and godly sincerity, as a matter of rejoicing, yea, of singular rejoicing. Wherefore?—

1. *The testimony of a good conscience is sometimes the only testimony we have in our favour*.—It was nearly so with the apostle at Corinth. The world may be offended, and bad men may influence even good men to join a wrong cause. This was the case at Corinth. Thus Judas led away the disciples with respect to Mary. But if we can say as Paul in the text, this will bear us up under all the misapprehensions and misconstructions of the world, or even of our brethren. Thus Enoch was supported. Doubtless he had to endure the world's scorn; but "he had this testimony—that he pleased God."

2. *The testimony of such a conscience is an echo to the voice of God.*—“If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.”

3. *The testimony of a good conscience will support us in death.*—But if we have not this, how shall we bear to die, and to appear in judgment?

My friends, if your minister can adopt the language of Paul, and feel a consciousness of being governed by the best of principles, still this will avail for himself only; it will not avail you. He may be pure of your blood; but are you? If you perish, and your minister be guiltless, where will the guilt lie then?

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## LXXXVI.

### THE REWARD OF A FAITHFUL MINISTER.

“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?”—1 Thess. ii. 19.

I do not know any part of the Scriptures in which we have a more lovely picture of a true pastor and true Christians than is contained in this chapter. Though the picture is drawn by the apostle himself, he could appeal to God for its correctness. It exhibits him and his brethren as bold in proclaiming the gospel; sincere in their doctrine; acting as in the sight of God; faithful to their trust, and to the souls of their hearers; unostentatious; gentle and affectionate; disinterested; and consistent in their deportment, not only among unbelievers, where even hypocrites will preserve appearances, but also among the people of their charge. Let *ministers* look at this picture, and at themselves.

We have also the character of primitive *Christians*. They received the gospel, not merely as the message of the apostles, but as “the word of God;” it wrought in them effectually; and they were the determined followers of the very earliest Christians, though at the risk of persecution, and even of death. The apostle sums up all by a solemn appeal to them and to God, that if he and his brethren had any reward in their labours, it consisted in *their* salvation: “What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye?”

The import of this passage is, that *the salvation of his hearers is the reward of a faithful minister*. In discoursing on this interesting subject, I shall endeavour to explain it—account for it—and apply it.

I. I shall endeavour to EXPLAIN THE OBJECT WHICH EVERY FAITHFUL MINISTER ACCOUNTS HIS HOPE, AND JOY, AND CROWN. It is *you*, even *you*, in the presence of the Lord. There are two things designed by the apostle in this language:—

1. *To disclaim all sordid and mercenary ends on his part.*—It is “not *yours*, but *you*.” Of course we have a hope, and expect a reward of some kind. They that run must have a prize, a joy, a crown; but it is not any thing carnal or worldly. Men may, indeed, engage in the ministry with the desire of obtaining lucre or fame; or from the love of power, or the love of ease: but not so Paul; not so any true minister of Jesus Christ. As to Paul, he had voluntarily resigned every thing of this kind, for the sake of the gospel, as those to whom he wrote very well knew. The language, therefore, peculiarly became his lips. And no true minister of Christ, though supported by the people, (and it is fit that those who devote their lives to an object should be supported in it,) will enter on the work for the sake of this; nor will he be satisfied with this alone, however liberal.

2. Another object of the apostle was *to show the necessity of true religion, and a perseverance in it, in them.*—There are some who are our hope, who are not our joy; and others who are our hope and joy too, for a time, who will never be our crown; who hold not out *to the end*, and therefore will never be our rejoicing in the presence of the Lord, at his coming. Some are under serious impressions, and excite a hope and joy, like that felt at the sight of blossoms in the spring, which yet are afterwards blighted. There are some that have even made a public profession, and yet, like the thorny and stony-ground hearers, produce no fruit. The object desired, therefore, is not only your setting out, but your holding on, walking in the truth, and holding fast your profession to the end. Then, indeed, you will not only be our hope and joy, but our crown of rejoicing.

II. I shall endeavour to ACCOUNT FOR ITS BEING SO:—

1. If we are faithful ministers, *we shall be of the same mind as Christ.*—And this was the reward which satisfied him, Isa. liii. 11. He endured all things for the elect's sake; and so shall we, if we be of his mind.

2. If we are faithful ministers, *our love to Christ will make us rejoice in every thing that honours him.*—The highest honour to which John the Baptist aspired was to be the Bridegroom's friend; and to see him increase was enough, though at the expense of his own popularity. This fulfilled his joy! What labour and pains will men take at an election to procure votes for the candidate to whom they are attached! And how grateful to him to see his friends, each on the day of election, bring with him a goodly number of votes! Much more we, if we be faithful ministers, shall, in the day of the Lord, be admired *in* all them that believe, and that love his appearing.

3. If we be true ministers of Christ, *we shall love the souls of men as he loved them.*—And this accounts also for the language of the text. All of you have souls of infinite value. Some of you are the children of those whom we have loved, and with whom we have taken sweet counsel, and walked to the house of God in company, but who are now no more. And what is our hope now? Why, that *you* may follow in their steps. It is strange that we should long to present you with them before the throne? Some of you have professed to be the spiritual children of your pastor; and you are his hope, and his joy too. See to it that you form a part of his crown.

III. Allow me to APPLY THE SUBJECT.—You may think this subject mostly concerns ministers; but be assured you have a deep interest in it.

1. *If it be our duty to obtain volunteers for Christ, it is your duty to give us an answer.*—God is saying, by us, "Choose ye, this day, whom ye will serve."

2. *If your salvation be our reward, still is it no concern of yours that we should be rewarded?*—You would scorn to deprive your servants of their wages, or your minister of his salary; but this is not enough; this will not satisfy us; you must not put us off with your money; for we seek not yours, but you. The salvation of your souls is the only reward which will satisfy a faithful servant of Jesus Christ.

3. *The personal interest you have in this matter is far greater than ours.*—If we be faithful, our loss will be made up in the approbation of God. Though you be not gathered, we shall not go unrewarded. But *your* loss will be irreparable.

4. *You must be presented in some way,*—if not as our joy and crown, as rebellious children, to be dealt with as such. We shall have to say of you, These our hearers were stubborn and rebellious, and would not listen to our message of love. They would not come to Christ that they might have life.

## LXXXVII.

[Ordination Sermon, addressed to both Pastor and People.\*]

## MINISTERS AND CHURCHES EXHORTED TO SERVE ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE.

“By love serve one another.”—Gal. v. 13.

My brethren, having been requested on this solemn occasion to address a word of exhortation to both pastor and people, I have chosen a subject equally suitable for both.

I. I shall begin by addressing a few words to you, my brother, the PASTOR of this church.

The text expresses your duty—to “serve” the church; and the manner in which it is to be performed—“in love.” Do not imagine there is any thing degrading in the idea of being a servant. Though you are to serve them, and they you, yet neither of you are to be masters of the other. You are fellow servants, and have each “one Master, even Christ.” It is a service, not of constraint, but of love; like that which your Lord and Master himself yielded. “I have been among you as one that serveth.” Let the common name of *minister* remind you of this . . . The authority you exercise must be invariably directed to the spiritual advantage of the church. You are invested with authority; you are to have the rule over them, in the Lord; but not as a “lord over God’s heritage.” Nor are you invested with this authority to confer dignity on you, or that you may value yourself as a person of consequence; but for the good of the church. This is the end of office: “Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.” . . . But, more particularly,

1. You must serve the church of God, *by feeding them with the word of life*.—This is the leading duty of a minister. “Preach the word; be instant in season, and out of season.” This will be serving them, as it will promote their best interests. For this end you must be familiar with the word. “Meditate on these things: give thyself wholly to them.” It is considered a fine thing with some to have a black coat, to loiter about all the week, and to stand up to be looked at and admired on the sabbath. But truly this is not to serve the church of God. Be concerned to be “a scribe *well instructed* in the things of the kingdom.” Be concerned to have *treasures*, and to bring them forth. I would advise that one service of every sabbath consist of a well-digested exposition, that your hearers may become Bible Christians. Be concerned to understand and to teach the doctrine of Christianity—“the truth as it is in Jesus.” Be careful, particularly, to be conversant with the doctrine of the cross; if you be right there, you can scarcely be essentially wrong any where. Cut off the reproach of *dry* doctrine, by preaching it feelingly; and of its being inimical to good works, by preaching it practically.

*And do all this in love*.—Your love must be, first, to *Christ*, or you will not be fitted for your work of feeding the church, John xxi. 15—17. Also to the *truth*, or your services will be mischievous, rather than useful. And to *Christians*, for Christ’s sake, Acts xx. 28. And to the souls of *men*, as fellow men and fellow sinners. If love be wanting, preaching will be in vain.

\* As were also the two which follow it.



2. You must feed the church of God, *by watching over them.*—"Be instant in season, and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine." Watch over them, not as a vulture, to destroy them: but as a good shepherd, who careth for the sheep. If you are compelled to reprove, beware that your reproof be conveyed, not in ill temper, but in love; not to gratify self, but to do your brother good.

3. You must serve them, *by leading them on in all spiritual and holy exercises.*—Lead them by your example. "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." Visit them. You have as much need to pray with them and for them in private, as to preach to them in public. And you must do all this in love. An affectionate example and deportment will draw them on.

II. Let me now address myself to THE CHURCH.—You also must serve your pastor, as well as he you, and this in love. You must seek his good, as well as he yours.

1. Be assiduous to make him *happy in his mind.*—If he discharge his work with grief, it will be unprofitable for you. If you be touchy, and soon offended, or cold and distant, it will destroy his happiness. Do not be content with a merely negative respect. Be free, open, kind, inviting to friendly and Christian intercourse and conversation; and be early and constant in your attendance on public worship.

2. Be concerned to render him *as easy in his circumstances as possible.*—If he serve you in spiritual things, is it such a great thing that he partake of your carnal things? I hope he does not covet a haughty independence of you; but neither let him sink into an abject dependence. Worship not with—offer not to God—that which costs you nothing. It is the glory of Dissenting churches, if they voluntarily make sacrifices for the maintenance of the true religion among them.

3. *If there be any thing apparently wrong in his conduct or his preaching, do not spread it abroad, but tell him of it alone.*—You may have mistaken him, and this will give him an opportunity of explaining, or, if he be in fault, this will give him an opportunity of correcting himself.

And do every thing *in love.*—Love will dictate what is proper on most occasions. It will do more than a thousand rules; and all rules without it are nothing.

To the deacons let me say, Be you helpers in every thing—whether agreeable or disagreeable.

To the congregation generally, I would say, You also have an interest in the proceedings of this day. My brother considers you as part of his charge. His appointment by the church is with your approbation. He will seek the good of you and your children. Then teach them to respect and love him. . . . .

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### LXXXVIII.

#### MINISTERIAL AND CHRISTIAN COMMUNION.

"That I may be comforted with you by the mutual faith both of you and me."—Rom. i. 12.

THE communion of saints was thought of such importance among the early Christians as to become an article of faith; and where the spirit of it is preserved, it is a charming part of the Christian religion. The text gives

us a brief description of it. Paul longed to see the Roman Christians, of whom as yet he had only heard, that he might impart to them some spiritual gift, that they might be established. His faith would comfort them, and theirs would comfort him.

We are here naturally led to inquire what there is in the faith of a minister to comfort Christians—what there is in the faith of private Christians to comfort ministers—and what there is in the common faith of both to comfort each other.

Let us then inquire,

I. WHAT THERE IS IN THE FAITH OF MINISTERS TO COMFORT PRIVATE CHRISTIANS.—For when Christians see their ministers, they naturally expect to hear something concerning the faith; and Paul seems to take this for granted. There are three things in the faith of a minister calculated to comfort private Christians:—

1. Its being *Scriptural and decided*.—If antiscritural, we might comfort the sinner and the hypocrite; if speculative, we might amuse a few ingenious minds; but we could not comfort the Christian. Nor must we be undecided. To see a minister who is decided, on Scriptural grounds, is to see a guide who is well acquainted with his map, and who knows his way; or a pilot well acquainted with his chart. The reverse will be stumbling and most distressing. If a guide now tells you this is the way, then that, and is at a loss which to choose, it must occasion fear and distrust, instead of comfort.

2. Its being considered, *not for themselves only, but as a public trust to be imparted*.—Paul considered himself a debtor to others; an almoner, possessing the unsearchable riches; “as poor, yet making many rich.” In fact, the very afflictions of ministers, as well as their consolations, are sent to produce this effect, 2 Cor. i. 6.

3. Its being *a living principle in their own souls*, 1 Tim. iv. 6. Without this, whatever be our attainments, our ministrations will not ordinarily edify Christians. We must preach from the heart, or we shall seldom, if ever, produce any good in the hearts of our hearers.

II. WHAT THERE IS IN THE FAITH OF PRIVATE CHRISTIANS TO COMFORT MINISTERS.—Ministers must receive, as well as impart; and should be concerned to do so, in every visit, and in all their intercourse with their people. Now the faith of Christians contributes to the comfort of ministers, in its being, its growth, and its fruits.

1. *It furnishes them with sentiments and feelings in their preaching which nothing else will*.—A believing, spiritual, attentive, affectionate audience, whose souls glisten in their eyes, will produce thoughts in the pulpit which would never have occurred in the study. On the other hand, if a minister perceive in his hearers, and especially in those of whom he should expect better things, unbelief, worldliness, carelessness, or conceit, he is like a ship locked up near the pole.

2. *In the faith of Christians, ministers see the travail of the Redeemer's soul*.—And this, if they love him, will be a high source of comfort to them.

3. *In the faith of Christians, ministers often see the fruit of their own labours*.—They often pray for their people, of whom they “travail in birth” until Christ be formed in them. Such fruit, therefore, of their anxiety and their labour, is very encouraging.

4. *The faith of Christians is a pledge of their future salvation*.—A Christian minister must love his people, and in proportion as he loves them he will feel concerned for their eternal happiness. Well, here is a pledge of it, and this cheers him. Your minister looks around, and feels tenderly attached to you as friends, and as the children of dear friends now with

God; and sometimes he enters into the spirit of the apostle, who wished himself accursed, after the manner of Christ, for his brethren, his kinsmen after the flesh. Your faith therefore, as a pledge of eternal glory, must needs comfort him.

III. WHAT THERE IS, IN THE COMMON FAITH OF BOTH, TO COMFORT EACH OTHER.—Common blessings are best. Let us not desire great things—the wreath of honour, or a crown. Amidst all this, the sweet singer of Israel desired and sought after “one thing,” and that was a common blessing, Psal. xxvii. 4. Extensive attainments, even mental acquisitions, are comparatively poor. An apostle would sacrifice them all for a common blessing—the knowledge of Christ, Phil. iii. 8. These blessings are common to the meanest Christian.

1. *Its unity.*—Those who have never seen each other, men of different nations and manners, when they come to converse on Christ and the gospel, presently feel their faith to be one, and love one another; and this is a source of great delight. As a Hindoo said of some of the missionaries, newly arrived, “They cannot talk our language; but we see all our hearts are one: we are united in the death of Christ.”

2. *The interesting nature of the truths believed.*—“Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.”—“God manifest in the flesh.”—“There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.”—“He that believeth on him is not condemned.” Christ is come; atonement is made; the way of access to God is opened; our sins are remembered no more; we are no more strangers and foreigners; we live in hope of eternal life. These are things which, if we be in ignorance and unbelief, will have no effect upon us; or if we be in doubt and darkness, like the two disciples going to Emmaus, we shall commune and be sad; but if our faith be in lively exercise, our hearts will burn within us, and time will glide sweetly on.

LEARN, from the whole,

1. *The necessity of faith to Christian communion.*—Unbelievers, or, which is the same thing, merely nominal Christians, are non-conductors. Neither ministers, nor others, can receive or impart without faith.

2. *The necessity of the communication of faith to profitable visits.*—We may not always be able to maintain Christian conversation. We are men, and must sometimes converse as such. But *Christian* visits will be of this kind. It is delightful, when they are of this description; and, to promote this, we should avoid large, promiscuous parties.

3. What will *heavenly* communion be!—No darkness—no discord—no carnality—no pride—no imperfection!

## LXXXIX.

## HOLDING FAST THE GOSPEL. \*

“Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.”—2 Tim. i. 13.

THIS Epistle was written on the near approach of death, and is very solemn. It is addressed to Timothy, and as such is doubtless especially applicable to ministers; but it is by no means exclusively so, since all Scripture is given for the sake of the church.

I. Let us notice THE EXHORTATION ITSELF.—“Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me,” &c. ‘The gospel is here denominated

“sound words,”—and “a form of sound words;” and requires to be “held fast in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.”

1. The gospel is called “*sound words*.”—Much has been said of sound words, and every one reckons his own creed to be such. I would only observe, that sound words must be *true* words, and words suited to convey the truth. All other systems are hollow. We must be more concerned about their being true, than fine or harmonious. We must beware of specious words, which are often vehicles of error. The words which the Holy Ghost teaches are the standard of soundness. So much regard as we pay to them, so far are we orthodox, and no further.

2. The gospel is called “*a form of sound words*.”—The word signifies a brief sketch, or first draft; such as artists sketch when they begin a painting. Paul intimates that he had given Timothy such a sketch—a compendium, or epitome. Whether he had given him any thing of the kind, different from what we have, we know not; but what he wrote to him and others contains such a form, expressed in different ways. As—“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”—“Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”—We have one of the forms in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, chap. xv. 1—4. And a still more perfect one in his Epistle to the Romans, chap. iii. 24, 25.

The term implies two things:—(1.) That what the apostles taught was a *sure guide*. We are quite safe here. Where will men go, if the apostles’ doctrines are treated as mere opinions? These are the genuine criterion of orthodoxy. Keep within these lines, and you are safe. They are able, through faith, to make you “wise unto salvation.” By these, the man of God may be “perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”—(2.) It implies that what he taught, though it contained the outline of truth, and as much as was necessary for the present, yet is *not the whole*. It was only an outline, only a sketch, for Timothy and all other Christians to fill up, and to meditate upon. Paul did not know all. Angels do not. It will require eternity to reveal all. There is plenty of room for meditation; only let us keep within the lines which the apostles have sketched out.

3. The gospel, as a form of sound words, must be “*held fast*.”—This supposes that we do, at least, hold the faith. Alas! many do not. Some have hold of a wholly false doctrine, and hold it fast too. Some are Gallios, perfectly indifferent, and hold fast the world, or any thing rather than the gospel. Nay more, it is to be feared that many who talk and profess much about doctrines, and Scripture doctrines too, yet do not hold them fast. We must *find* the gospel, as Philip and Nathanael found the Messias, and then we shall hold it fast. They sought out Jesus, and compared his character and pretensions with the descriptions of the Messiah in the prophecies; and were convinced from examination. If, instead of being convinced of the truth from actual personal research, we receive the notions of others, without examination, upon *their* representations, even if these notions should be correct, we shall be in danger of not holding them fast. Many will try to wrest the truth from us. Persecutions—temptations—and false doctrines, sanctioned by fashion and the appearance of learning, have occasionally made sad havoc with the truth, and forced many a one who held it loosely, many a one who received his faith at second-hand, instead of drawing directly from the fountain, and who therefore never fully comprehended it, to give it up.

4. The gospel must be held “*in faith and love*.”—There is such a thing as a bigoted and blind attachment to doctrines, which will be of no use, even

if they be true. The word does not profit, unless it be "mixed with faith." And there is such a thing as a sound creed, without charity, or love to God and men. But the gospel must be held in faith and love. The union of genuine orthodoxy and affection constitutes true religion.

II. Let us ENFORCE THE EXHORTATION.—

1. Consider *the inestimable value* of these sound words. They are the words of eternal life. There is nothing in this world equal to them. They are the pearl of great price.

2. They have been held in such esteem that *many of the best of men have sacrificed their lives*, rather than part with them.—And shall we cowardly desert the truth, or shun the avowal of it, merely lest the indifferent should call us bigots, or infidels, or enthusiasts? There is not a more dangerous foe to the truth than *indifference*. Then "*hold fast*" the form of sound words.

3. They are *the only principles that can meet the exigencies of perishing sinners*.—All besides, however plausible, will flatter, and allure, and deceive, and destroy the soul.

4. They are *the only source of a holy life*.—People foolishly discard doctrines under the pretence of exalting practice; but holy doctrine is the source and spring of a holy life. What has the church become where these doctrines are given up? And what have those dissenters become who have embraced another gospel? Mere men of the world.

5. They are *the only source of real happiness*.—They inspire a peace and joy in health, a cheerful acquiescence under affliction, and a hope in death and the prospect of futurity, to which all are strangers who are building on any other foundation than that laid in the Scriptures by the apostles, even Jesus Christ—himself being the chief corner-stone.

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## XC.

[Preached in the Circus, Edinburgh, Oct. 13, 1799.]

### NATURE AND EXTENT OF TRUE CONVERSION.

"All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him."—Psa. xxii. 27.

It is worthy of notice, that the Spirit of inspiration in the prophets is called *the Spirit of Christ*, (1 Pet. i. 10,) because Christ was so frequently the theme of it. The plaintive part of this Psalm is applied more than once to him. The explanation, (ver. 1,) "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?" he adopted as his own. The revilings in ver. 8 were used, inadvertently no doubt, by his enemies: "He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him." The kind of death which he endured was expressly pointed out in ver. 16, "They pierced my hands and my feet." Even the circumstance of their casting lots for his garments is noticed in ver. 18, "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture."

And as the sufferings of Christ were the theme of Old Testament prophecy, so also was the glory that followed them. His resurrection and exaltation at the right hand of God, with the glorious success of his gospel in the world, are hinted at from ver. 19 to the end of the Psalm.

The passage first read is a prediction of the conversion of the Gentiles. It furnishes us with two interesting ideas; the nature of true conversion—and the extent of it under the reign of the Messiah.

I. THE NATURE OF TRUE CONVERSION:—It is to *remember*—to *turn to the Lord*—and to *worship before him*. This is a plain and simple process. Perhaps the first religious exercise of mind of which we are conscious is reflection. A state of unregeneracy is a state of forgetfulness. God is forgotten. Sinners have lost all just sense of his glory, authority, mercy, and judgment; living as if there were no God, or as if they thought there was none. And when God is forgotten, there is no proper remembrance of themselves. Their own evil ways attract little or no attention. They go on, adding sin to sin, and think scarcely any thing about them. Even if some threatening judgment should have affrighted them into vows and resolutions to amend their lives, no sooner is the cloud dissipated than all is forgotten.

But if ever we are brought to be the subjects of true conversion, we shall be brought to remember these things. This Divine change is fitly expressed by the case of the prodigal, who is said to have *come to himself*, or to his right mind. If we thus come to ourselves, we shall think of the holiness, goodness, and forbearance of God, and be troubled. And if we think of God, we shall not forget our own evil ways. We shall remember, and be confounded, and never open our lips any more.

The Holy Spirit makes use of divers means in conversion; but they all operate to bring the sinner to reflection. Sometimes he works by *adverse providences*.—Thus it was with Joseph's brethren. They had sold their brother for a slave, and framed a lie to deceive their father; and more than twenty years had elapsed when they went down into Egypt to buy corn. There they were treated roughly, and put in ward as though they were spies. In this situation, they remembered and reflected upon their evil ways: "And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us. And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake not I unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required," Gen. xlii. 21, 22. Thus, also, Manasseh king of Judah, after a long life of the most awful wickedness, was reclaimed by an adverse providence. In the thorns of affliction, he remembered the Lord God of his fathers, called upon his name, and obtained mercy. Frequently the Lord works by his *word*.—In reading or hearing it, something lays hold of the heart; and the effect is the same. Peter's hearers (Acts ii.) were brought to remember their evil doings, and to sue for mercy. We may read the Scriptures over and over, and hear hundreds of sermons, without any real profit, unless they operate in this way. If ever you hear to purpose, you will think but little of the preacher; your attention will be principally turned to yourselves. Sometimes, I believe, a sinner is converted without any apparent second cause. While sitting in his house, or walking by the way, his mind is insensibly drawn to think of its own evil courses: "I thought on my ways," says David, "and turned by feet unto thy testimonies." Whatever be the way in which we are brought, if it be by the word of God, we shall certainly be induced to remember those things which heretofore have been neglected and forgotten.

If you be truly the subjects of God's work, there will be many *ways* which will be brought to your remembrance, and which you will reflect upon with bitterness; ways of open immorality,—ways in which you have thought there was little or no harm—ways that you have thought little

about—and even ways which you have heretofore accounted good. 1. You will remember your ways of *open immorality*, odious to both God and man, and which have required some pains to stifle convictions while you pursued them. Such were the objects of bitter recollection to the penitent publican, and to the returning prodigal. Those evil courses which have distinguished your character may be supposed to have most interested your hearts; and consequently will generally be the first which occur to your remembrance. But these are not the only evils to be lamented. 2. You will remember things in which you have thought there *was little or no harm*.—Such are those pursuits which are common with the world. The principles, customs, and amusements of those people among whom you have lived, you accounted lawful; or if not quite lawful, yet nearly so. You have observed many to act upon this principle in trade, *that we may get all we can*; and may have thought you might do the same: but if you are brought to a right mind, you will remember these pursuits as Zaccheus did, and, like him, your hands will not be able to hold the ill-acquired gain. You saw little or no harm, it may be, in cards, dice, and other amusements of the kind, being kept in countenance by the example of people of fashion; but if brought to a right mind, you will remember such things with shame, being conscious that in many instances the desire of your neighbour's property was your ruling motive: or if no property was at stake, it is an exercise on which you cannot ask for a Divine blessing before you engage, nor go with freedom upon your knees when you retire. 3. You will remember ways that you have *thought nothing about*.—This will be the case, especially, with respect to heart sins. Saul, the Pharisee, had no idea of God's law taking cognizance of his heart; but when the commandment came in its spirituality, it opened to him an entirely new scene; it slew all his self-righteous hopes. Or if you should have had some convictions on account of secret sins, yet you were not aware of that awful load of negative sin of which you were continually guilty; I mean *the want of love to God*. But if you are brought to a right mind, you will remember and be confounded at the idea that a God of so glorious a character, and whose goodness to you has never abated, should have had no place in your heart; that you have never regarded him in any thing; but lived in wicked aversion against him. Finally, You will remember, and that with contrition, even ways that you counted *good*. Your very prayers, and tears, and alms, and the whole of your religion while unconverted, will appear odious to you. That of which you have made a righteousness, hoping at least that it would balance your evil deeds, will now appear as “filthy rags,” fit for nothing, unless it were to bind you hand and foot, in order to your being cast into utter darkness. Nor will these your views be at all exaggerating; for all this is but the truth. God requires the heart, the whole heart, and *nothing but the heart*. All those things which God requires as duties are but so many expressions of the heart; whatever, therefore, we have done without the heart can have no goodness in it in his sight, who sees things as they are; but must needs be evil. And that which is evil in the sight of God, if we become of God's mind, will be evil in *our* sight.

But further, True conversion consists not only in remembering, but in “turning to the Lord.” This part of the passage is expressive of a cordial relinquishment of our idols, whatever they have been, and an acquiescence in the gospel way of salvation by Christ alone. Its importance will appear, if we consider, 1. That it is possible to remember our evil ways without turning from them. There are few who attend a faithful ministry, but are compelled, at one time or other, to remember their ways, and that with pain, shame, and remorse; yet they continue to pursue them. Their consciences

are enlightened and awakened, but their hearts remain the same. Therefore they persist in evil, though the road is covered with briars and thorns. The guilt of such characters is greater by far than that of sinners in common. O! dread the thought of remembering without turning. 2. It is possible both to remember and turn, and yet not turn "to the Lord." We may break off our open sins from merely selfish considerations, and not from the love of God. This is not breaking off our sins "by righteousness;" but a mere exchange of vices. Shimei, when circumstances required it, left off abusing and casting dust at David; but he was the same character notwithstanding. Neither God nor man can be satisfied with such turnings: "If ye will return, return to me, saith the Lord."

Once more, True conversion to Christ will be accompanied with the *worship* of him. Worship, as a religious exercise, is the homage of the heart, presented to God according to his revealed will. This homage being paid to the Messiah affords a proof of his proper Deity. It was the practice of the primitive Christians, and that by which they are described, "to call upon the name of the Lord Jesus."

Such is and will be the practice of all true Christians to the end of time. If we be truly converted to Christ, we shall worship him both privately and publicly. The worship of the closet, of the family, and of the church, will be our delight. That which has heretofore been a task and an uneasiness will become our meat and drink.

II. THE EXTENT of conversion under the kingdom or reign of the Messiah: "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord,—all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him."

It was fit that the accessions of the Gentiles should be reserved for the gospel day, that it might grace the triumph of Christ over his enemies, and appear to be what it is, "the travail of his soul." It is becoming the coronation of a prince for liberty to be granted to the captives, that many hearts may unite in the public joy. Hence it might be that the Spirit was so copiously poured out upon the apostles, and that their preaching became so eminently successful. The coronation of Christ in heaven must be accompanied with the pardon of his murderers, and followed by the liberation of millions among the heathen who had hitherto been the willing captives of the prince of darkness.

And this great and good work begun in the apostles' days *must* go on, and "must increase," till "all the ends of the world shall remember and turn," and "all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him." Conversion work, except for a few years in the early ages, has been *individual*; God has gathered sinners one by one. Thus it is at present with us; but it will not be thus always. People will flock to Zion as doves to their windows. The church will be struck with joyful surprise, on viewing her own increase. Her heart shall fear and be enlarged, saying, "Who hath begotten me these?" These, whence are they?

Further, Conversion work has hitherto been circumscribed within certain parts of the world. For many ages it was nearly confined to the posterity of Abraham. By means of the labours of the apostles, it was extended to various parts of Asia, the borders of Africa and of Europe. Of late ages it has been nearly confined to Europe and America. But the time will come when "all the kindreds of the earth" shall worship. Ethiopia, and all the unknown regions of Africa, shall stretch out their hands to God. Arabia, and Persia, and Tartary, and India, and China, with the numerous islands in the Eastern and Southern Ocean, shall bring an offering before him. Mahomedans shall drop their delusion, papists their cruel superstition, Jews



shall be ashamed of their obstinacy, deists of their enmity, and merely nominal Christians of their form of godliness without the power of it.

These hopes are not the flight of an ardent imagination; they are founded on the true sayings of God. Nor can the time of their accomplishment be far distant. Daniel, in his seventh chapter, has given us a prophecy of all the principal events from his time to the universal spread of the Messiah's kingdom. The whole is comprehended in the rising and falling of four great governments, with their branches and subdivisions. The world has seen the rise and fall of three out of the four. They have also seen the fourth divided into ten kingdoms, and the "little horn," or papal government, rise up amongst them. They have witnessed its rise, its reign, and in part its downfall. The last branch of the last of the four beasts is now in its dying agonies. No sooner will it be proclaimed, "Babylon is fallen!" than the marriage of the Lamb will come. There are no more tyrannical or persecuting powers to succeed; but "the kingdom shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High." All ranks of men, princes, nobles, and people, becoming *real* Christians, the government of the world will naturally be in their hands; and love, peace, and universal good shall consequently pervade the whole earth.

Finally, While we are concerned for the world, let us not forget our own souls. If the whole world be saved and we lost, what will it avail us?—Perhaps we can scarcely conceive of any thing more dreadful than that of seeing multitudes from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, sitting down in the kingdom of God, while we who thought ourselves the children of the kingdom, are thrust out!

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## XCI.

### EFFECT OF THINGS MODIFIED BY THE STATE OF THE MIND.

"Unto the pure all things are pure, but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled."—Tit. i. 15.

THE apostle had lived to see many who had bid fair to turn aside. Under the impression of these things he writes to Titus as he had done to Timothy, 2 Tim. ii. 21.

The human mind is exposed to numerous influences—the world—the flesh—the devil; and according to the state of the mind, such is the influence exercised. The beams of the sun lighting on a garden of spices exhale the most pleasing odours, while they produce an opposite effect on a foul and unsavoury object.

I. Let us endeavour to ascertain THE IMPORT OF THE TERMS.—By the *pure* is not meant the sinless. No such characters are to be found. If any think so, the Scriptures are decisive on this point, 1 John i. 8, 10. But as a *defiled* mind is connected with *unbelief*, and is attributed (ver. 14) to those who "turn from the truth," so a pure mind must be a believing one—one that receives the "truth in the love of it." Evangelical purity is connected with faith—thus Peter, 1 Pet. i. 22; Acts xv. 9. The *mind* and *conscience* are the governing powers of the soul. If they be polluted, all is so. If the judgment be corrupted, there is no pledge for our retaining one correct view of ourselves, or of God. If conscience, God's witness, be defiled, there is nothing to recall us. Faith is the principle that opposes these corruptions.

II. ILLUSTRATE THE SENTIMENT by a review of the different effects pro-

duced by the same things, according to the different state of the mind. 1. On a believing mind the *doctrines* of Christ will have a sanctifying effect, and the contrary on an unbelieving. Some parts of Christian doctrine have a *warning* tendency, particularly the omnipresence, omnipotence, and holiness of God—these beget holy fear. Others are of an *encouraging* complexion, as redemption, pardon, reconciliation, eternal life. Even in those doctrines to which unbelievers are ever objecting—sovereign, efficacious grace, personal election, &c.—the Christian finds the most powerful motive to purity. But on others they produce an ill effect, exciting dislike to religion, causing to raise objections. You never hear of them but in ridicule. Some believe in them, and hail them as that which frees them from restraint. Thus they are either “stumbling at the word, being disobedient,” or “turning the grace of God into lasciviousness.” 2. On a believing mind, *precepts*, and even *threatenings*, produce a salutary effect. Considering the Divine commands as their rule, they fear to deviate, and are tender of conscience; but unbelievers dislike restraints, and there is a species of *religion* which proposes to leave them out. 3. *Mercies and judgments* humble, melt, and soften some, but harden others. Mercy, Eccles. viii. 11. Judgments soften transiently only: Pharaoh—Saul. David says, Psal. xviii. 5, 6. But another returns to his sin for relief, so the means of grace and salvation produce no good effect, Isa. xxvi. 10. 4. *Evils which occur among men*.—A pure mind gathers good from the wickedness that occurs around him—from the defection of apostates, (John vi. 68,) and from the falls of good men. But others are carried away before these things. 5. *Treatment from men*.—It may be unkind—unjust, but we shall view it as coming from God. David turned the reproaches of Shimei into reproofs from God; but the lawyer mentioned in the Gospels turned reproof into reproach; thus the most faithful preaching gives offence.

From the whole we see the vast importance of the mind being purified by faith. There are those in the world that are neither believers nor unbelievers; but none such are here. Every one who *has heard*, or who has had *opportunities* of hearing, the gospel, is one of them. Some manifest their unbelief by making no pretension either to faith or purity, but ridicule both. Some pretend faith; but it does not purify the heart and life. O come to Jesus—purify your souls by obeying the truth! Wash in that laver. If found impure at the great day, all is over. Nothing unclean shall enter heaven, Rev. xxii. 11.

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## XCII.

[Delivered at Maze Pond, London, May 11, 1794.]

### SIN ITS OWN PUNISHMENT.

“Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee.”—Jer. ii. 19.

WHEN we read such pointed addresses as these to the conscience, it becomes us not to be contented with considering whom they were immediately addressed to. What will it avail you and me barely to read that there were a great number of wicked people in the times of the prophet Jeremiah? What immediate use will it be to us to be told that the judgments of God were threatened against them, and that those judgments were executed upon

them, unless we consider this threatening as applicable to ourselves? We ought to conceive that all such language is expressive of the indignation of God against all unrighteousness, and, consequently, against our unrighteousness. I do not take upon me to say that those whom I now address are in all points like unto the people who are here addressed; probably there is great diversity of character, not only between individuals of the same age, but between those of different ages and circumstances, yet I am persuaded there is likeness enough to afford a ground for inquiry. I am persuaded that I need not go so far back as the days of Jeremiah to find such a thing as wickedness; that I need not go three thousand years back in order to find characters who are guilty of backsliding from God: no, the word is nigh to us, and the objects which it describes are nigh us. We ourselves are parties herein deeply interested.

The terms wickedness and backsliding, perhaps, are not exactly of the same meaning; wickedness seems to comprehend rather more than backsliding; it seems to be a stronger term: all backsliding is wickedness, but all wickedness is not backsliding: backsliding supposes, at least, the profession of religion; wickedness does not necessarily suppose this: backsliding is never attributed but to those who were in the ways of God either in reality or else by profession; that was the case with the Israelites as a nation. But that sentiment which has principally struck my mind is the manner or method that God takes in order to punish wickedness, and in order to punish backsliding. It is here said, "thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee." It is not said, thine own wickedness shall be corrected, thine own backslidings shall be reproved, or that they shall be removed on those accounts; but it is intimated that their very wickedness should prove its own punishment, that their backsliding should become the means of its own correction. This I think is the sentiment taught us in the passage, and it is upon this and this only that I mean to dwell, that God in the punishment of sin frequently so orders it that we should see our sin in its punishment. I think if we take a review of the dealings of God with men, both good and bad men, we shall find this idea abundantly substantiated.

#### I. LET US REVIEW THE DEALINGS OF GOD WITH GOOD MEN.

1. I may observe, in the first place, that if our backslidings consist in a neglect of secret devotion, God will usually punish them by withholding his blessing from all other means of grace. It is often the case, I believe, that backslidings originate in a neglect of private duties. It is rarely known, I believe, that persons fall into foul misconduct at once; there is generally a gradual progress in this business: first, the heart begins a little to be alienated, the thoughts turn and fix upon worldly objects, delight in conversing with God ceases, the closet ceases to be a privilege and resort in the hour of distress, it becomes rather a dreaded place—a place that we begin to shun, or, if we frequent it, we are driven there rather by the reproaches of conscience than by the desires of the heart. When closet duty is thus neglected, and we cultivate scarcely any other religion than that which is before the eyes of men, God will then cause this sin to become its own punishment; that is, we shall lose by it, we shall be destitute of the pleasures of religion. A great and good man used to say, "A little religion is just enough to make a man miserable, a good deal will make him happy." A little religion is just enough to keep conscience uneasy, just enough to disturb and embitter all those pleasures which others indulge in without remorse, just enough to make you hang your head like a bulrush; now this is the punishment that attends a neglect of a closet walk with God. It is in this way that God causes our wickedness to correct us, and our back-

sliding to reprove us. We go lean from day to day, and that not only in the want of closet enjoyment, but, if we neglect dealing with God in secret, we shall not enjoy much from our public engagements: if a man only frequent public worship, but not his closet, God will withdraw his blessing from that public worship; you may sit and hear the Saviour presented, but you shall not be profited. You may go, but your heart may not be there, and you may find no profit; you may impute it to this or to that; you may say it is owing to the preacher, or this, or the other, but say what you will you shall not profit, you shall not enjoy God, you shall not enjoy the pleasures of religion while you live in the neglect of close converse with God in secret; for it is thus that thy wickedness shall correct—that thy backslidings shall reprove.

2. If our backslidings have consisted in the indulgence of secret sin of a positive kind, then we may expect that God will punish it by causing that that sin shall not long be kept secret. God in his providence frequently so orders it that he who can allow himself to sin in secret will not be able long to keep it secret; it shall be exposed in the eyes of the world: him that honoureth God he will honour, but he that despiseth him shall be lightly esteemed. If you care nothing about God's honour, or so little about it as to violate his will in secret, God will care but little about your honour. If you care only about your own reputation, and watch no part of your conduct but that which falls under the eye of man, God will presently so order it that you shall not preserve your reputation. David had sinned in this manner, and God punished him by making his sins public: "Thou hast done this thing in secret, but I will expose thee before the sun." It is a very dangerous thing to play with secret sin, to indulge in abominations when we are behind the scene and away from the eyes of mortals: be sure of this, that God will find you out; his providence will bring secret sins to light; and that which was done in secret he will manifest upon the house-tops; and it is thus that thy backslidings will particularly look thee in the face and reprove thee. Iniquity of every species is a something that it is next to impossible always to hide. A man that falls into guilt feels greatly degraded; his conscience tells him, I am guilty, I am degraded, and every one that meets me will slay me, every one that meets me knows it. Oh, it is a difficult thing to hide what is within! God thus will surely bring it out, and thus cause our iniquities to reprove us. The slander of the tongue is a method the Divine Being sometimes uses, and we may remark in some of his dispensations that he will permit reproach to be poured upon us, and that beyond the degree of our desert. We find that David was reproached with being a bloody man: this was not true in the sense that Shimei meant, viz. that he had been a bloody man to the house of Saul; it was the language of reproach; but then it was true in a sense in which Shimei did not feel it—he had been a bloody man in the affair of Uriah; this was it that cut David to the very soul. "Go on, thou bloody man," says Shimei.—Abishai said unto the king, "Let me take off his head; why should this dead dog reproach my lord the king?" No, says David, let him alone, God said, Curse David: it is the message of God—what he says is a lie in the sense in which he meant it, but it is true in another sense—I am a bloody man; God has thus permitted the very enemy to reproach me. It is thus that God caused David's wickedness to correct him, and his backslidings to reprove him.

If our backslidings consist in idolizing created good, in making that of it which it ought not to be, or putting it in the place of God, then it is God's usual method to punish us either by taking away the idol from us, or by continuing it as a curse and a plague to us. When the heart is set

inordinately upon any created good, so as that God is excluded from the supreme place in our affections, he frequently takes away the object, and thus perhaps we may sometimes account for the loss of some of our dearest friends—of our darling children: it may be they have occupied too high a place in our esteem and affection: it may be owing to them that God had but a small share in our affections. Well, the Lord has taken them away as being his rivals, and it is thus that we read our sin in our punishment: while the heart bleeds on account of the wound which is produced by rending the bone from bone and flesh from flesh, let us remember that this was our sin—to idolize this creature, and therefore God has caused a worm at the root of the gourd in order that it may fade and die. Sometimes he is pleased to continue the object to us, but to continue it as a curse and a plague, as a grievance to us, and this is much more awful and much more to be dreaded than the former. We have a remarkable example of this in the case of Lot. When he parted with his uncle Abraham, he lifted up his eyes and beheld the plain of Sodom, and lo, it was a rich and a well-watered plain: indeed! and is there no other tract of the country, Lot, that can satisfy thy desires without pitching thy tent in that infamous country? Lot, are you not alarmed for your honour? are you not alarmed for your family, lest they learn the ways of the wicked Sodomites? What! a rich and well-watered plain is all that Lot consults; he goes, he places his family in Sodom, and what is the consequence? God lets him have his rich and his well-watered plain. I suppose he accumulates wealth to a great amount there, and by and by the wrath of God is poured down from heaven upon the city. While he is there his righteous soul, it is true, is grieved for the filthy conversation of the wicked, but what has become of his family? what has become of his children? why, here are two or three of them married and settled in Sodom, and they have become so attached to the manners and customs of the Sodomites, that when Lot went to warn them of the approaching destruction his words seemed an idle tale. I imagine they smiled and said, The old man is superannuated; they would not regard any thing he said. Well, this is one of the fruits of his attachment to this rich and well-watered plain; he has two or three of his children settled there, and they must fall in Sodom's overthrow. Well, there are two of his daughters remain single; he does somehow or other manage matters by the good hand of God so as to accomplish their escape. They are brought out of the city, and his wife along with him; but what are the consequences as to his wife? she has lived so long in Sodom that her heart is wedded to it, and she seems to have left it with such reluctance that she is ready to call her husband, I imagine, a thousand fools as they are going along, to think he should leave it, and she looks behind her, and her heart goes along with her eyes, and God smites her—turns her into a monument of Divine vengeance: here is another fruit of his choice. Well, he has only his two daughters left; he takes them and flees to a little city: a little one will now serve Lot and his family: "is it not a little one?" Again, they are much reduced, and what follows? alas! the two daughters have learnt so much of the abominations of Gomorrah, that they cover their father's name with infamy, and cause him to go down to the grave with shame. Here are the fruits of a sinful choice, of a man's choosing to settle in the world merely for the sake of wealth, without considering any thing about God and religion. What a striking example does it afford us of the method of the Divine procedure—to give us our choice, but to render that choice its own punishment! thus our wickedness shall correct us, our backsliding shall improve us.

4. If our backslidings have consisted in unfaithfulness towards one

another, God will oftentimes punish this sin by so ordering it that others shall be unfaithful to us in return. If men deal treacherously with others, by and by others shall deal treacherously with them. You recollect it was thus in the case of Jacob. Jacob dealt unfaithfully with his brother Esau, and with his father Isaac, and how was he punished? many years after he was imposed upon by his uncle Laban, in a manner that proved a trial to him all his future life. Could Jacob help reading his sin in his punishment?

5. If our backslidings have consisted in undutifulness to parents, God will oftentimes punish this sin by causing our children to be undutiful and cruel to us. See that young person who will treat his aged parent with cruelty and neglect—only suppose that he lives to be an aged man, and you may see how he shall be treated in return by his own posterity. I have heard of a cruel, unfeeling son, whom Providence had smiled upon and blessed with worldly affluence; he had a poor aged father who was reduced to necessities in his old age—he took him into his house, but he treated him as a brute. One day the poor old man, it seems, had offended this cruel son: he called one of his own children, a little boy of about eight or nine years old, to him, and gave him a blanket, and bid him go and give it to the old man, his grandfather, and turn him out of doors, and tell him he should never enter his doors again;—the little boy took the garment and cut it in two;—the father, astonished at this, required the reason:—“Father,” says he, “I have cut it in pieces in order to give one to my grandfather, and to keep the other to turn you out of doors with when you are old:”—the keenness of the remark, it is said, had its effect.

6. Our backslidings may have consisted in a neglect of family government. Religious professors are often very loose in the exercise of family government. Well, if our backslidings have consisted in this, God will usually punish us by causing us to reap the fruits of it in the looseness of our children and those about us. Many a parent, by neglecting the proper government of his family, has seen such sins in his children as have brought them to infamy before his own eyes; and when a parent in old age comes to see his posterity covered with shame, with misery, and with infamy, what must be his reflections! What must have been the sensations of Eli when he saw the wickedness of his children, and heard of their awful end!

7. Once more, If our backslidings have consisted in setting ill examples before our domestics, we may expect that God will punish us by suffering our children to follow these examples. Many a parent (some cases have fallen under my own observation) has set shocking examples before his children; he has walked vainly and loosely, nevertheless he has not intended that they should follow his example; he has endeavoured by his authority to prevent their doing so; but it shall not be so long;—set you but an ill example in your house, and God will probably suffer your children to follow that example as a punishment in part to you. What very awful events of this sort there were in the family of David! he set an example of murder and uncleanness, and what followed?—the first news that you hear in his family is, Tamar is ravished; and then as a revenge for it Amnon is slain by his brother Absalom. How soon do we hear of one iniquity upon the back of another!—bloody business goes on in David’s family—the sword shall not depart from his house.—That was the way in which God would punish him.

II. OBSERVE THE SENTIMENT EXEMPLIFIED IN THE DEALINGS OF GOD WITH THE WICKED.—There is one description of ungodly persons whose hearts are set upon the gratification of their appetites and passions. Young man, you have had a religious education—your father has taught you to read the word of God—he has a thousand times prayed for you, and a

thousand tears have been shed over you, and a thousand remonstrances delivered before you, but all without effect—your heart is hardened—you are weary of reproof—you wish in your heart, either that the old man was dead, or that you were out of the family, so as that you might have your full swing and go on without remorse. You are tired of this round and round of religion in the family—you hate to hear so much of praying morning and evening—you hate to hear the Bible read—you hate to hear those reproaches rung in your ears—you wish they would but let you alone. Not only this, but these remonstrances have kept your conscience rather awake—you cannot sin so cheaply as many other wicked people do—you plunge yourself into wicked company; but when you get alone there is something will rise within you in spite of yourself, and you cannot go on with that ease and repose which others do. Well, thus your heart fretteth against the Lord—thus you want to be freed from conviction. Now, how may you expect that the Almighty will punish you? probably by giving you your wish—by letting you have your way. Well, young man, you shall be troubled not much longer with these remonstrances. God will take that pious parent out of your way. Hitherto God has been hedging up your way, and building walls as it were to keep you from plunging into hell; these have been a grievous eye-sore to you, and you want to have them removed. Very well, God will probably remove them out of your way—he will take away your godly parents; and since you want to get rid of this remorse, these convictions, and uneasiness, God will give you up to hardness of heart—as you have loved strangers, you shall go after them—as you have chosen delusion, God will choose also your delusion, and let you have your course. And as you have been hitherto, perhaps, used to sit under a faithful ministry, a ministry that has come home to your conscience, and you cannot sit at quiet, God perhaps will permit you to have one after your own heart—one that will please your ears and never disturb your conscience, and then you may take your course. If there be an awful way of punishing sin, it is surely this—this, indeed, is for our own wickedness to correct us—this is for our backslidings to improve us.

Again, I might mention another case, the case of those who have an inward dislike to the gospel. There are many persons who have a secret hatred to the humiliating doctrines of the gospel, and to those searching plain truths that come home to the conscience, and therefore they find some false system of religion—some system or other that is more adapted to the flesh. Now if this be the case with any one, let him expect that God will cause his sin to become its own punishment. You may expect that, seeing you delight not in the truth, God will give you up to a reprobate mind, that you “may believe a lie and be damned:” so that the scripture speaks, because “they believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness,” therefore God will give a man up; seeing he chooses some flesh-pleasing system—something that will lie easier upon his mind, he shall follow his inclinations, and the consequences are generally fatal.

We may further observe, that the same principle will be found exemplified at death and judgment as well as in the present world. If we be found wicked in the sight of God at the last day, we shall find that there will be something in the nature of the punishment, or of the doom denounced, that will of necessity call to our remembrance the nature of our sin: witness this, when the sinner, with frantic despair, stands calling at heaven’s gates, “Lord, Lord, open unto us!” God will say, “I called, and ye refused; I stretched out my hand, and no one regarded it; therefore will I laugh at your calamity, I will mock now your fear is come:” and when the awful sound, “Depart,” shall ring in the ears, must it not, think you, call

to remembrance the language of a sinner in the world? Have you not been saying all your life, "Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways—depart from me, thou faithful minister,—depart from me, thou irksome and disagreeable reprover—depart from me, thou faithful friend, and let me have a friend that will merely soothe my passions and flatter my vices—depart from me, godly and serious parents—depart from me, all thoughts of God and heaven?" Has not this been the language of thy heart? And now when the Lord comes at last to address thee, "Depart from me;" oh what a sound will this have! what ideas will this revive! Thus it is that thine own wickedness shall correct thee. Nay, I might add, in that dreadful world of woe the essence of misery will consist in recollection. Could memory but be obliterated from the soul, the flames of hell would become extinct: but there busy memory, clear memory, and memory that will harrow up the feelings—will recall past events and place them before the mind; nor shall we be able to efface the thought, nor give attention to any other object; but the remembrance of the past will thus prey upon the soul for ever;—this will be the worm that dieth not—this will constitute the fire that will not be quenched. It is thus that our wickedness must in the end reprove us, and our backslidings correct us.

But I close: if things be thus, how dreadful a thing is sin in all its operations! Every one of us that indulges in it is only kindling a fire with which to burn himself; he that indulges in it is but whetting a sword to plunge into his own soul; and, I may add, what reason have we to bless God that our iniquity has not more reprovèd us than it has; that our backslidings have been no more! If we review our life, we must remember many periods in it in which we were upon the point of some awful fall; we cannot but remember how we have walked near the precipice, and how Divine Providence has preserved us from falling; how God has either by giving us timely repentance for our sins brought us back to himself, or by his providence has prevented iniquities we designed. Who is there but must cover his face with shame, and reckon it a wonder that he is not this day marked among the fools in the gospel? But beware, beware of sinful indulgence of any sort, or in any degree; for be sure of this, that the Almighty will find you out; and let it be your concern and mine to cleanse our hands, and to repair to the blood of Calvary, that we may be cleansed from all our backslidings and all our wickedness—that there is no other radical cure, but to return to the Lord with contrition, and to repair to the blood of the cross that we may obtain remission. It is this, and this only, that will effect a cure.



# ILLUSTRATIONS OF SCRIPTURE.

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## SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

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### THE BEATITUDES.

Matt. v. 1—12.

VER. 1, 2. We have already had a general account of our Saviour's ministry (iv. 23); but here the evangelist informs us of his doctrine. Of this the sermon on the mount is an important specimen. Observe, First, The occasion of this sermon—it was on *seeing the multitudes* that he betook himself forthwith to a convenient place to instruct them. Christ never beheld a multitude of people without sentiments of compassion. It was on seeing the Samaritans coming down the hills to hear the word that he told his disciples *the fields were white already to harvest*, and, like Abraham's servant, refused to eat bread till he told his tale. Secondly, The *place*—*He went up into a mountain*. Mountains were commonly covered, at least in part, with wood. Hence they afforded secrecy and retirement. In, or among, these mountain woods, the defeated forces of the five kings found shelter, Gen. xiv. 10. Thither also the spies fled and hid themselves three days, when they departed from the house of Rahab the harlot, Josh. ii. 22. The object of our Saviour was retirement. Seeing multitudes of people who wished to hear him, he drew them away from the interrupting concerns of cities and towns, into a place where all was still, solemn, and impressive. Thirdly, The *posture*—*He sat and taught them*. This is said to have been the usual posture of eminent teachers among the Jews. It certainly was befitting the majesty of this Teacher, who taught as one having authority—as a judge, rather than as a counsellor. Fourthly, He spoke in the hearing of all, but with a special respect to *his disciples*. Not that our Saviour confined his preaching to believers; but *this* discourse seems to have been principally addressed to them. Having lately called his disciples, it was his intention to instil into their minds, at the outset, right sentiments. At the same time, if the *multitudes* mixed faith in hearing, they would be no less profited by it than if it had been immediately addressed to them.

Our Saviour begins his sermon by declaring *who were blessed*; and, considering him as the future Judge of the world, an extraordinary importance attaches to his decisions. It is observable, in general, that the characters which he pronounces blessed are not those accounted so by the world; on the contrary, they are such as the world hate, despise, and persecute. On this account all these beatitudes possess the air of paradox. It is also observable, that it was our Saviour's manner of preaching to exhibit *marks* or *signs of grace*, and to pronounce those, and those only, who possess

them, in a blessed state. The offer of salvation was made to every creature; but the blessings were promised only to believers. Some have pretended that marks and signs are no certain evidences of grace; and that this is a legal and dangerous way of preaching, as tending to lead men to look into themselves for comfort; but, so far as comfort proceeds from evidence of our interest in the Divine favour, it must imply a consciousness of our being the subjects of those spiritual dispositions to which the promises are made. It is true the first genuine comfort which a soul possesses is by directly believing in Christ; or from a view of what he is, rather than from any thing in himself; for it is impossible that he should be conscious of any good in himself, till he has believed in him. I may add, it is equally true that the richest consolations to a believer are derived from the same source; namely, from beholding the glory of Christ, and of salvation through his name. But there is no contradiction between this and his knowing himself to be interested in that salvation, by an habitual consciousness of his possessing those dispositions, or sustaining those characters, to which it is promised. "Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him." If our hearts condemn us of hypocrisy, much more will the all-searching eye of God; but if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God, 1 John iii. 19—21.

Ver. 3. The first of these beatitudes is pronounced on *the poor in spirit*.—Many seem to think that because they are poor in circumstances, or great sufferers in this world, therefore they shall be blessed in another; but this will prove a fatal mistake. Nor is every kind of poverty of spirit that which the Lord approves. The Laodiceans were censured for being poor; and the same censure falls on multitudes in the present day. It is not what we are, but what we are *in our own estimation*, that is here intended! To be poor in spirit is the opposite of being proud in spirit, or rich and full in our own eyes. He who trusts in his own righteousness, his own wisdom, his own strength, or his own inherent graces, has this lesson yet to learn; and, let me add, it is a lesson that none can learn but he that is taught of God. A lowly spirit is one of the most difficult things in the world to assume, where it is not possessed.—The blessing pronounced is suited to encourage them under the contempt of the present world, and to teach them to bear it with patience. An everlasting kingdom awaits them; and even in the present state they have received a kingdom that shall not be moved.

Ver. 4. The next blessing is on the *mourner*.—The mourning to which Christ promises *comfort* must be restricted to that which is spiritual; as mourning on account of our own sins, or the sins of others, or for any thing by which the name of the Lord is dishonoured, or his cause injured or impeded. We are hereby taught, First, The folly of measuring the profitability of preaching by the degrees of comfort which it affords us. We may not go to hear in a condition for the gospel to comfort us. Conviction may be more necessary for us than comfort. If the gospel comfort those that mourn, that is all which it professes to do. Secondly, The connexion between godly sorrow and gospel joy. We have heard much of the gospel containing comfort for the *mere sinner*; and if, by the mere sinner, be meant one that has nothing to plead but the mercy of God, through the atonement, like the publican in the parable, it is for such, and only such, that the gospel contains consolation. But if, by the mere sinner, be meant the impenitent though distressed sinner, it has no comfort for such in their present state. Repentance is necessary to forgiveness, in the same sense as faith is necessary to justification; for it is not possible for a sinner either to embrace the Saviour, or prize the consolations of the gospel, while insensible to the evil of sin. There *is* no grace in the gospel, but upon the supposition that God

is in the right, and that sin is exceedingly sinful; and consequently none to be *perceived* or *prized*.

Ver. 5. The next blessing is on the *meek*.—The word signifies *gentle, humble, lowly*. Every grace, however, has its semblance. There is a kind of meekness, as well as of mourning, which is merely natural or constitutional. A lamb-like temper is a blessing, and however it may be despised by the hectoring spirits of this world, it is highly advantageous to society; but the gentleness of a renewed mind is a different thing, and has the promise of different blessings. Saul of Tarsus was naturally violent; but, being apprehended of Jesus, he came to him, took his yoke, and learned his spirit. This is that spirit which receives the ingrafted word; which insures our being guided in judgment; which is an ingredient in the wisdom from above; which submits to God under adverse providences; which stands aloof from noise, contention, and clamour, and renders our religion still and affectionate; which, in fine, is the ornament of Christians, and causes them to resemble the myrtle trees that grew in the valley, and had the Lord among them. But how is it that such characters should have the promise of *inheriting the earth*? It seems to be supposed that in one respect they have but little of it. But, First, Meekness of spirit is connected with rest to the mind; and this makes much of a little. The proud and restless do not inherit the earth, though it be in their hand. The humble Christian has far more enjoyment in a cottage than they can have in distressing and dividing the world. “A little with the fear of the Lord is better than great treasure, and trouble therewith.” Secondly, The meek ones shall have the rule of the world in God’s due time, Dan. vii. 27. Nor need they lay aside their meekness or engage in revolutionary schemes to accomplish it: God will revolutionize the world, by planting fear in the hearts of princes as well as subjects, and then the work is done; and Christian principles will govern the nations.

Ver. 6. “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness,” &c.—It is a truth that the obedience of Jesus unto death, which is the righteousness on account of which believers are justified, is the object of their most intense desire; but as this is less introduced prior to its being actually wrought than afterwards, I doubt not but that the term in this place refers to the universal prevalence of righteousness in the mind and in the world. Unbelievers are hungering and thirsting, but it is after carnal and worldly gratifications. Some thirst for gold, and care not much by what means they obtain it; others may be more scrupulous on this head, yet it is chiefly on account of their own honour. Self, in one shape or other, is the idol in the heart of every sinner. What then is true religion? An earnest desire to do right, and to see righteousness toward God and toward man prevail in the earth. Hence arise the believer’s desires for the spread of Christ’s kingdom, his sighs for the evils among men, and his secret moans over those of his own heart.—It is a source of great joy, that, while those who hunger and thirst after the world are disappointed, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled. The way to have our desire is for the mind to be one with the mind of God.

Ver. 7. “Blessed are the merciful,” &c.—This character respects our dispositions towards men. It is that kindness and goodness which feels the miseries of others, not only as our fellow creatures, but as God’s creatures, and, it may be, the purchase of the Saviour’s blood. There is a principle of compassion in that mutual affection which God has planted in all men, and even in animals towards their kind: and where it is cherished by the grace of God, or even by an enlightened conscience, it is productive of great and good effects to society. The true knowledge of God, as taught

among the Israelites, had such an influence upon Ahab and his predecessors, that, idolaters as they were, its effects were not wholly obliterated; for the kings of the house of Israel were still known and acknowledged among the heathen as *merciful kings*. The same effects are seen to this day in countries where the gospel is preached, compared with those where it is not preached. This is certainly to the honour of religion, and affords much cause for thankfulness. It must not, however, be confounded with that spirit of which our Saviour speaks. True religion may cherish natural affection, and false religion quench it; but its proper origin is not religion, but creation. That merciful spirit to which Christ annexes the blessing is an effect of the grace of God, or of love written upon the fleshly tables of the heart. Christ was full of compassion; and, as we learn of him, we feel as he felt. An unmerciful spirit is inconsistent with true religion.—Whatever pretences we may make to orthodoxy, or to devotion, if we show no mercy to the poor and the afflicted, we shall on a future day meet with judgment without mercy. But he who imbibes the merciful spirit of Jesus, and acts upon the principles upon which he acted, shall *obtain mercy*. He shall seldom want a sympathizing friend in this world; and, what is infinitely more, shall obtain mercy of the Lord another day.

Ver. 8. "Blessed are the pure in heart," &c.—The import of this phrase, I take it, is much the same as what we mean by *pure intention*, or *godly simplicity*. It is the opposite of subtlety and duplicity. Genuine Christianity lays aside, not only malice, but guile and hypocrisy. It is not enough to be pure in words, nor in outward deportment, and still less to be pure in our own eyes; for all this may consist with inward wickedness. True religion has its seat in the heart, whence are the issues of life. Purity is a quality but little esteemed in the world. Men bless the subtle, rather than the simple-hearted; but Christ judges otherwise: the one may succeed in his measures, and rise high in things of this life; but the other shall *see God*, and stand accepted in his presence.

Ver. 9. "Blessed are the peace-makers," &c.—As one of the ways in which lust operates is by breeding divisions, contentions, strifes, wars, and the like, and thus diffusing death through every vein of society; so one of the ways in which true religion operates is by preventing, or allaying them. The desire of such persons is not merely to avoid giving or taking offence, and to stand aloof from the quarrels of the neighbourhood; but, if possible, by a wise, temperate, and friendly interference to heal them at an early stage. It is a great blessing to a church, a neighbourhood, or a nation to have such characters among them. There is no calculating the mischiefs which have raged in these different departments of society, and which might have been prevented by listening to a few words from a pacific friend.—The blessedness pronounced on these characters is the honour of being called "the children of God;" and this no doubt because they resemble him. He that seeks peace on pure and honourable principles is of God's mind, acting on the same principles as God acts in reconciling the world to himself through Jesus Christ.

Ver. 10—12. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake," &c.—It is a strong proof of human depravity, that men's curses and Christ's blessings should meet on the same persons. Who would have thought that a man could be persecuted and reviled, and have all manner of evil said of him, for righteousness' sake? And do wicked men really hate justice, and love those who defraud and wrong their neighbour? No; they do not dislike righteousness as it respects *themselves*; it is only that species of it which respects God and religion that excites their hatred. If Christians were content with doing justly, and loving mercy, and would

cease from walking humbly with God, they might go through the world, not only in peace, but with applause; but he that will “live *godly in Christ Jesus* shall suffer persecution.” Such a life reproveth the ungodliness of men, and provokes their resentment. Persecution is not confined to those acts of violence which are sanctioned by law, and affect liberty, property, or life; but extends to slanderous and reproachful language, and every other way in which enmity is expressed. Through the goodness of God we have been long protected from legal persecution; but the enmity of the serpent will find ways of expressing itself. If, from the most disinterested compassion, you warn your wicked neighbours of their danger, you will be called disturbers of the peace; crimes will be imputed to you of which you are innocent; and even your best actions ascribed to the worst motives. If you model your religion by the word of God, and pay no regard to human establishments any further than as they agree with it, you may expect to be represented as enemies to government, a discontented sort of people, “turning the world upside down.” A view of such a state of things, to one that is weak in faith, may appear discouraging; but there is no just cause for being cast down. Only see to it that whatever you suffer be “for righteousness’ sake,” and that all the evil which is said of you be *false*, and *for Christ’s sake*, and, instead of being discouraged, you will have reason to “rejoice and be exceedingly glad.” Unbelievers may tell you that this is extravagant and impossible, and that no man can be happy in such circumstances; but it is not so. The primitive Christians entered into the spirit of their Lord’s doctrine, “rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name’s sake.” When to this is added the promised “kingdom,” the “reward in heaven” which awaits those that overcome, miserable as your lot may be accounted by the world, it will be found to be not only preferable to that of your persecutors, but even to that of such Christians as, by yielding in a measure to the world, escape a few of its censures. You have more satisfaction, and consequently more happiness, in this life; and your reward in heaven will be greatly augmented; for if afflictions in general “work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,” much more those which we have suffered for righteousness’ sake. Every wound received in this warfare will then be a scar of honour; a seed, productive of a harvest beyond all our present conceptions.

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CHARACTER OF CHRISTIANS AND CHRISTIAN MINISTERS.

Matt. v. 13—16.

VER. 13. “Ye are the salt of the earth,” &c.—This character, I conceive, applies to the disciples, both as Christians and as Christian ministers. There are three things observable.

First, *Their use as a preservative*.—The world is corrupt, and, if left to itself, would in a little time work its own ruin; but as the Lord of hosts had a seed in Israel, who otherwise would have been as Sodom and Gomorrah, so he has a people scattered over the towns, cities, and nations of the earth, who to them are that which salt is to a substance tending to putrefaction. The influence which a few people, who imbibe the gospel and act up to its principles, have upon the consciences and conduct of others, is much beyond calculation. Had the ruling powers of France been friendly

to the servants of Christ in the seventeenth century, it might have prevented the horrors of a revolution in the eighteenth; but having destroyed or banished them, nothing was left to counteract the torrent of infidelity; which, being natural to the carnal mind, and cherished by popery, had before risen to a great height, and now overwhelmed the country. Humble and serious Christians, though often accused of being inimical to civil government, are in reality its best friends; while those governments which persecute them are their own enemies.

Secondly, *Their value as consisting in their savour.*—There are many things which, though useless for one purpose, yet may be very useful for another; but things which, by possessing only one distinguishing property, are designed for a single specific purpose, if that property be wanted, are good for nothing. It is thus with the vine, as to bearing fruit. If other trees were barren, yet their trunks might be applied to various uses; but if a vine be barren, it is good for nothing but to be burnt, Ezek. xv. 1—6. The same may be said of salt. Many things which have ceased to be good for food, may yet be useful for manure; but salt, if it once lose its savour, is good for nothing; it is fit for neither the land nor the dunghill. And thus if Christians lose their spirituality, or Christian ministers cease to impart the savour of the heavenly doctrine, of what use are they? of what in the family?—of what in the church?—of what in the world?

Thirdly, *Their irrecoverable condition on having lost their savour.*—It is true all things are possible with God; but where persons, after having professed the name of Christ, and in some cases preached his word, turn back, or go into another gospel, there is little hope of them, and indeed none from the ordinary course of things. Salt may recover unsavoury meat; but what is to recover unsavoury salt?

Ver. 14—16. “Ye are the light of the world,” &c.—This character implies that the world, notwithstanding its attainments in science, is in a state of darkness; and that the only true light that is to be found in it is that which proceedeth from Christ. It may seem too much for our Saviour to give that character to his disciples which he elsewhere claims as his own. The truth is, He, as the sun, shines with supreme lustre, and they, as the moon, derive their light from Him, and reflect it on the world. As ministers, it is for them to show unto men the way of salvation; and, as Christians, to set the example of walking in it. On this account they require to be *conspicuous*. There is indeed a modesty in true religion, which, so far as respects ourselves, would induce us to steal through the world, if possible, unnoticed; but this cannot be; Christians being diverse from all people in their principles and pursuits, all eyes will be upon them. They are as “a city set upon a hill, which cannot be hid.” Their faults, as well as their excellences, will be marked both by friends and enemies. Nor is it desirable it should be otherwise. Light is not intended to be hid, but exposed for the good of those about it. On this account we must even be *concerned* to let our light shine before men; not by any ostentatious display of ourselves, but by a practical and faithful exhibition of the nature and effects of the gospel, by which our heavenly Father is glorified. It is not merely by words, but works, that gospel light is conveyed to the consciences and hearts of men.

Their is another saying of our Lord in another place, nearly a kin to this, though under a different image: “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit: so shall ye be my disciples.” The glory of a husbandman does not arise from his fields or vines bearing fruit, but *much* fruit. A few ears of corn in the one, nearly choked with weeds, or here and there a branch, or a berry, on the other, while the greater part is covered

with leaves only, would rather dishonour than honour them. And thus it is in spiritual fruitfulness. A little religion often dishonours God more than none. An undecisive spirit, halting between God and the world, walking upon the confines of good and evil, now seeming to be on the side of God, and now on that of his adversaries, causes his name to be evil spoken of much more than the excesses of the irreligious. Hence we may see the force of the rebuke to Laodicea; "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." It is also intimated that without bearing *much* fruit we are unworthy to be considered as *Christ's disciples*. He was indeed a fruitful bough. His life was filled with the fruits of love to God and man. It behoves us either to imitate his example, or forego the profession of his name.

The glory of God being manifested by the good works of his children implies that they are all to be ascribed to him as their proper cause. Though we act, he actuates. A mind set on things too high for it may deny the consistency of this with the free agency and accountableness of creatures; but the humble Christian will turn it to a better use. "Thou wilt ordain peace for us, for thou hast wrought all our work in us."

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PERPETUITY AND SPIRITUALITY OF THE MORAL LAW.

Matt. v. 17—32.

VER. 17—19. It might appear to some of our Lord's disciples as if he intended to set aside the religion which had been taught by Moses and the prophets, and to introduce an entirely new state of things. It was true indeed that he would abolish the ceremonial law, and explode all dependence upon the works of any law for acceptance with God, as indeed Moses and the prophets had done before him; but it was no part of his design to set aside the law itself. Being about to correct various corruptions which had obtained among the Jews, he prefaces what he has to say by cautioning them not to misconstrue his design, as though he were setting himself against either Moses or the prophets, neither of whose writings were at variance with his kingdom, but preparatory to it. So far from his having any such design, he, with the most solemn asseveration, declares the law to be of perpetual obligation.—Such also was his regard for it, that if any one professing to be a minister in his kingdom should break the least of its precepts, and teach others to make light of it, he should be as little in the eyes of his Lord as the precept was in his eyes; while, on the contrary, those ministers who should practise and inculcate every part of it should have his highest approbation.

Ver. 20. Having made these declarations by way of introduction, (and to which we may have occasion hereafter to refer,) our Lord proceeds to denounce the system of Pharisaical religion, and to exhibit in contrast with it that of Moses and the prophets, which, purified from all corrupt glosses, he recommends to his followers. In general he declares that, "except their righteousness exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, they could in no case enter the kingdom of heaven." This, at the time, must have been a most extraordinary and alarming declaration. The scribes and Pharisees were the reputed models of strict religion. The common people seem to have thought that men in general could not be expected to attain the

heights of purity to which they had arrived. If, therefore, any had attached themselves to Jesus, in hopes of obtaining a little more latitude than was allowed them by their own teachers, they would find themselves greatly mistaken. For not only did he inculcate an equal, but even a superior degree of strictness to that which they practised. Nor did he, by *righteousness*, mean that which was imputed to them for justification; but that judgment, mercy, and love of God, of which the scribes and Pharisees, with all their tenacity for forms and ceremonies, were wofully destitute.

In proof of the gross defectiveness of the Pharisaical system of morality, he goes on to account for it, by convincing its authors of having by their glosses, in a course of time, greatly corrupted the law; and this must have cut the deeper on account of an attachment to the law being their principal pretext for opposing him.

Ver. 21, 22. The first example alleged is the sixth commandment, "*Thou shalt not kill.*" All that the Pharisees understood by this was a prohibition of the act of murder; but our Lord insists that the commandment, taken from its true intent, prohibited not only the overt act, but every evil working of the mind, which led to it; such as causeless anger, with contemptuous and provoking language. This was going to the root or principle of things. The different degrees of *punishment* here referred to allude doubtless to the courts of justice among the Jews; and express not merely what sin was in itself as a breach of the Divine law, (for in that sense all sin exposes to hell-fire,) but how many degrees of evil there were, short of actual murder, which would endanger a man's salvation.

Ver. 23, 24. Of this doctrine our Lord proceeds to make some practical uses, by applying it to certain cases. First, he enforces *speedy reconciliation with an offended brother*.—Be sure there be no enmities rankling in thy bosom from day to day, every one of which is murder in embryo; nor let any conduct of thine be the cause of their rankling in the bosom of another. The best means of preventing both is to examine thyself in thy most solemn approaches to God; for then, if ever, the conscience is tender, and likely to bring to remembrance what is wrong between thee and thy brother. What must I do, say you, who have offended my brother? Must I not worship God nevertheless? No, not in that state, for God will not accept of thy gift. What then, must I keep away? No; but go immediately to thy brother, and acknowledge thy fault, or if no offence were intended, explain matters to him, and, thus being reconciled to thy brother, then come and offer thy gift. If the door of God's house were shut against every one who refused to comply with this direction, it would make many feel: yet the door of mercy, or Divine acceptance, is shut; which is of far greater account. It is observable, that the exhortation is given to the offender, and the term *reconciled* is not expressive of a conciliatory spirit on his part, but of its *effect* upon his brother. The meaning of it is, *Be restored to thy brother's favour*. And this is the sense in which the word is sometimes used on a higher subject, namely, that of reconciliation to God. We are often told by the adversaries of the atonement that God is never said to be *reconciled to us* by the death of Christ, but to have *reconciled us to himself* by it. This is true; but the term in this connexion does not mean his appeasing our anger by offering us mercy through Christ; but his making his soul an offering for sin, and thereby *restoring us to his favour*. Hence God's having reconciled us to himself by Christ is alleged as a motive to our being, as to the state of our minds, reconciled to him, 2 Cor. v. 18—20.

Ver. 25. From the case of an offended brother, he proceeds to that of an *adversary*, recommending a speedy agreement with him also.



The law of love, if truly complied with, would promote universal peace. But a small difference, where there is little or no love to counteract it, often terminates in mutual and settled dislike; and being accompanied with a proud reluctance to concession, litigations and contentions frequently follow, to which death only puts a period. But what is this? It is murder! And wouldst thou wash thy hands from thy neighbour's blood? Go then, and be at peace with him! Human prudence would recommend a timely agreement for thine own sake: let religion, let benevolence, even to thine adversary, recommend it for his. Say not, our differences shall be tried before legal judges, whatever be the consequences; but offer just and generous terms whilst thou art in the way with him, that if the breach can be healed it may, or if not, that the fault may not lie at thy door. It were desirable that there were no strife among us, and if we loved one another as God's law requires, there would be none; but seeing it is otherwise, the same principle which in innocent creatures would operate to prevent it must in guilty creatures operate to heal it.

Ver. 27, 28. Having taken an example from the sixth commandment, and reproved the Pharisaical system with respect to sins of the mind, our Lord proceeds to the seventh, and detects the sins of the flesh. They had heard that it was said to them of old time, "*Thou shalt not commit adultery;*" and they had heard the truth: but the Pharisaical glosses would confine its meaning, as in the former instance, to outward actions; whereas, in its true intent, it comprehended the inward affections of the mind, censuring the wanton look and the impure desire. The Pharisees were worldly men, and the religion of such men is merely *political*: so far as good and evil affect society, they feel in some degree; but as to the honour of God, they have no concern about it.

Ver. 29, 30. As Christ had turned his former decision to practical use, so he does the present one. "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out; or if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off," &c. The word rendered *offend*, in this and several other passages in the New Testament, does not mean to *displease*, but to *cause to offend*, and so it is rendered in the margin. The meaning is not, If they displease thee; but if, by becoming a stumbling-block or snare to thy soul, they cause thee to offend God, &c. Neither was it our Lord's design that we should literally go about to maim our bodies; but he hereby teaches us either that we had better be without eyes or hands than to employ them in wantonness, or that we must on pain of eternal damnation give up those companions, situations, or pursuits, though dear to us as right eyes, or right hands, which prove a snare to our souls.

The tremendous consequences held up to induce such sacrifices teach us that a single lust persisted in will issue in eternal ruin, and that it is necessary even for those whom the Lord may know to be the heirs of salvation, in certain situations, to be threatened with damnation, as the means of preserving them from it.

Ver. 31, 32. Under the head of adultery there occurred another case, namely, that of *divorce*, in which the Pharisaical doctrine had greatly corrupted the law. In this case our Saviour may seem to depart from the law of Moses rather than to expound it; and true it is that he took for his standard, in this instance, the original law of creation, to which it was his design, under the gospel dispensation, to bring his followers. This law, however, as well as the other, was given by Moses; and the difference between them he elsewhere accounts for, by alleging that Moses rather suffered divorce than required it, and *that* because of the hardness of their hearts. In what he now taught, therefore, he was not against the *mind* of Moses or of God, neither of whom approved of divorce, except in case of

fornication; but barely permitted it to prevent a greater evil. And though the law respecting marriage, as given to Israel, was less pure than the original law of creation, yet it was much purer than it had since become in the hands of Pharisaic expositors, through whom divorces were become so common, as, in a manner, to deluge the land with adultery.

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OATHS.

Matt. v. 33—37.

WHAT our Lord says of swearing may have respect to the third commandment, in which we are forbidden to “take the name of the Lord our God in vain.” It had also been said, “Thou shalt not swear by my name falsely; neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God.” And again, “If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond, he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.” To these passages, and to the construction which had been put upon them, our Lord seems to have alluded in what he here teaches.

Many have supposed that oaths of every kind are here forbidden, and therefore refuse in any form, or on any occasion, to take them. To determine this question, we must have recourse to the principles laid down at the outset of the sermon. “Think not that I am come to *destroy the law* or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled,” ver. 17, 18. The question is, then, whether oaths of any kind belonged to the law, or whether they arose from the false glosses of the elders? If the former, it was not Christ’s design to destroy them: but if the latter, it was. That they were a part of the Divine law, and not of merely human authority, is sufficiently manifest from Deut. vi. 13, “Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt *swear by his name.*” Consequently, it was not our Lord’s design to destroy them.

If it be objected, that though Christ did not destroy the moral law, yet there were various precepts pertaining to the ceremonial and judicial laws of Israel which, on his appearance, ceased to be binding, and that oaths might be of this description,—I answer, In abolishing things which had been of Divine authority, he is never known to have cast reproach on them, or to have imputed the observance of them to evil. He could not therefore be said to have *destroyed* even the ceremonial law, but rather to have fulfilled it. But the oaths against which he inveighs are expressly said to *come of evil*; and therefore could never have been of Divine authority.

To this may be added, If *all* oaths be unlawful under the gospel dispensation, some of the most solemn and impressive passages in the Epistles of Paul must be utterly wrong. “The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not—God is my witness, whom I serve in the gospel of his Son.” Each of these is an oath, and that of the most solemn kind; yet who ever thought of accusing the apostle of violating his Lord’s precept?

The truth appears to be this—the Jews had construed the commandment merely as a prohibition of *perjury*; accounting that if they did but swear *truly* as to matters of fact, or *perform* their oaths in case of promise, all was right. They seem to have had no idea, or at most but a very faint one, of

sinning by swearing *lightly*. But for an oath to be lawful, it required, not only that the affirmation were true, or the vow performed; but that such a mode of affirming or vowing were *necessary*. This is evident from the words of the Divine precept, "Thou shalt not swear by my name falsely, *neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God.*" Thousands of things are true which yet it would be profaning the name of God to swear to. Here lay the sin which it was the design of Christ to reprove. He did not censure his countrymen for what was said before a magistrate, to put *an end to strife*; but for what passed in their ordinary *communications* (ver. 37); that is, for light and unnecessary oaths, by which the name of God was profaned. This was a sin so prevalent among the Jews, that even Christians, who were called from among them, stood in need of being warned against it, James v. 12.

It may appear rather extraordinary that any person who fears God should stand in need of these warnings; and if profane swearing were confined to expressly naming the name of God, they might be in general unnecessary among persons who had any claim to seriousness of character. But as both Jews and Christians have learned to mince and soften their oaths, by leaving out the name of God, while yet it is implied, and consequently profaned, such warnings cannot be considered as superfluous. We perceive by our Lord's words that it was common among the Jews to swear "by heaven, by earth, by Jerusalem, by the temple, by the altar, by their own head," &c. &c. They had also some curious distinctions between swearing by the temple, and by the gold of the temple; the altar, and the gift upon the altar; but our Lord, looking deep into the principles of things, considers them all as amounting to the same thing—the profanation of God's holy name, Matt. xxiii. 16—22.

It is thus that oaths are used among men calling themselves Christians. In popish countries, your ears are continually stunned by hearing people swear, not only by their saints, but *by Jesus, by his blood and his wounds*; and even in protestant countries, these terrible oaths are turned into exclamations on many a trivial occasion. The words '*S blood, 'S wounds, &c.*, are no other than these old popish oaths minced, or contracted by the dread of expressly naming the blood and wounds of Christ. Every person who uses such language may not be apprised of the meaning; but every thing of the kind *cometh of evil*. The same may be said of all such phrases as the following—*Of faith, By my troth, Upon my soul, Upon my life, Upon my honour, Upon my word*. By our Lord's exposition of such language, in Matt. xxiii. 16—22, all these modes of speaking would be found to bear a relation to God, and so to be *a profaning of his name*.

How opposite to all this profane jargon is the simple and dignified language prescribed by our Lord!—"Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these *cometh of evil*." He that is conscious of a want of veracity may find it necessary to confirm his words with oaths; but he that habitually speaketh the truth will have no occasion for resorting to such mean and profane expedients.

## RESISTING EVIL.

Matt. v. 38—42.

In the judicial law of Israel, it had been enacted as follows:—"If men strive and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and

yet no mischief follow, he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband shall lay upon him, and he shall pay as the judges determine. And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe." This law, *in the hands of the magistrate*, was equitable, and adapted to the general good; nor was it our Lord's design to undermine its authority. But, by the glosses of the Jews, it had been perverted in favour of *private retaliation and revenge*. Against this principle our Saviour inveighs. He did not complain of the law in the hands of the magistrate, nor forbid his followers appealing to it for the public good; but they must neither take upon them to judge of their own cause, nor repair to a magistrate from a principle of revenge; but must keep in view the good of the party, or at least that of the community. He does not crush any passion,\* no, not that of anger; but merely requires that it be not selfish, but subordinate to the glory of God, and the good of mankind. And however unbelievers may affect to deride this precept, it so approves itself to the judgment of men in general, that you shall rarely know an individual appeal to justice, but under a profession, at least, of being influenced by some other motive than that of private revenge.

With respect to the precept of "turning the other cheek to him that smiteth thee," it certainly does not mean that we should court insult, or in all cases submit to it without any kind of resistance; for this was not the practice of our Lord himself. When unjustly smitten before the high priest, he did not invite the repetition of the indignity; but, on the contrary, remonstrated against it. "If," *said he*, "I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?" In this remonstrance, however, he was not influenced by a spirit of retaliation, but of justice to his own character, which, under the form of striking his person, was assaulted; and what he said had a tendency to convict the party and assembly. Such remonstrances are doubtless allowable in his followers. But the meaning of the precept is, that we render not evil for evil; but rather suffer injury, and that injury to be repeated, than go about to avenge ourselves. It is the principle, rather than the act, which is inculcated; yet even the act itself would be right in various cases; and instead of degrading the party, would raise him in the esteem of the wise and good. When Greece was invaded by Persia, Themistocles, the Athenian general, by warmly urging a point in a council of war, is said to have so provoked the displeasure of Eurybiades, the Spartan, the commander in chief, that the latter lifted up his cane over his head in a menacing posture. "*Strike*, (said the noble Athenian,) *but hear me!*" He did hear him, and the country was saved. And why may not a Christian act, or rather forbear to act, on the same principle, and for an infinitely greater end, even the eternal salvation of his enemies? What else has been the language of the noble army of the martyrs from the beginning? Have they not practically said to an enraged world, *Strike, but hear us?*

Similar remarks might be made on the precept of giving our "cloak to him that would sue us and take away our coat." It is the principle that is to be regarded, rather than the act. It would be far from just in many cases to give place to the overbearing treatment of men, as it must tend not only to ruin our own families, but to encourage the wicked in their wicked-

\* The *passions* are commonly confounded by infidel writers with *vicious propensities*. The former is the name indeed by which they choose to denominate the latter; and that with the obvious intent of apologizing for them. But they are, nevertheless, perfectly distinct. The former belong to us as creatures, the latter as sinners; the Scriptures regulate the one, but prohibit the other. Elias was a man of *like passions* with other men; but in praying for the giving or withholding of rain, he did not act under the influence of vicious propensity.

ness. But the *spirit* here inculcated is of the greatest importance; it is that disposition which would rather put up with injury than engage in litigious contests. All strife for victory, or for the sake of having our will of men, is here forbidden, as carnal and antichristian.

The precept of going "two miles with him that would compel you to go with him one," teaches us to need no compulsion in works of benevolence; but to be willing to do good to all men, even beyond their requests.

In harmony with this is the practice of "giving and lending to them that ask us." To suppose that Christ is here laying down a literal and universal rule of action, would be supposing him to inculcate a practice which must soon destroy itself, by putting it out of our power either to give or lend. But by this language he recommends a kind and liberal spirit, ready to do good to the utmost of our power. Such was the spirit of Christ himself towards an impoverished world, and such is the spirit of his religion; selfishness, in every shape and form, is antichristian.

## LOVE TO ENEMIES.

Matt. v. 43—48.

IT was written in the law of Moses, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The construction which the Jews put upon this precept is easily discerned by the question of the self-justifying lawyer, "And who is my neighbour?" They excluded from that character heathens and Samaritans, and indeed all those of their own country who were unfriendly towards them; and so considered the command to love their neighbours as allowing them to hate their enemies.

In opposing this sentiment, our Lord did not oppose the law; but merely the selfish gloss of the rabbin; for the law did not allow of any such hatred as they cherished. Yet, in comparing it with David's language in the Psalms, some Christian writers have seemed willing to concede that the Jewish gloss was really founded upon the spirit of the Old Testament, and have represented the doctrine of love to enemies as peculiar to the gospel dispensation. That it is more clearly taught and powerfully enforced by our Saviour, than it had been before, is allowed; but the notion of his opposing his doctrine to that of Moses or David is inadmissible; for this had been to "destroy the law," and to render the New Testament at variance with the Old.

That good-will to men is both taught and exemplified in the Old Testament is manifest from the joy expressed by David and the prophets, when predicting the conversion of the heathen. They even prayed, and taught their countrymen to pray for the blessing of God upon themselves *in subserviency to it*.—See Psal. lxxvii.; Isa. xlix. Nor are the prayers of David against his enemies at variance with this principle. If they be, however, the New Testament is also at variance with it; for the same kind of language is used in Paul's Epistles as abounds in David's Psalms. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed."—"Alexander, the coppersmith, did me much evil; the Lord reward him according to his works!" Much confusion has arisen, on these subjects, from not distinguishing between *benevolence* and *complacency*. The one is due to all men, whatever be their character, so long as there is any possibility or hope of their becoming the friends of God; the other is not, but requires to be founded on character. The Old Testament writers, being under a dispensation distinguished by awful threatenings against sin, dwell mostly upon the latter, avowing their

love to those who loved God, and their hatred to those who hated him; the New Testament writers, living under a dispensation distinguished by its tender mercy to sinners, dwell mostly upon the former; but neither of these principles is inconsistent with the other. We may bear the utmost good-will to men as the creatures of God, and as being within the limits of hope; while yet, considered as the Lord's enemies, we abhor them. If we love others as we love ourselves, that is all that is required; but the love which a Christian bears to his own soul is consistent with his abhorring himself as a sinner. Our Lord exemplified both these dispositions at the same time. In denouncing the damnation of hell against the scribes and Pharisees, you would think him void of every feeling but that of inflexible justice; yet, looking upon the same people in reference to their approaching miseries, he burst into a flood of tears. The same spirit possessed the apostle Paul towards his countrymen. When they rejected the gospel, he did not scruple to apply to them the awful prophecies of Isaiah, "Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive," &c.; yet the same apostle solemnly declares that he had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart on their behalf. So far from an abhorrence of the wicked in *respect of their wickedness* being inconsistent with genuine benevolence, it is necessary to it. The compassion that is void of this is not benevolence, but the working of disaffection to God, and of criminal partiality towards his enemies.

Benevolence has not, as observed before, an immediate respect to character; yet it considers its objects within the limits of hope, in respect to their becoming the friends of God. If a creature be a confirmed enemy to God, as in the case of devils and lost souls, true benevolence will cease to mourn over them, as it would imply a reflection upon the Creator. It is on this principle that Aaron was forbidden to mourn for his sons Nadab and Abihu, and that Samuel was reprov'd for mourning over Saul, Lev. x. 6; 1 Sam. xvi. 1. Hence also we see in the benevolence of David and Isaiah towards the heathen (Psal. lxxvii.; Isa. xlix.) a prospect of their future conversion; and as this prospect was to be realized under the gospel dispensation, we perceive the reason of benevolence in it arising to its highest pitch. By the appearance and sacrifice of Christ, the glory of God was to be manifested in a way of good-will to men, even to enemies; angels therefore dwelt upon this idea at his birth, and the disciples were taught to cherish it.

But to bear good-will to our enemies, to pity them that hate us, and to pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us, is, after all, a strange doctrine in the account of a selfish world. If the love of God be not in us, self-love, in one shape or other, will have possession of our souls. Hence infidels have treated this precept as extravagant, and imputed the conduct of Christians to affectation. Conscious, it seems, that self-love is the governing principle of their own actions, they imagine it to be the same with all others. The general prevalence also of this spirit leads them to expect little else from one another, and to act as if it were a law of nature for every one to love himself supremely, and all other beings only as they are subservient to him. Nor are infidels the only persons who have spoken and written in this strain; many of the advocates of Christianity have so formed their systems as to render self-love the foundation on which they rest. Neither God nor man is to be regarded but on our own account. On this principle, however, it would follow that there is no such thing as glorifying God *as God*, nor hating sin *as sin*, and that the gospel has no charms on account of its revealing mercy *in a way of righteousness*, any more than if it had revealed it in a way of unrighteousness. If our love

be directed merely "to that which relieves us," it would be equally worthy of acceptance, in our account, let that relief come how it might; and thus the character of God as "the *just*, and the *justifier* of them that believe in Jesus," forms no part of the good news to sinful men: the glory of the gospel is no glory.

There is much meaning in the words of the apostle John—"We are *of God*: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not *of God* heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." Every false system of religion originates and terminates in self. This is the character of the spirit of error. But if we be *of God*, we shall love him, and every image of him in creation. Those objects which bear his *moral* image, such as his holy law, his glorious gospel, and his renewed people, will occupy the first place in our esteem; and those which at present bear only his *natural* image, while there is any hope of their recovery to a right mind, will be the objects of our tender compassion, and their salvation the subject of our earnest prayers.

It is thus that we manifest ourselves to be "the children of our Father who is in heaven;" who, till sinners are fixed in a state of irreconcilable enmity to him and to the general good, "causeth his sun to rise and his rain to descend" upon them, whatever be their characters.

If self-love be the spring of our religion, it is declared by our Saviour to be of no value, and that it will issue in no Divine reward. How should it be otherwise, when it differs not from the spirit of the world? The most abandoned men love those that love them. If this were true religion, we do not need to be taught it of God; for it is perfectly suited to our depraved nature. But if true religion consists in being of the mind of God, or in being "perfect, as our Father who is in heaven is perfect," it is absolutely necessary that we be born again, or we cannot see the kingdom of God.

## ALMS-GIVING, AND PRAYER.

Matt. vi. 1—8.

OUR Saviour having detected various false glosses upon the law, and shown the spirituality of its requirements, proceeds to discourse on some of the most common and important duties of religion. Of these he instances *alms-giving* and *prayer*. Three things are observable from what is said of the former, ver. 1—4.

First, It is taken for granted that the disciples of Christ were in the habit of giving alms; and this notwithstanding they generally consisted of persons who laboured for their subsistence. And would this bear to be taken for granted of the body of professors among us? They might have said, We have enough to do to provide for our own houses; it is for the rich, and not for labouring people, to give alms. But feeling, as they did, for the afflicted and necessitous, especially for those of the household of faith, they would deny themselves many comforts for the sake of being able to relieve them. True religion always teaches men to be merciful.

Secondly, As, through the deceitfulness of the human heart, the most beneficial actions may arise from corrupt designs, and thereby be rendered not only void, but evil in the sight of God, we are warned as to our motives—"Take heed that ye do not your alms *before men, to be seen of them*

—do not *sound a trumpet* before you, as the hypocrites do.” In what concerns the relief of individuals this counsel will commonly apply in the most literal sense of the words. The liberality of vain men, having no other object than to be thought generous, is commonly either publicly proclaimed, or exercised in a way that shall by some means come to the knowledge of the neighbourhood; while that of the modest Christian, desirous only of approving himself to God, is done in secret. The words, however, do not apply in all cases. It is not so much the *act* as the *principle*, or  *motive*, that our Lord condemns. If we understand it literally of the former, it would follow that nothing ought to be given in *public* subscriptions or collections for the poor; for, in this, concealment would be improper, if not impossible. The primitive Christians did not always conceal their donations; but consulted and subscribed for the poor brethren at Jerusalem, Acts xi. 29, 30. Nor would privacy be consistent with other commandments; particularly that in chap. v. 16, “Let your light so shine before men, that others, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven.” There is no evil in our works *being seen of men*, provided they be not done *for this end*, but *for the glory of God*. Secrecy itself may become a cloak to avarice; and it is a fact that many, by affecting to be very private in their donations, have contrived to keep their money to themselves, and at the same time to be thought very generous. The evil lies in the  *motive*; doing what we do from ostentation, or *to be seen of men*. The desire of human applause is a canker that eats out the charity of many gifts, and renders that which would otherwise be good and well pleasing to God a mere exercise of selfish hypocrisy.

Thirdly, As every thing in this world bears a relation to eternity, we are reminded of the final issue of things. If we give from ostentation, we *HAVE our reward*; but if from love, and with an eye to the glory of God, “that which has been done in secret shall be rewarded openly.” It is so ordered in the Divine administration, that the selfish soul shall be disappointed in the end; while he who seeks the good of others shall find his own. But how is it that the works of sinful creatures should be *rewarded* with eternal life? In themselves considered they cannot; and if any man think, by a series of beneficent actions, to atone for the sins of his past life, and to obtain the kingdom of heaven, he will be awfully deceived. But if he believe in Jesus, he is accepted in him; and, being so, his offerings are accepted and rewarded, both in this world and that which is to come.

From alms-giving our Lord proceeds to *prayer*, ver. 5—8. The former respected our conduct to men, the latter our approaches to God. And here also it is observable, that it is taken for granted that Christ’s disciples are praying men. What he says is not to persuade them to prayer, but to direct them in it. Infidels may imagine that God does not concern himself with the affairs of mortals, and may excuse themselves by pretending that it were presumption in them to solicit the Supreme Being to do this or that; formalists may *say* their prayers, and be glad when the task is over; but Christians cannot live without communion with God. Prayer has with propriety been called the breath of the new creature. To satisfy Ananias that Saul was become a Christian, it was enough to say, “Behold, he prayeth.”

What is said of the privacy of prayer will literally apply to that which is personal, or expressive of individual desire. The proper resort for this is the closet, or a place of retirement from the interruptions and observations of men. A vain-glorious professor may enjoy no freedom in this, because there is none to witness and admire his devotions: but the child of God is here at home, even in the presence of his Father, who beareth him in secret. If we have no freedom in private prayer, but live nearly if not



entirely in the neglect of it, and at the same time possess great zeal and fluency in our public exercises, we ought surely to suspect that things are far from being right between God and our souls.

The words of our Lord, however, must not be literally applied to all cases. Respect is had more to the principle of the act than to the act itself. To understand it of the latter would be to censure all *public* prayer, and *standing* in prayer, which was no part of the design. A good man *might* pray "standing in the synagogue," or even at "a corner of the street," on some occasions. Paul prayed with the Tyrian disciples, with their wives and children, and gave thanks to God, in the presence of a ship's company. That which Christ meant to censure was the loving to pray in public places *in order to be seen of men*. His object was not to appoint the *place* or the *posture* of prayer; but to detect the vanity of the mind, and to direct his followers to seek the approbation of God rather than the applauses of men.

The  *motive* with which these counsels are urged is very impressive—"Verily I say unto you, They have their reward!" God will apportion our rewards according to the things we seek. If the objects of our desire be confined to this world, this world shall be our all; but if they extend to another, that other shall be our portion.

What is said of "vain repetitions," and "much speaking," admits of similar remarks to that which goes before it. In general, it is right to avoid long prayers, especially in the family, and in the church, which are not only wearisome to men, but offensive to God. A proper sense of the majesty of the great Supreme would cure this evil. "God is in heaven, and we on earth; therefore let our words be few." The contrary practice savours of heathenism. Let the devotees of Baal vociferate from morning till noon; but let not the worshippers of Jehovah imitate them.\* Our heavenly Father knoweth what things we need. If he require importunity in prayer, it is not because he needs to be persuaded; but that his favours may be known, accepted, and prized.

It is not our Lord's design, however, to condemn *all* long prayers, nor all repetitions. He himself, on some occasions, continued for a whole night; and in Gethsemane he three times repeated the same words. They are *vain* repetitions which he censures, and the hope of being heard *for* much speaking. It is observable, however, that whenever Christ or any of the apostles were long in prayer, it was in private. If many who pray for an hour or longer in public, and with tedious repetitions, were equally circuitous in the closet, whether we should commend their discretion or not, we might hope well of their sincerity. But where the reverse of this is true, it certainly has the appearance of the very spirit which it was our Saviour's intention to condemn.

## THE LORD'S PRAYER.

Matt. vi. 9—15.

THIS admirable summary of prayer, as introduced by Matthew, would seem to be only for the purpose of illustrating, by example, the foregoing precepts. Luke, however, represents it as occasioned by our Saviour's being

\* Heathenism still retains the same character as it did in the days of Elijah. The Hindoos at this day, in worshipping the idol Kreesnoo, or Hurry, will cry for hours together, without intermission, "Hurry bolo! Hurry bolo!" i. e. Kreesnoo, speak! Kreesnoo, speak!

engaged in prayer at a certain place, and when he ceased, one of his disciples saying unto him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." If in any thing we need Divine instruction, it is in drawing near to God. It does not appear to have been Christ's design to establish a form of prayer, nor that it was ever so used by the disciples; but merely a brief *directory* as to the matter and manner of it. Such a directory was adapted not only to instruct, but to encourage Christians in their approaches to God. It was putting words into their mouths. In supplicating Divine mercy, they might plead, Thus and thus our Saviour taught us to say; even he in whom thy soul delighteth: hear us for his sake! Observe,

First, The *character* under which we are allowed to draw near to the Lord of heaven and earth.—"Our Father." It has been a question, though I conceive it ought not, whether God is here to be considered as our Father in Jesus Christ, and not rather as our Creator; and whether the prayer be not suited to all men, who are God's creatures, as well as to believers. That the prayer is free to every one who can cordially utter its sentiments there is no doubt; but whatever others have done, Christ would never prescribe a prayer suited to an unbeliever. As the Scriptures inculcate no precept but what, if obeyed in its true intent, would prove us in the way to eternal life, so they prescribe no prayer but what, if offered up in its true meaning, would be heard and answered. It is true that God is the Father of all men by creation; but, like prodigals, they are by sin alienated from him, and his love to them as a Creator is in a manner extinguished. He cannot consistently treat them as children, but as strangers and enemies. If strict justice had its course, he would "destroy man, whom he hath created, from the face of the earth." The effect is, that if any of the sons of men approach him as a Father, it must be through a Mediator. The original relation is, as to any access to him, or communion with him, dissolved. If any sinner be now treated as a child of God, it is as an *adopted alien put among the children*.—See John i. 13.

It is no small proof that the privilege of approaching God as a Father has respect to the mediation of Christ, that it is almost confined to the gospel dispensation. To Israel, it is true, pertained the national adoption; but this was only a shadow of that to which believers were predestinated through Jesus Christ. Old Testament believers were no doubt related to God as a Father, as well as we; but they were not ordinarily in the habit of addressing him under that endearing character. The spirit of that dispensation was, when compared with ours, a spirit of bondage. It was reserved for the times of the Messiah, in the spirit of adoption, to cry, *Abba, Father*. The encouragement contained in this tender appellation is inexpressible. The love, the care, the pity, which it comprehends, and the filial confidence which it inspires, must, if we are not wanting to ourselves, render prayer a most blessed exercise.

Secondly, The *place* of the Divine residence.—"Our Father, who art *in heaven*." As the endearing character of a father inspires us with confidence, this must have no less a tendency to excite our reverence; and both together are necessary to acceptable worship. "As for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy; and in thy *fear* will I worship toward thy holy temple." Fear without hope would sink us into despair; and hope without fear would raise us to presumption; but united together, they constitute the beauty of holiness. It is not, however, for the purpose of inspiring reverence only that God is said to be in heaven, but to encourage us to confide in his absolute supremacy and almighty power. He is above all our enemies, and has the direction and control of all events. What can be more consoling than the thought of having the Lord of the

universe for our Father! When the heathen triumphed over the church, and sneeringly asked each other, "Where is now their God?" it was sufficient to answer, "Our God is in the heavens, he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased."

Thirdly, The *social* principle which pervades the prayer.—"Our Father—forgive us," &c. Assuredly we are hereby taught not to confine our petitions to what respects ourselves, but to identify with our own cases those of our brethren. Nor is it necessary that they should be actually present to hear us, and join with us; the prayer of faith and love will embrace in its arms brethren at the greatest distance; and not only such as are known, but such as are unknown, even the whole family of God upon earth. Neither is it necessary to social prayer that all who are present should be believers. Were this the case, we must restrain prayer in our congregations, and in our families. The worship of the primitive churches had in it both prayer and singing, and that in a language that might be understood; yet it was open to unbelievers, or any person who chose to join in it, 1 Cor. xiv. 15, 23—25. If either prayer or praise was a *positive institution*, we might be under the necessity of refusing admission to some characters, as is the case in other positive institutions; but if they are immediately binding on all men, whatever be their characters, any man has a right to be present. If he can join in either, let him; and if not, it is to himself only. Our only concern in such cases is, not to give unbelievers to understand that they are considered differently from what they are; and this may be avoided, without refusing to pray or praise in company with them. Paul would not have united with the ship's company in celebrating the Lord's supper, but he did not scruple to take common bread, and "give thanks" on their behalf, "in the presence of them all."

Fourthly, The *brevity* of it.—"Use not vain repetitions, but in *this manner* pray ye." The prayers recorded in the Scriptures are commonly as brief as they are impressive. It is true our Lord continued in prayer for a whole night; but he was then by himself. The importunity which induces us when alone to wrestle with our heavenly Father for a blessing, and to be unwilling to retire without it, is very different from that tedious circumlocution so wearisome to families, and disgusting to the most solemn assemblies. There may be indeed an extreme on the other side. Some persons conclude their prayers ere they have well begun them, and without affording opportunity for their own hearts, or the hearts of others, to be affected in them. Prayer is the pouring out of the soul before God; it therefore requires to be long enough to interest the mind and affections, and not so long as to drown them in a flood of unmeaning words.

Fifthly, The *order* of it.—Our attention is first directed to those things which are of the first importance, and which are fundamental to those which follow. Such are sanctifying and hallowing the name of the Lord, praying that his kingdom may come, and that his will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. After this, we are allowed to ask for those things which pertain to our own immediate wants, both temporal and spiritual. This is seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. The glory of God's character, and the coming of his kingdom, stand first in all his works, and therefore must have the precedence in all our prayers. The love of God stands before the love of our neighbour, or of ourselves, in the Divine law; and the glory of God before peace on earth and good-will to men, in the gospel. We must subscribe to this ere we are allowed to ask for our daily bread, or the forgiveness of our sins. To desire salvation at the expense of the Divine honour would be direct rebellion against the Majesty of heaven and earth. Self-love may induce a sinner to regard a doctrine which

relieves him, and merely on account of its relieving him; but that which endears the gospel to a Christian is that it reveals a way in which "God can be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." Why is it that sinners, under the preaching of the gospel, continue averse to the way of salvation? It is not because they would not be glad to have their sins forgiven; but having no regard for the honour of God's name, they see no need for such an interposition as the gospel exhibits, in order to sanctify it, and render forgiveness consistent with it. Hence, like Cain, they present their offerings without an eye to the gospel sacrifice. That which some have denominated "disinterested love," or the love of God for what he is in himself, as far as I understand it, is no other than hallowing his name, which is essential to true religion. Not that we are called upon to love any thing in the Divine character which is not *manifested in the work of saving sinners*, nor to be *unconcerned about our own salvation*; but to embrace the gospel as first glorifying God, and then giving peace on earth; and to seek our own interest as bound up with the honour of his name, and as tending to promote it.

We are taught to pray for even the coming of God's kingdom, and the universal prevalence of righteousness in the world, in subserviency to the honour of HIS NAME. It is to this end that God himself pursues these great objects; to this end therefore we must pray for them. But though they are placed *after* the hallowing of his name, yet they stand *before* any private petitions of ours, and in this order each requires to be sought. Why is it that so little has been done, from age to age, for the general interest of Christ? Is it not owing to a practical error on this subject? placing our own private interests before his, dwelling in our ceiled houses, while the temple of God has been in ruins, or at most seeking the prosperity of a small part of the church which happens to be connected with us, to the utter neglect of the general kingdom of the Redeemer.

As Christ has taught us to pray for the coming of God's kingdom, and the universal spread of righteousness in the world, we may rest assured that these things will come to pass. Christ would not have directed us to ask for a specific object, and without any proviso, when he knew it would never be granted. Whether the kingdom of God here means the same as the Messiah's kingdom, or whether it relates to that state of things when the kingdom shall be delivered up to the Father, and God shall be all in all, it makes no difference. The coming of the latter supposes the gradual completion of the former: to pray therefore for what is ultimate in the system is to pray for whatever is intermediate. At present God's name, instead of being sanctified in the earth, is disregarded and blasphemed. He reigns in the hearts of but few of the children of men. Instead of earth resembling heaven, as to obedience to the Divine will, it bears a much nearer resemblance to hell. But it shall not be thus always. He who taught us thus to pray was manifested to destroy the works of the devil, and destroyed they will be. And as the grand means by which this great end will be accomplished is the preaching of the cross, we have abundance of encouragement to persevere in that arduous employment.

As there are three petitions in respect of God's name and cause in the world, so there are three which regard our own immediate wants; one of which concerns those which are temporal, and the other two those which are spiritual.

"Give us this day (or *day by day*) our daily bread." Bread comprehends all the necessaries, but none of the superfluities, of life. If God give us the latter, we may receive them with thankfulness, only considering them as a trust committed to us, but we are not at liberty to ask for them. Nor are

we allowed to ask for what may be necessary in days to come; but, as children on their father, must depend upon God for the bread of each day as the day occurs. Still less are we allowed to ask for the bread of others, or to covet our neighbours' goods; but must be contented with what the Lord gives us in the way of honest industry, or by the kindness of our friends.

Such is the spirit inculcated by this petition. How opposite to the spirit of this world! Man as a sinner aspires to be independent of God, and to raise himself out of the reach of adversity. He cannot trust God to provide for him and his children, but desires to take the charge upon himself. Unlike the sheep of Christ's pasture, who go in and out as he leads them, he emulates the wild beasts which roam through the forest in quest of prey for themselves and for their young ones. Ever anxious to accumulate, he has neither time nor inclination to think of any thing else, till, in some unexpected hour, he is arrested in his course, and is obliged to spare time—to die! Christian, canst thou envy such a character? wilt thou learn his ways? No, surely! Covet not to be rich, lest it should cause thee to deny thy God, and, by treating sacred things with lightness, to take his name in vain. Is it best for thee, is it best for thy children, even in the present world, that thou shouldst emulate the beast of prey in providing for thy young ones? Remember “the young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.”

“Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” As bread in this prayer comprehends all the necessaries of life, so the forgiveness of sin comprehends the substance of all that is necessary for the well-being of our souls. Sin is the only bar between God and man; if, therefore, this be removed, there is nothing left to impede the most ample communications of his favour. Sins are called *debts*, not properly, but metaphorically. All that belongs to a debt will not apply to a crime. The former, as being a mere private obligation, may be remitted by the creditor, if he please, without any satisfaction; but the latter being a public evil, committed against God as the Governor of the world, cannot be consistently forgiven without an atonement which shall effectually distinguish that forgiveness from connivance. There is a sufficient resemblance, however, between them to justify the use of the term. We *owe* to God as his creatures supreme love and unreserved obedience; and, in default of paying it, fall under an obligation to punishment. As a rebel against the state forfeits his life, which is his all, to his injured country; so, as rebels against God, we have forfeited our souls, which are our all, to his injured government.

From this petition we learn four things. First, That we have *daily* sins to be forgiven. It is to our shame that it should be so; but so it is. To disown it does not make it the better, but the worse. The direction of Christ contains an insuperable objection to the notion of those deluded people who imagine themselves to have attained to a state of sinless perfection. No man that is not blinded to the spirituality of that law which requires supreme, perfect, and unabated love, can be insensible of his vast defects. The highest degree of love that we at any time attain comes immensely short of what we ought to feel, and of what we shall feel when presented faultless before the presence of the Divine glory. The only reply that can be made is, that the petition may refer to past sins, and not to present ones. But is it not presented along with a petition for our *daily* bread, and in a prayer which is supposed to be daily offered. Secondly, That the shedding of Christ's blood as the price of our redemption is perfectly consistent with the free grace of God, not only in providing the Saviour, but in forgiving the sinner for his sake. If we had borne the full penalty due to

sin in our own proper persons, all must allow there had been no place for forgiveness. And if the union between Christ and his elect people had been so intimate as to render the actions or sufferings of one the very actions and sufferings of the other, the same consequence would follow. Or if the satisfaction made by Christ in our stead had been on the principle of debtor and creditor, whatever obligation we might have been under to the surety, or to the creditor for providing him, the debt could not be said to have been forgiven. But as we have not borne the penalty of sin in our own persons, and as sin itself is transferable to another only in its *effects*, we must still be considered as *deserving* of death, and, whatever be the considerations on which God proceeds in our forgiveness, as being freely forgiven. We may plead the atonement as that for the sake of which we may be forgiven, in a way glorious to the Divine character, together with the invitations and promises of the word; but this is all. We must not go as claimants, but as supplicants. Thirdly, That the perfection and perpetuity of justification are consistent with a daily application to God for forgiving mercy. It is an important truth that he that believeth in Christ "shall not come into condemnation." There is no such idea, however, held out in the Scriptures as the pardon of sins, *past, present, and to come*. Forgiveness invariably presupposes repentance. It is not bestowed *on that account*, yet it is inseparably connected with it. As justification includes forgiveness, we may be said to be fully forgiven from the first moment that we believe in Christ; but it is in some such way I conceive as we are said to be *glorified*. The thing is rendered *sure* by the purpose and promise of God; but as in that case a perseverance to the end is supposed and provided for, so is repentance and a continued application for mercy through Jesus Christ in this. If it were true that a believer might not persevere to the end, it would be equally true that he might never be glorified; and if it were possible for him to live in sin, and never repent of it, it would be equally possible that he would never be forgiven—but he that has promised that which is ultimate has provided for every thing intermediate. Fourthly, That we are not allowed to ask or hope for forgiveness at the hand of God while we refuse it to those who have offended us. It is not enough to say, we cannot expect the comfort of it: we cannot expect the thing itself. While we indulge in implacable resentment, it is presumption to expect any other than that we shall perish in our sins, ver. 14, 15.

"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." The last petition respected the bestowment of the greatest good; this, deliverance from the worst of evils. Christ teaches us to suspect ourselves. To be delivered from evil, we must not only avoid running into temptation, but pray that God in his providence may not lead us into it. Though temptation and sin be not in themselves necessarily connected, yet there is almost a moral certainty of their being so in our case. Christ indeed went into the field of contest, and came out unhurt; but this is more than can be said with certainty of any of his followers. They have indeed been preserved from actual compliance with many evils; but the temptation may nevertheless have left such impressions upon their imaginations and desires as to be a source of guilt and shame for years to come. He that carries about him inflammable materials will do well to keep at the greatest possible distance from fire. Many a fair character, both in the world and in the church, if led into temptation, would be soon stripped of his glory. What then do we mean by courtng applauses, by forming carnal connexions, by plunging into unnecessary cares, or by coveting lucrative situations? Much of what men call *the leadings of providence* is in fact God's leading them into temptation, for the detecting of their true character. Lot might no doubt have pleaded that providence led him to discover *a rich and well-watered plain*, and he

only followed its openings. Gehazi had a fine opportunity afforded him; and he only embraced it. Moses, however, had a much greater opening than either of them; but he declined it. The truth is, providence is no rule of duty, independent of Scripture. If the Scriptures warrant a measure, and providence open the way, we may safely walk into it; but woe to him that catcheth every opportunity that offers to aggrandize himself! Many a man would have killed Saul in the cave of Adullam, and have pleaded, as David's servants did, that "the Lord had delivered his enemy into his hand;" but so did not David, because of the fear of God.—I only add, There is no necessary connexion between going into temptation and coming out of it. Both Judas and Peter went in, but only one of them returned; and those who go in on a presumption of coming out again by repentance will probably be fatally mistaken.

The concluding doxology, though omitted by Luke, and thought by some not to have been originally included by Matthew, appears to agree with the foregoing petitions, and to furnish encouragement to hope for an answer.

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FASTING, AND OTHER DUTIES.

Matt. vi. 16—34.

OUR Lord's discourse is not designed to amuse his disciples with curious disquisitions, but to direct them as to their daily walk, partly in their approaches to God, and partly in their conversation with the world.

Ver. 16. "Moreover, when ye fast," &c. Fasting is supposed to be the ordinary practice of the godly. Christ does not make light of it, but merely cautions them against its abuses. There has doubtless been much formality and hypocrisy in some who have attended to it; but it does not follow that the thing itself should be neglected. It is an appendage to prayer, and designed to aid its importunity. It is humbling, and in a manner chastising, ourselves before God. The spirit of it is expressed in the following passages—"So do God to me, and more also, if I taste bread, or aught else, till the sun be down." "Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, nor slumber to mine eye-lids, until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob." No mention is made of the time, or how often the duty should be attended to. It seems to be proper on various occasions, especially when, as the Scripture phrase is, we "set ourselves to seek the Lord." It is only a *means*, however; if rested in as an *end*, it will be an abomination in the sight of God. In the direction of our Lord concerning it, respect is had to the *principle* of things rather than to the things themselves. A *sad countenance*, if it be expressive of a sad heart, and in our secret approaches to God, has nothing in it improper. The evil consists in counterfeit sadness and ostentatious grief. Whatever be your concern of mind, make no show of it before men, but rather appear, when in company, as at other times. Let all be between thyself and thy Father, who seeth in secret.

Ver. 19, 20. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures," &c. The Lord here proceeds to a variety of counsels, and all upon things in common life. The inhabitants of this busy world are taken up in accumulating something which may be called their own, and in setting their hearts upon it rather than upon God. So common is this practice, that, provided they do not

injure one another, it insures commendation rather than reproach. "Men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself." Hence we are in greater danger of this sin than of most others. In opposition to this, we are directed to "lay up treasures in heaven." Not that the heavenly inheritance is the reward of our doings; but, believing in Christ, and setting our affections on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, every thing we do in his name, whether it be to the poor, or any others, for his sake, turns to our account. Heavenly enjoyment accumulates, as we in this way make much of it. It is thus that, in "giving alms, we provide ourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens which faileth not." Men commonly choose a safe place to lay up their treasure. It is said that many millions, during the late deprivations on the continent, have been placed in the English funds; and no wonder. But still there is nothing secure in this world. If we would place our treasure in a bank where no marauder cometh, it must be "hid with Christ in God."

From this passage, some have seriously concluded that it is forbidden us in any case to add to our property. To be consistent, however, they should not stop here, but go on to "sell what they have and give it to the poor;" for the one is no less expressly required than the other. But this were to overturn all distinctions of rich and poor, and all possession of property, which is contrary to the whole current of Scripture. To lay up "treasures upon earth" is to trust in them, or make them our chief good, instead of using them as a means of glorifying God and doing good in our generation. This is evident from the reason given against it, that "where our treasure is, there will our heart be also." The Lord prospered David; yet David's *treasures* were not in this world. On the contrary, he was distinguished from "men of this world, who had their portion in this life;" declaring, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness." If, however, our treasure be in heaven, we shall not be eager to lay up worldly wealth; but rather to lay out that which God intrusts in our hands for promoting the good of his cause, and the well-being of mankind.

Ver. 22—24. "The light of the body is the eye," &c. Our Lord here seems to illustrate and enforce the principle on which he had all along proceeded; namely, the importance of *pure design or right motive* in every thing we do. This, to the soul, is that which a clear sight of the eye is to the body. A single eye has but one object, and this is God.\* It is opposed to an evil eye. The one is expressive of that spirituality of mind, which, as the apostle says, "approves the excellent," Phil. i. 10. The other is a mind blinded by the love of the world, or other corrupt affections, by which the judgment, which should be the guide of the soul, becomes dark, and leads it into evil. Thus the gospel is rejected, and some false doctrine received instead of it; and thus religion, by which men hope to find their way out of their labyrinths, serves only to bewilder them more and more, till at length they plunge into perdition. To show the importance of a *single eye*, it is added, "No man can serve two masters," &c. He that has his eye partly on God and partly on mammon, wishing to grasp both worlds, will deceive his soul. He may lose both; or if not, he will certainly lose the kingdom of God. Our minds must be supremely set on him, and the world must be sought only in subserviency to him. Two masters we cannot serve.

Ver. 25. "Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life," &c. This affectionate dissuasive from worldly anxiety is supposed to be the

\* Dr. Campbell excludes the idea of *single*, rendering the word "sound," as opposed to "distempered;" but the context clearly favours the common translation.



natural consequence of what had been spoken. It is as though he had said, Seeing you cannot serve two masters, serve the Lord; and as you must not look two ways, let your eye be single; keeping one great end in view, and treating every thing else as a secondary or subordinate object. The command, "Take no thought," may seem to be inconsistent with that diligence in business which the Scriptures commend, and which is necessary to the providing of things honest in the sight of God and man. Certain it is that this cannot be done without *thought*; but the word here used is expressive of *anxious solicitude*. It does not mean every care, but the care which groweth of distrust. It becomes us, after using all lawful means, to be anxiously careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, to let our requests be made known unto God.

Ver. 26—34. To enforce the most entire confidence in our heavenly Father, we are reminded that, having done the greater, he will do the less (he has given us our lives and our bodies; and the life is more than meat, and the body more than raiment)—that he provides for the fowls of the air, which, without anxiety, receive their food at his hand—and that all our fretfulness is unavailing; for, however we may think to raise ourselves by it, we can accomplish nothing beyond the will of God, any more than we can add to our stature. And as to dress, God clothes the lilies, without any solicitude on their part, so as to cause them to surpass us all in finery. To be anxious concerning what we shall eat, what we shall drink, and wherewithal we shall be clothed, is heathenism, and more suited to men who live without God in the world than to the children of the Most High. All such anxiety and distrust must proceed on the principle that God either does not know our wants, or that he careth not for us. Let it suffice us, therefore, to be told that "our heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of all these things." Seek those things first which are of the first importance. Take care of God's interest, and God will take care of yours. The ills of the time present are sufficient for us, without calling in those of futurity. God has promised strength for the day, but no more: the evils which we bring in from the morrow, we must bear ourselves.

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JUDGING OTHERS, AND CASTING PEARLS BEFORE SWINE.

Matt. vii. 1—6.

VER. 1—5. "Judge not," &c. This prohibition, like many others in our Lord's discourse, if interpreted in its utmost latitude, would go to censure what is elsewhere commended. If we judge not truth and error, good and evil, we cannot embrace the one and avoid the other; neither can we discharge the duties of our station in the world, or in the church, without forming some judgment of those about us. Paul and Silas are supposed to have judged Lydia to be faithful, ere they entered her house; and Peter did not scruple to tell the sorcerer that he "perceived him to be in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity." We are not only allowed, but directed, even in this discourse, to judge of men, as of trees, by their fruit, ver. 16—20. It is part of our duty as ministers to declare from God's word that they who live after the flesh will die; and that they who are carried away by strong delusions and the belief of a lie are in the utmost danger of damnation. They may be displeased with us for thinking so hardly of them, and may allege this passage as a reproof to our presumption.

The judgment which Christ forbids is that which arises not from good-will and a faithful discharge of duty, but from a *ensorious spirit*, which takes pleasure in thinking and speaking evil of those about us, puts the worst construction upon actions of doubtful motive, and is severe in detecting smaller faults in another, while blinded to far greater ones in ourselves. It stands opposed by Luke to a forgiving spirit, chap. vi. 27. It is therefore the judgment of rancour, selfishness, and implacability. "All men," says Calvin on the passage, "do flatter and spare themselves; and every man is a severe censor against others. There is a certain sweetness in this sin, so that there is scarcely a man who itcheth not with a desire to inquire after other men's faults. This wicked delight in biting, carping, and slandering doth Christ forbid, when he saith, *Judge not.*"

It is remarkable that those who are most disposed to detect the faults of others are commonly the most faulty themselves, and therefore the least qualified for that which they are so eager to undertake. And herein lies their hypocrisy: they would seem to be great enemies to sin, whereas, if this were the case, they would begin with their own. It is therefore nothing better than selfish rancour, under the mask of zeal and faithfulness. It also deserves notice, that he who is under the dominion of any sin is utterly unqualified to reprove; but he that has first repented of his own sin shall thereby be fitted to deliver his brother from his. "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

To deter us from this evil spirit and practice, we are given to expect that if we judge we "shall be judged," and that "with what measure we mete it shall be measured to us again." Such is the ordinary course of things even in the present life. A censorious spirit towards others brings censure in abundance upon ourselves. Hence arise debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults. Thus the sweets of society, both civil and religious, are imbittered; and, instead of the ills of life diminishing, they greatly accumulate in our hands. Neither is it in this life only, nor chiefly, that such things will meet with a righteous retribution. If we go on condemning in this manner till death, we must expect to be condemned at a judgment-seat, from the decisions of which there is no appeal.

Ver. 6. "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs," &c. This precept may have no immediate connexion with the foregoing one, and may apply to the disciples as teachers. Though they must preach the word to all, yet it must be with due discrimination, giving to every character that which the Scripture assigns him. Thus did Christ himself, at the beginning of this sermon. I am inclined to think, however, that there is a connexion between this precept and the foregoing one; and that the former dissuades from *evil-minded* censures, and this from *imprudent* ones. Though we should reprove men from the purest motives, yet if what we say be harsh or unseasonable, instead of doing them good, we shall provoke their resentment, and do both them and ourselves harm. The conduct of Paul in his voyage to Rome (Acts xxvii.) furnishes an example of the contrary. He was not so awed as to leave the company in any doubt who he was, nor yet so obtrusive as unnecessarily to draw upon him their displeasure. His behaviour was such from the beginning as to procure him a courteous treatment from Julius the centurion, ver. 3. When danger approached, he gave them a respectful admonition, and, to excite their attention to the gospel, foretold what would be the disastrous issue of the voyage, ver. 10. Finding his word disregarded, he held his peace, till "all hope that they should be saved was taken away." Then, with a gentle reproof for their unbelief, he renews his predictions, declares the ground on which he uttered them,

acknowledge himself more fully the servant of God, and addresses them in encouraging language, ver. 21—25. After this he rises in their esteem, his influence among them is extended, he takes bread and gives thanks in the presence of them all, and they are cheerful, and eat with him, ver. 31—36. Whether this conduct issued in the conversion of any of them, or not, it so interested the centurion, that when the soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners, he kept them from their purpose for Paul's sake. We see in it a union of zeal, which never lost sight of its object, and of discretion, which selected the best means and seized the fittest opportunities for accomplishing it. All was the effect of good-will, which, wherever it prevails, either prevents the violent attacks of the wicked, or, if they come unprovoked, enables us to bear them.

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PRAYER AND EQUITY.

Matt. vii. 7—12.

FROM negative religion, our Lord proceeds to enforce that which is positive—prayer to God, and justice to men. We have had directions already concerning the *duty* of prayer, and are now furnished with *encouragements* to engage in it.

Observe the terms by which it is expressed—*asking, seeking, knocking*. No mention is made of what we are to ask or seek for; but it is understood that every thing we want, both for this world and that to come, is richly *provided*, and that the way of access to God is opened by the Saviour. Such an invitation would not else have been given. It is also understood that what we receive is of *grace*, and that we must apply for it, not as haughty claimants, but as needy and unworthy supplicants. The prayer of the Pharisee had not a single petition in it. We may also perceive that true prayer is that by which we look *out of ourselves*, and seek help from above. The formalist rests in the deed alone, but the believer in Jesus thinks not of his own seekings, but of the objects sought. There is also a *gradation* of desire expressed in the terms. Seeking is somewhat more than asking, and knocking more than seeking. The mind, when properly engaged in this exercise, increases in its importunity, like his who said, “I will not let thee go except thou bless me.”

Observe, next, the encouragements afforded us in the exercise. It is wonderful how they are heaped, as it were, one upon another. Here are first promises, “It shall be given you,” &c.; next examples, “Every one that asketh receiveth,” &c.; and then an appeal to the feelings of a parent, arguing thence to the compassion of our heavenly Father.

It is of great account in prayer to lay hold of the *promises*. It is this constitutes it the prayer of faith. It is true we may pray for temporal things which are not specifically promised, provided it be in submission to the will of God, leaving it to his wisdom to give or to withhold, as seemeth good to him. But even here we must not lose sight of his general promise, to withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly. It is also true, that if there were only a possibility of success in matters of salvation, considering the urgency of our case as lost and helpless sinners, we might well supplicate mercy. Such were the reasonings of the four lepers, and of Esther the queen; but though they have sometimes been applied to the sinner's application for mercy, yet they are not cases in point. We must not compare our

heavenly Father to capricious heathens, who might have spurned their supplicants, instead of hearing their petition: nor an application at a mere peradventure to coming on an invitation, and under a promise of acceptance.

And then, with respect to *examples*, our Lord directs the attention of his followers to facts. "Every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth." This is like challenging them to find an instance of a poor supplicant perishing at a throne of grace, or of a single petition offered in the faith of Jesus falling to the ground. Lastly, His appealing to the heart of an earthly parent, and arguing that "if we, being evil, know how to give good gifts to our children, much more will our heavenly Father give good things to them that ask him," is truly overwhelming. And is it possible, after all this, that we should ever feel reluctant to draw near to him? Oh what must be that alienation of heart which can make light of such a privilege, that guilt and shame that make it seem almost a duty to stand aloof, and that distrust of God which gives to our approaches before him an appearance of presumption!

Ver. 12. "Therefore all things whatsoever," &c. It may seem as if there could be no connexion between this precept and those which preceded it. On close inspection, however, we may find it otherwise. It may have a connexion with various other precepts which had gone before, and, so far as they related to the duty of man to man, contain a sort of summary of the whole. Or it may well be considered as connected with what is said on prayer. All inordinate affection toward this world (which is the impetus that moves men to overreaching practices) has its root in a distrust of God. Were we daily to ask for all we want of him, seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and relying upon his promise to add other things as he sees them to be best for us, we should have no inclination to covetousness or injustice. But if, instead of depending, like sheep, on the care of their shepherd, we set off like beasts of prey, to forage the world for ourselves, we shall often judge it to be wise and necessary to seize on that which equity forbids. Hence arises the hateful distinction among statesmen between what is right and what is politic, and hence all the rapacity which desolates the earth. It will be found in the end that whatever was right was wise; but this lesson is seldom learned till it is too late. Oh what a world would it be if this rule were acted upon! What families, churches, cities, and nations, would our eyes behold! But this is not to be expected till it shall be written in the hearts of men by the Spirit of God.

It is remarkable that this golden rule, as we call it, is God's witness in every human breast. Every one has so much regard for himself as quickly to feel wherein *he* is wronged, and to pass censure on the person who has wronged him. He has therefore only to apply the principle to his own conduct, and the right and the wrong must instantly appear. Hence no one can plead ignorance. Even the heathens, who have not the written law, "are a law unto themselves, their consciences bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another."

THE BROAD AND NARROW WAY; AND HOW TO JUDGE OF TEACHERS.

Matt. vii, 13—20.

VER. 13, 14. "Enter ye," &c. Our Lord now proceeds to set before his hearers life and death, exhorting them to choose life. From the whole of

what he had advanced, it must appear that the way of the world was broad, and that his own was narrow, or difficult; but though the one might be agreeable to the flesh, and the other disagreeable, his counsel is, "Enter ye in at the strait gate." It is as if he had said, "If you walk in the way which I have been warning you against, the entrance will be easy, and you will meet with but few obstructions in your progress. Every thing will accord with your corrupt propensities. The transition from sin to sin, and from occasional to habitual indulgences, will be quite easy. You will have full scope for inclination, and free choice of the vices best suited to your birth, rank, or turn of mind. Temptations, like wind and tide, will help you on! You will be in no want of company; for old and young, rich and poor, learned and illiterate, walk there; but remember "it leadeth to destruction!" If, on the other hand, you walk in the way which I have marked out, great difficulties may present themselves at your entrance, hard struggles will attend your progress, and you may expect but few to keep you company; but it "leadeth unto life!" Whosoever, therefore, chooses the broad way, "enter ye in at the strait gate!"

Ver. 15—20. "Beware of false prophets," &c. As this warning was designed for Christians in every age, the term rendered *prophets* must here, as it often is elsewhere, be understood of ordinary teachers. There are few, if any, more dangerous temptations than those which arise from false teaching. Men are led on by one another, and by preaching more than by most other things. As the true doctrine directs to the narrow way, which leadeth unto life; so false doctrine directs to the broad way, which leadeth to destruction. It is the characteristic of false teachers, that they recommend a loose religion, a flesh-pleasing scheme, the effects of which are commonly fatal. A criterion therefore by which they may be known and avoided must needs be of the greatest importance.

It is remarkable that this criterion does not consist of any external distinction conferred by others. Whatever may be said in favour of ordination from any order of men, it is not this that will render us true ministers. It is not any profession that may be made by the parties; for they may come in sheep's clothing, and yet be wolves. Loud professions of zeal and sanctity may be resorted to merely as means of success. It is the *spirit and conduct* by which we are directed to judge of men, and of the tendency of their ministry. "Ye shall know them by their fruits."

The principle on which this rule proceeds is this; true teachers have imbibed the true doctrine, which is productive of good fruit both in themselves and others; and false teachers have imbibed a false doctrine, which is productive of evil fruits both in themselves and others. There may be difficulties in applying the rule; we may be mistaken both on the favourable and the unfavourable side; yet as a general direction for those who sit not as final judges, but merely for the practical purposes of the present life, there is none like it. Men may put on the demure and the devout for mere selfish purposes, but follow them into private and domestic life, and they will ordinarily declare themselves. We may at least know enough of men by this medium to guide us in our choice of them; and that is the end to be answered.

There are two kinds of fruit by the presence or absence of which we are directed to judge of teachers; namely, *good* and *evil*. With respect to the former, every true minister of Christ is a good tree, and bringeth forth *good* fruit. Having believed the gospel himself, he speaks it from the fulness of his heart. The love of Christ constrains him. The love of souls induces him to labour, and to deny himself for their salvation. He seeks not theirs, but them. And where it is so, it will appear and approve itself to the con-

sciences of those about him. A false teacher, on the other hand, can no more bring forth this good fruit than a thorn can bear grapes, or a thistle figs. There will be a manifest want of those fruits of the Spirit enumerated by the apostle; namely, of "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Even in those who may have maintained a fair character, as it is commonly accounted by the world, you will often perceive a shocking vacancy with respect to these things. When the Pharisee, full of scorn and self-complacency, thought ill of Christ even for his suffering a sinner to wash his feet with her tears, he was told of his own sins. But what were they? Neither himself nor his acquaintance might know of any that could be laid to his charge. Jesus, however, was not at a loss to find them; and they consist, not so much in what he *had* done, as in what he had *not* done. In this view, how naked does the poor creature appear, and what a disparity is there between him and the sinner whom he had despised! "I entered into thy house; thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss; but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet: mine head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment."

With respect to the presence or absence of *evil* fruit, a true minister of Christ cannot live in sin, no, not in private, any more than a good tree *can* "bring forth evil fruit." Neither can a false teacher suppress for any considerable time the ruling propensity of his heart, nor forbear to manifest it, though undesignedly, to those about him. "A corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit."

The motives which influence these different characters being opposite, their effects will ordinarily correspond with them. All the labours of a false teacher originate and terminate in *self*. Some, under the disguise of apparent sanctity, are seeking to gratify the foulest propensities. Others flatter their audiences either as to what human nature is, or what they are in distinction from many around them. Some are adepts at gaining an ascendancy over the minds of the people, and so of getting possession of a considerable part of their property. Others, less addicted to avarice, are eager after applause; hence their chief study is to obtain the graces of a public speaker, or that elegance of diction which shall render them admired. Where such things are, they cannot be concealed, unless it be from those who are willingly ignorant. But how opposite to every thing of the kind is the spirit and conduct of the man of God! Read 1 Thess. ii. "Our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor of guile; but as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, who trieth our hearts. For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness! nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others. Being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us." False teachers will often be on their guard before enemies, but when with their friends only, will throw off their disguise, and indulge in licentious freedoms, under the name, it may be, of the liberty of the gospel; but it was not so with the apostles and true ministers of Christ: "Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblamably we behaved ourselves among you that believe."

## THE LAST JUDGMENT.

Matt. vii. 21—29.

OUR Lord, in drawing to the close of his discourse, is unusually solemn and impressive. He anticipates the last judgment, and places his hearers before the great tribunal. The sum of what he says is, that mere profession will avail nothing, and that real practical godliness is the only thing which in that day will be approved.

Ver. 21—23. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord," &c. The greater part of those who in that day will have to stand before him have not acknowledged him as their Lord; and not every one of them that have will be accepted. Professions, though repeated with earnestness, will avail nothing. It is not what we *say*, but what we *do*, that will be admitted as evidence in that day. As to what we *do*, unless the Father's will be our will, Christ will not regard us. Such is the union between the Lawgiver and the Saviour, that each is guarantee as it were to the honour of the other. If the Father's wrath abide on all who believe not on the Son, the Son no less excludes from the kingdom of heaven all who obey not the Father. Many who in this world have said, "Lord, Lord," in a way of high profession, will in that day repeat their words with very different sensations, and with earnest importunity for admittance, but all in vain. They may plead their having been not only professing Christians, but Christian teachers, and some of them possessed of extraordinary gifts, but all in vain. Having been workers of iniquity, whatever else they have wrought, it stands for nothing. They were never known as his friends in this world, and shall be utterly disowned in the next. Nothing will avail in that day but what is holy. Holiness is made of little account here; shining talents carry the bell: but there the meanest Christian is approved; while the most distinguished preacher who has lived in sin will be cast out.

Ver. 24—29. "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them," &c. The regard or disregard we pay to the doctrine and precepts of Christ in this world is here compared to building a house on a good or a bad foundation, and the issue of things at the last judgment to a tempest that shall try our work. Still he presses the necessity of practical godliness. It is he that heareth his sayings and *doeth* them whose religion will stand the test; while he that heareth them and doeth them *not*—he who has heard and talked about repentance, but never repented—has heard and talked about believing, but never believed—has heard and applauded the morality of the gospel, but never walked by it—his building shall fall, and "great will be the fall of it!" Other losses have been repaired by time, but this will be irreparable and eternal.

There are two ways, and perhaps I may say three, in which this solemn passage has been perverted. We see here, say some, that it is by *doing*, rather than by *believing*, that we shall stand approved. But though *doing*, in the article of justification, stands opposed to believing, (Gal. iii. 10—12,) yet here, being introduced as the *evidence* of a state of salvation, it is opposed to *saying*, or to mere profession, and *includes believing*. Faith itself is a practical persuasion of the truth of Christ's sayings, and is followed with a course of obedience to his precepts. Moreover, the doctrine of Christ's sayings is not the rock, but the building upon it.—We see, say others, that it matters but little what doctrines we believe, provided we lead a good life; it is not by what we have *believed*, but by what we have *done*, that we shall be judged! But if doing Christ's sayings, instead of being

opposed to believing, *include* it, this remark is altogether unfounded. Finally, Others, overlooking the scope of our Lord, are from this passage continually insisting on the doctrine of justification by faith, in opposition to the works of the law, and comparing those who believe in the Saviour for acceptance with God to the wise man who built his house upon a rock; and those who depend upon their own righteousness to the foolish man who built his house upon the sand. But this way of treating the Scriptures betrays the truth into the hands of its adversaries, who, perceiving the force put upon them in supporting a favourite doctrine, conclude that it has no foundation in Scripture. The truth is, our Lord is not discoursing on our being justified by faith, but on our being "judged according to our works," which, though consistent with the other, is not the same thing, and ought not to be confounded with it. The character described is not the self-righteous rejecter of the gospel, but one who, though he may hear it, and profess to believe it, yet brings forth no corresponding fruits.

The impressive manner in which he who will be our Judge enforces the *practice* of religion reminds me of the words of that miserable man, Francis Spira, who was a fearful example of the contrary. "Take heed," said he to the spectators who surrounded his bed, "of relying on that faith which works not a holy and unblamable life, worthy of a believer. Credit me, it will fail. I have tried; I presumed I had gotten the right faith; I preached it to others; I had all places in Scripture in memory that might support it; I thought myself sure, and in the mean time lived impiously and carelessly; and, behold, now the judgment of God hath overtaken me not to correction, but to damnation!"

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## CONVERSION OF THE JEWS.

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EZEK. XXXVII. 1—14.

LET us suppose ourselves walking over an extensive plain, where many years ago a great battle was fought, in which vast numbers were slain, and being buried in heaps but a little below the surface, their bones are now disunited, dried up, and many of them scattered over the surface of the country; such I imagine to be the imagery of this prophecy. As to its meaning, we are at no loss, since it is expressly applied to "the house of Israel," and doubtless describes their low and scattered condition, together with their restoration, which should be to them as a resurrection from the dead.

But to what restoration does the prophecy refer? It must be either to that of Judea from Babylon, or to that of all the tribes in the latter days. Some very good expositors, I allow, have applied it to the former; but the following reasons induce me to understand it of the latter. 1. What is here predicted respects "the whole house of Israel," ver. 16—23; but the restoration from Babylon chiefly respected those who were carried captive into Babylon, namely, Judah and Benjamin, and the Levites. 2. It was to be an "exceedingly great army," ver. 10; but they that returned from Babylon



were about forty and two thousand (Ezra ii. 64); a number that could not answer to this description. 3. The general scope of the prophecy, as it draws towards the close, refers to the time of the Messiah. The "temple," the "holy waters," and the "city," whose name should be called "Jehovah Shammah," *the Lord is there*, cannot be literally understood, and must therefore refer to the glory of the church in the latter days. 4. There are some passages in this chapter which appear to be inapplicable to any times but those of the Messiah: such are those in ver. 24, 25, where David was to be their king and their shepherd; compare this language with that in Hos. iii. 7. 2. The restoration here predicted was to remain for ever, ver. 25—28. This language, if applied to the few centuries between the restoration from Babylon and the dispersion by the Romans, must be hyperbolic in the extreme. I conclude, therefore, that the restoration here predicted is yet to come, and that it refers to what is foretold in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, where the receiving of Israel into the church is said to be "life from the dead."

Considering this point, then, as settled, I shall only offer a few remarks on the leading ideas suggested by the prophecy concerning "the house of Israel," viz. on its former glory—its present low and scattered condition—its future prospects—and the gradual methods by which the change will be effected.

First, The prophecy implies that the house of Israel, though now in a scattered and forlorn condition, was once otherwise. A contemplative mind would see a number of dry bones scattered over a plain, a once living army; and such must be our reflection concerning the house of Israel. The history of this nation is deeply engraven on our minds. The names of their ancestors are dear to us. In the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Samuel, David, and the prophets, we see not only models of holy beauty, but patterns of faith. In them we recognize the principles which animated our apostles and martyrs. Those all died in faith of the Messiah to come; these of the Messiah as already come: the Messiah in whom each believed must have been the same, or their spirit and conduct would not have been so. How lovely do this people appear as the worshippers of the true God at a time when all the nations of the earth were gone after their idols! Even an enemy was constrained to exclaim, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! From the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations!" We admire Athens for its science, and Rome for its power and splendour; but what are they to Zion? "In Judah God was known!" The remembrance of ancient Zion still excites tears of affection and grief.

Secondly, Let us notice the *present* condition of this once highly-favoured nation. They who were once as an army going forth to battle are now a number of dry bones; so dry that, to an eye of sense, there is no hope of their being ever revived. Long have they ceased to be a political body: they are indeed preserved as a distinct people, while all the other nations of antiquity are lost in one undistinguished mass; and this indicates a special providence over them for future purposes; but as to their condition at present, it is that of scattered individuals over the face of the earth. A political existence they have not, nor any thing scarcely deserving the name of religion. They are, in fact, what was foretold by the prophet Hosea, "Without a king, without a prince, without a sacrifice, without an image, without an ephod, and without teraphim." Not only are they without their own appropriate worship, but without the resemblance of it. Where are we to look for such holy men of God among them as were found amongst

their forefathers? Where are the symptoms of Jehovah being amongst them? There is scarcely the mantle, much less the Lord God of Elijah! Where are the symptoms of brotherly love? There appears to be no bond amongst them, but that of hatred of Jesus. If to an eye of sense there be no hope of their being restored to political life, the case is more hopeless as to the *spiritual* life. No people upon earth have lived among Christians to so little purpose. The negroes from Africa, though injured and enslaved by men calling themselves Christians, have no such inveterate antipathy to Christ as the Jews. If serious Christians, who carry it kindly to them, recommend their Saviour to them, it is not unfrequently with success; but it is rarely known so with the other, who appear to be given up to blindness of mind, and hardness of heart. Other sinners make light of serious religion; but they are full of bitterness against it. Others are wicked; yet we can come at their consciences; but their very mind and conscience is defiled. Other sinners are dry bones; but, lo, these are *very dry!*

Thirdly, Let us consider the *future prospects* of this people. These bones, scattered and dry as they are, and without any hope from ordinary causes, yet, by the power and grace of God, can, and shall live. "O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am Jehovah, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I will place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I Jehovah have spoken it, and performed it, saith Jehovah.—And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all. And David, my servant, shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd." On this part of the subject, as being yet unfulfilled, it certainly becomes us to speak with diffidence; but surely it cannot denote *less* than that the house of Israel shall be restored to their own land, united as a nation, and turned to the Lord. With this accords the prophecy in the twelfth chapter of Zechariah, where, *after the restoration from Babylon*, it is declared that "Jerusalem should yet again be inhabited in her own place, even in Jerusalem." And, what is more, that the Lord would "pour upon its inhabitants the spirit of grace and of supplications, and that they should look upon him whom they had pierced, and should mourn as one mourneth for an only son, and be in bitterness as one that is in bitterness for his first-born!"

As to the order in which these great changes will be accomplished, it would seem by these prophecies as if the gathering of the people together would precede the pouring out of the Spirit upon them. There are other passages of Scripture, however, in which restoration is promised on their repentance, Deut. xxx. 1, 16; 1 Kings viii. 47.

But both these accounts may be fulfilled: some, though perhaps not the greater part, may return to their own land as they did from Babylon, "Going and weeping, and seeking the Lord their God," Jer. i. 4; and God may graciously reckon them as the first-fruits of the whole nation, and restore them in answer to their prayers; and when they shall have arrived from the four quarters of the earth, a still greater measure of the spirit of grace and supplication may be poured upon them. If this, or something like it, should be the case, it certainly furnishes a strong inducement, both to the Jews themselves to repent and turn to the Lord, that they may not only escape that wrath which came upon their fathers to the utmost, and still lies upon them, but be among the first fruits of their nation, for whose sake God will restore it; and to those who are seeking to turn them, that they may contribute to the work.

Lastly, Let us observe the gradual methods by which the great change will be effected: "And he said unto me, Prophecy upon these dry bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones; I will lay sinews upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live, and ye shall know that I am the Lord. So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them above; but there was no breath in them. Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, and say unto the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." It appears from hence that many things will be done for this people preparatory to their general conversion to Christ; which, in themselves, may be no more than the sinews, the flesh, and the skin of the human body, but which are no less necessary than the breath of life. If all that should be done, or is doing at present, should be only in this preparatory way, still, if it be a part of the Divine process, it is not to be despised. And though the breath of life may not as yet be breathed, so as to produce a general conversion, yet there may be instances of it sufficient for present encouragement. Paul certainly did not expect a general conversion in his day, but merely a few who should be as the first fruits to the lump; yet he laboured if by any means he might save some. Only let us do what we do with simplicity of heart, seeking not our own glory, but their salvation, and, whether we succeed little or much, we shall obtain the approbation of God.

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## LETTER I.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE MISSIONARY MAGAZINE.\*

Ezek. xxxvii.

I WAS lately reading a book, published about eighty years ago, in which the author reproves another for having prayed for the conversion of the Jews, contending that they had sinned "the sin unto death;" that therefore prayer for them was not the prayer of faith; and that there was nothing in the Scriptures whence we could conclude that they ever would be converted. I shall not trouble your readers with the author's arguments, which appear to me to have no weight; but having been employed of late years in a morning exposition, I have met with several parts of the prophecies which have appeared to me inexplicable on any other supposition; and as it may furnish Christians with matter and motives for prayer, I will offer a few remarks on two or three passages which I conceive to relate to this subject. My present paper will be grounded on *the vision of the dry bones*, in the 37th chapter of Ezekiel.

This vision, I allow, had its first and immediate accomplishment in the restoration of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, who in that country were like dead men, or rather like bones of a dead man disunited and scattered, and in a manner without hope of recovery. Their restoration by Cyrus was a kind of resurrection from the dead; and as the Assyrian power, which carried away the ten tribes, had been swallowed up by that of Babylon, and Babylon was now in its turn swallowed up by that of Media

\* This was a publication carried on for several years in Scotland.—B.

and Persia, opportunity would probably be afforded for many of the other tribes to attach themselves to Judah, and return with them. The inquiry at that time does not appear to have been, whether they were of Judah, or Benjamin, or Levi; but *whether they were of Israel*. This may in some degree answer to *the two sticks of Ephraim and Judah becoming one*. Being governed also by princes of the house of David, he might be said to reign over them, and to be their one shepherd, ver. 16—24.

But as it is not unusual for the same thing (the passover for instance) to refer immediately to one event, and remotely to another, so it is common for a prophecy to have a partial fulfilment in something at or near the time, and a more perfect one at some distant period. God's works being a whole, and the end seen from the beginning, there is often a dignified analogy between them; system as it were within system; one train of events making way for another, and furnishing an earnest of its fulfilment. Thus the kingdom of the Messiah is manifestly predicted in the seventy-second Psalm, though it is mostly under the form of the prosperous reign of Solomon. In like manner the vision in question contains a prediction of the restoration and conversion of the Jews in the latter days, though it is mostly under the form of the return of their forefathers from Babylon. In proof of this, let the following particulars be considered. First, The number of the ten tribes who might return with Judah was too small to contain a full accomplishment of the prophecy, which is expressly applied to "the whole house of Israel." Secondly, Those who were to return are described as an exceedingly great army, but that of Judah and the other tribes which returned from Babylon was very far from answering to this description; they were but a small company compared with the number which usually composed an Eastern army, Ezra ii. 64. Thirdly, It is said of David, God's servant, who was to be king over them, that he should be their "prince for ever." This is language which very much resembles that of the covenant with David, that "his seed should be established for ever, and his throne built up to all generations, even as the sun and moon in the heavens," which is clearly to be understood of the kingdom of Christ. There is also a similar phraseology in a prophecy of Hosea: "For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim. Afterward shall the children of Israel return and seek Jehovah their God, and David their king, in the latter days." Fourthly, Though the company who returned with Zerubbabel were many of them godly people, yet the history of the nation from that event till the coming of Christ is far from answering to what is said of them in this prophecy, that they should "walk in God's judgments, observe his statutes, and do them." Such promises also as "his tabernacle being with them, and his sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore," seem to be much too strong for the above period. Finally, It accords with the general design of this prophet, towards the latter end of his prophecies, which was, under the form of Jewish phraseology, to foretell the glory of the latter days. Hence his description of a new temple (chap. xl., xli., xlii.); of the glory of the God of Israel as dwelling in it (xlii.); of the division of the land by lot (xlv.); of the holy waters (xlvii.); and of the city whose name should be called Jehovah-shammah, *The Lord is there* (xlviii.).

Admitting the prophecy to refer to the condition of the Jews in their last dispersion, and future return to Christ, there is something very impressive in the whole account. Their present *scattered* and *unconverted* state is fitly represented by a number of dry bones. The allusion may be to a field of battle, where, many years before, thousands upon thousands fell by the

sword, and, their bodies remaining unburied, their bones lay scattered over all the plain. Once they lived, but can they live again? Israel was once a living *body*, and, what was more, lived to God; yea, they were the only people who did so. But what are they now? scattered over the face of the earth; no longer a body, but separated bone from his bone; no more possessed of that life and spirit which distinguished their holy predecessors, but *dry* as bones which have been long dead; not only devoid of every thing like true religion, like other sinners, but singularly averse to it. All unconverted sinners are dry, but they are *very dry*. They indeed retain something of the resemblance of religion; but it is that which a skull retains of the human countenance—ugly, disgusting, and horrid.

Their *hopeless* condition is also fitly expressed by the question to the prophet, "Can these bones live?" Judging by sense, the answer must have been—They cannot. There is no people so apparently hardened against conviction; none who have lived among Christians so much in vain; none who manifest such diabolical enmity and wrath when reasoned with, though it be in the meekest manner. The frequent disappointments which we have met with in attempting their conversion is almost enough to overcome us with despair. Even they themselves seem to have no hopes, except what are of a worldly nature. Yet, hoping in him with whom all things are possible, we may answer with the prophet, "O Lord God, thou knowest."

Their restoration and conversion are no less fitly represented by a *resurrection*. Such is the idea given us by the apostle of this very event. "If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but *life from the dead*?" So extraordinary an instance of Divine power and goodness could scarcely be illustrated by any thing more suitable.

The *order* in which it will be accomplished is worthy of notice. Several things, it seems, will precede their becoming truly alive to God, some of which may be preparatory to it. If they should be collected and combined by some occurrence in providence, previously to their conversion to Christ, it will correspond not only with the account here given of their first "coming forth out of their graves," &c., and their "having the Spirit of God imparted," but with another given by Zechariah. Jerusalem is, by him, represented as "a torch of fire in a sheaf to her enemies," and afterwards as having "a spirit of grace and supplication" given her, by which her inhabitants should "look on him whom they had pierced and mourn." Though sinners do nothing preparatory to their own conversion, yet God frequently does much in this way with them, and for them; and many events may precede the effectual calling of God's ancient people, which may answer to the "noise," the "shaking," and "the bones coming together, bone to his bone." Even "the sinews and the flesh may come upon them, and the skin cover them from above," while yet there is "no breath in them." In other words, they may become a body politic, and possibly have the form of devotion as heretofore, while yet it is only a form. But if, while the doctrine of the cross is preached, the Spirit of life from God out of heaven breathe upon these slain that they live, then shall they "know that the Son of God is come, and, having an understanding given them to know Him that is true, shall believe and be in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ," 1 John v. 20.

In two or three future papers, I may offer some remarks on a few more prophecies on this subject. At present, I only observe that God's designs of mercy towards the descendants of his ancient people are, I hope, sufficiently manifest to afford a ground for the prayer of faith.

## LETTER II.

Hos. i., ii., iii.

HAVING in a former paper considered the vision of the dry bones, I shall here offer a few remarks on some passages which I conceive have reference to the same subject in the prophecies of Hosea. These are chiefly addressed to the ten tribes, as those of Ezekiel were to Judah.

Under the form of signs and parables, as I suppose, he delivers in the *first* chapter some very pointed reproofs to that idolatrous people; but concludes with great and precious promises to their distant posterity.

He is commanded to go and take "a wife of whoredoms, and children of whoredoms," and is supposed to have children by her. Such a command communicated to the people would shock them as grossly indelicate. "Nay," saith the profit, like Nathan to David, "but ye are the men! If the Lord be a husband to you, he must have a wife of worse whoredoms than these!"

This wife of whoredoms is supposed to bear him three children, whose names are prophetic. The first, *Jezreel*, predicts evil against the government, of which this place was a seat; the second, *Lo-ruhamah*, intimates the discontinuance of the Divine mercy to the nation; and the third, *Lo-ammi*, God's renouncing them as his people. Yet these terrible denunciations are followed (in verses 10, 11) by something not a little encouraging to the faithful, whose hearts would tremble as for the ark of God. The promises to Abraham should nevertheless be fulfilled; children should be raised up to him from the Gentiles. Nor is this all: the children of Judah and of Israel, forgetting their former enmities, should unite in the Messiah, as under a captain or leader; and then Jezreel, from being a scene of wickedness and bloodshed, should have her day of mercy. Nor does this seem to conclude the prophecy; the first verse of the second chapter seems properly to belong to the preceding rather than the following subject, and to contain an address to the faithful of the land, directing them to look out of the then present generation for *brethren and sisters*, even to the latter days, and, in the name of the Lord, to greet them with the cheering names of *Ammi* and *Ruhamah*, My people having obtained mercy!

After many cutting things in the second chapter, in which, to show the odiousness of Israel's conduct and to bring it home to their bosoms, they are again compared to an adulterous wife, who, having dissolved the marriage bond, deserved to be stripped, and, with her spurious offspring, turned out by her injured husband. They are even told that such will actually be their portion. Yet after this, from ver. 14 to the end, the most precious promises are made to their posterity. His "alluring her, and bringing her into the wilderness;" however, seems rather to be expressive of present judgments than of future mercies. It denotes, I apprehend, not the drawings of love, but the devisings of Providence to render her sin its own punishment.\* As an injured husband makes use of the adulteries of his wife to convict and banish her; so the Lord would cause the fondness of this people for idolatry and idolaters to draw them into the Assyrian net, (chap. vii. 11, 12,) and they should be carried away captive among the nations as into a wilderness, and for a long time be in a manner lost, Ezek. xx. 35.

\* I cannot find that פתה any where signifies to influence in a way of mercy, but properly means to *entice* or *deceive*; and thus God, in just judgment, entices and deceives sinners, by giving them up to their own delusions. See 2 Chron. xviii. 19—22; Ezek. xiv. 9.

Yet as in the wilderness of old he spake kindly to their fathers, and thence gave them the land of promise, so thence shall she again "receive her vineyards:" and as "the valley of Achor," where Achan's idolatry was punished, was to Israel "a door of hope," in that the fierce anger of the Lord was hereby turned away (Josh. vii. 26); so shall it be in this case. After having made an example of many for their idolatry, his anger will be turned away, and he will comfort the survivors. Then shall they "sing as in the days of their youth, as in the day when they came up out of the land of Egypt."—See also Exod. xv. 1—21, compared with Isa. xi. 11—16, and xii.

And now, being brought to believe in the Messiah, she shall be cured of her spiritual adultery and become chaste to God, no more polluting his worship with idolatrous mixtures, but cleaving to him with singleness of heart, as to the husband of her youth, ver. 16, 17.

In that day, the whole creation, which has in a manner been at war with her, shall be at peace, (ver. 18,) and he that had cast her off, saying, "She is not my wife, neither am I her husband," shall "betroth her unto him for ever in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies." Nor are these the only attributes that shall be glorified in her recovery: "he will betroth her unto him in faithfulness, and she shall know the Lord;" his covenant promises, made even from the days of Abraham, shall now be fulfilled, and the veil which has so long remained on her heart shall be taken away, ver. 19, 20.

Finally, He who had taken away his corn, his wine, his oil, and his flax, owing to their being ascribed to idols, and abused to idolatry, will now graciously restore them. God will hear, and supply the heavens with water; they the earth with rain, and the fruits of it with moisture; and these the people with plenty. The earth shall yield her increase, and God, even their own God, will take pleasure in blessing them. Nor is this all: Israel shall be a blessing to the world. What the seed is to the harvest, that shall they be to the nations among whom they have sojourned. And now, instead of "Lo-ruhamah" and "Lo-ammi," they are called *Ruhamah* and *Ammi*; "for I will have mercy upon her, saith the Lord, that had not obtained mercy, and will say to them that were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God." Thus, like friends reunited after a long separation, their communion is more intimate than ever.

The *third* chapter contains another prophecy on the same subject. Like the former, it is introduced under the form of a parable. The case supposed is that of a man attached to a woman who is an adulteress. Go, saith the Lord to the prophet, see if thou canst love such a one; yet such, if any thing, must be my love to this people. The prophet is further supposed to go and covenant with this adulteress, engaging her to desist for many days from her lewd courses, living as it were a widow by herself, and afterwards she should become his wife. Such was the love of the Lord to the children of Israel. He loved them notwithstanding their idolatry, and intended, at a future time, to take them to be his people. He would not receive them, however, in their idolatry, nor till a proper time had elapsed, in which they should live in a state of separation; but in due season he would take them to himself as his church and people, remembering their sin no more.

"The children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice." Never surely has a prophecy corresponded more exactly with fact. Nor is this all: the whole of the Israelitish race with whom we have any acquaintance have also been "without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim;" that is, though mixed with the nations of the world, and in other respects wicked in the extreme, yet they have not been suffered to go into their former idolatrous

practices; and thus have answered to the adulteress ceasing from playing the harlot, and abiding for her husband in a state of separation many days. "Afterwards shall the children of Israel return and seek Jehovah their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days." On this no reflection need be made, save this, that the superabundant grace of God towards them in their outcast and perishing condition shall not only fill their hearts with gratitude, but inspire them with a holy fear of offending him any more.

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### LETTER III.

Hos. xi., xiii., xiv.; Jer. xxxi. 15—21.

IN my last I offered some observations on those prophecies which I considered as relating to God's future designs of mercy towards Israel, in the first three chapters of Hosea; in this I shall notice some others in the remaining part of that book, together with a passage from Jeremiah.

The ten tribes, in this and other prophecies, are frequently personified under the name of *Ephraim*. Much is said of Ephraim's sin, and of his punishment; but several strong intimations are also given of his being brought to repentance, and obtaining mercy. Of this we have a beautiful example in chap. xi. 8, &c.; "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? Shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? Shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me; my repentings are kindled together." Half the force and meaning of this melting passage appear to me to be lost, by twice introducing the supplementary term *how*. So read, it contains one continued appeal of Jehovah to his own mercy and faithfulness; but, read without it, it is an alternate appeal, first in the language of covenant mercy, addressed to himself, and then in the language of justice, addressed to the conscience and other feelings of the offender: q. d. How can I bear to give thee up, Ephraim? yet thou deservest to be delivered over to destruction. What sayest thou? Shall I deliver thee? How can I bear to make thee as Admah? Yet this is thy due. What sayest thou? Shall I set thee as a monument of endless displeasure, like Zeboim? Ah no! my heart revolts at the thought, my repentings are kindled together; I will not execute the *fierceness* of mine anger; I will not return to *destroy* Ephraim; for I am God, and not man, the Holy One in the midst of thee; and I will not enter into the city as an avenger, but rather as a father will turn away mine eyes from thee, that I may not be provoked by thy sins.

In verses 10, 11, it is intimated that there should come a time when Ephraim should be of another mind, and the Lord would spare that generation, as well as many succeeding ones, for their sakes; that the signal of their return to God should be some terrible event in the world, in which he would "roar like a lion," filling the minds of men with consternation and terror; and that, in the midst of these alarms, they should come from the west, and from the south, and from the east, as trembling doves to their windows, "and I will place them in their houses, saith the Lord."

In chap. xiii. 14, Ephraim is considered as dead and buried; and now what will his Father do? Will he lament over him, like David over Absalom? No; his power is equal to his mercy. He will storm the castle that detains him. "I will ransom him from the power of the grave, I will redeem



him from death. O death! I will be thy plagues. O grave! I will be thy destruction. Repentance shall be hid from mine eyes!" In this astonishing language, we see the anger of the father towards his disobedient son, now that he is dead, turned against death itself that cut him off, and the grave that enclosed him, resolving to rescue him by destroying his destroyers.

To the above, I think I ought to add chap. xiv. 4—8, as belonging to the same subject. It is, I am aware, expressive of the blessings which the Lord *would have* bestowed upon Israel in case of their return to him, as they were most pathetically exhorted to in the preceding verses. But if there come a time when they *shall* thus return, the blessings will then be actually bestowed. Like a field refreshed by dew, like a lily blossoming with beauty, like Lebanon casting forth her roots, God will bless him, and he shall be a blessing to all about him. Nor shall this goodness be abused as heretofore, but shall heighten his abhorrence of his former courses. Ephraim, being grafted into "the green fir tree," shall answer to his name; he shall be "fruitful" among his brethren; nor shall he, as formerly, bring forth fruit unto himself, but to him that hath had mercy upon him.

I shall conclude this piece with a few remarks on a well-known passage in the prophecies of Jeremiah, as belonging to the same subject. I refer to chap. xxxi. 15—21. The ten tribes are here, as in other prophecies, personified under the name of *Ephraim*. They had, at the time of its delivery, been carried away captive more than a century. Alluding to the distresses of that period, the prophet spake as follows: "Thus saith the Lord, A voice was heard from Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel, weeping for her children, refused to be comforted for her children because they were not!" Rachel was the mother of Joseph, from whom Ephraim descended; and, by a most affecting figure of speech, she is here represented as risen from the grave, and looking about for her children; but, finding none of them in the land of their fathers, she weeps for the loss of them with bitter lamentations. But let not Rachel, or rather the church of God whom she personates, despair. "Thus saith the Lord, Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears; for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord, and thy children shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope *in thine end*, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border." But whence is this hope to be entertained by Rachel? Her children had been gone for more than a century; and their name and memorial were in a manner perished. Observe the answer, "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself, Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art Jehovah my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh; I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth." This confession of Ephraim is not historic, but prophetic; for the state of mind here depicted is represented as taking place at a time so very distant, that he should look back upon the days of his idolatry as the period of his *youth*. Nevertheless, when he shall return to the Lord, he shall obtain mercy. Ephraim has not only a mother to bewail him, but a father, who, as soon as he hears the voice of the prodigal, is moved with compassion, and runs to meet him. "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." The virgin of Israel is then directed to prepare for returning home. "Set thee up way-marks, make thee high heaps; set thine heart toward the highway, even the way which thou wentest: Turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities."

But Rachel was not only the mother of Joseph, and so of Ephraim, but also of Benjamin, whose tribe adhered to Judah; and inasmuch as her voice was heard from *Ramah*, a city of Benjamin, the prophecy would not only have a retrospective aspect to the captivity of Ephraim by Assyria, but a prospective one to that of Judah and Benjamin by Babylon. It was in the latter that the children were carried away from Ramah, which seems to have been the head-quarters of the Babylonish general after the taking of Jerusalem, and whence he disposed of his prisoners, Jer. xl. 1—3. Thus both the ten and the two tribes, sustaining a relation to Rachel, are combined in the prophecy, as they should actually be in their restoration. Hence it follows, "How long wilt thou go about, O thou blacksliding daughter? For the Lord hath created a new thing in the earth. A woman shall compass a man. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, As yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah, and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity, The Lord bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness. And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they that go forth with flocks. For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul." The import of these verses I take to be this: How long wilt thou seek deliverance from human help? God will cause, what is contrary to all human calculation, weakness to overcome strength, and the church to be triumphant. Judah, with Ephraim, shall return; and righteousness, holiness, and peace shall be established in their land. The prophecy being a vision, the prophet adds, "Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me."

As there is nothing in all this which intimates the return of the ten tribes as a *distinct nation*, but in connexion with Judah, so neither is there any thing which leads us to look for the fulfilment merely in the return of Judah from Babylon, accompanied with a few of the Israelites; and if we read on to ver. 31—34, we shall find that the blessings promised were not to be under the *same covenant* as that of their fathers, but "a new covenant," in which God will "put his law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be his people;" all which determines it to have reference to gospel times.

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#### LETTER IV.

Isa. xi., xii.

THAT these chapters refer to the gospel dispensation there can be no doubt, seeing they are introduced with a prophecy "that a rod shall come forth out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots;" and by some passages in them they would seem to have a special reference to the latter part of it. The language in which peace and amity, as succeeding to a state of enmity and hostility, is described in ver. 6—8, seems much too strong for any thing the church has yet seen, and to accord with no period short of that mentioned ver. 9, when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

Ver. 10 describes the great accession to the church of Christ from among the Gentiles. "In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign to the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious." The term *rest* denotes an established government, succeeding

to wars and troubles, like the reign of Solomon to that of David. Such will be the government of Christ in that day, to what it has been in all former periods, during which it has been engaged in one continued struggle. And as the reign of Solomon was exempted from wars, and distinguished by its buildings, so shall be the reign of Christ in that day. The Lord will then build up Zion, and appear in his glory.

In the midst of this glory God is represented as remembering his ancient people, both Israel and Judah. "It shall come to pass, in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand *a second time* to recover the remnant of his people which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah, from the four corners of the earth. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim." This *second time* of God's setting his hand cannot refer to the restoration of the Jews from Babylon; for though that event might be so denominated in respect of their being first brought out of Egypt, yet the period of the whole prophecy does not answer to it. That which is here referred to is something which should be wrought for Israel under the reign of the Messiah, and at a time when the "earth should be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea;" and what it can be but their conversion to him I am not able to conceive.

What follows, in ver. 14—16, compares the return of the remnant of God's ancient people to the coming up of their fathers out of Egypt. The kingdom of the Messiah shall be enlarged, as the borders of Israel were formerly by their victories over the surrounding nations; and as then God dried up the tongue, or bay, of the Red Sea, and caused the waters of Jordan to go backward, so now he will remove every obstruction out of their way, and bring them home to himself with a high hand and an outstretched arm.

Chap. xii. is a continuation of the subject, and contains a hymn, or sacred song of praise, suited to the joyful occasion of their deliverance. It is observable, that their first deliverance from Egypt was followed by a triumphant song on the shores of the Red Sea. So also was their deliverance from Babylon, Psal. cxxvi. Their joy on that occasion was so great, that what had taken place seemed to them a dream—too much to be true. Surrounding nations beheld and acknowledged "that the Lord had done great things for them;" while their thankful spirits echoed the acknowledgment: "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." But neither of these deliverances was equal to that which is here celebrated.

We may observe, in the first place, the use of the *singular pronouns*: "Thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee," &c. This may denote the *unity* that shall prevail among them. In their divided and scattered condition they said, "*Our* bones are dried, and *our* hope is lost; *we* are cut off for *our* parts;" but now they are of one heart and of one soul.

With respect to the matter of the song, they begin with praise to Jehovah for his great mercy in pardoning their sins, or removing that fierce anger which had for so many ages burned against them. "Thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me." This is perfectly in character: true penitents look back upon past sins with bitterness, and thankfulness for having escaped them and the wrath of God revealed from heaven against them. The anger of God against the Jews, for their crucifying his Son, the Lord of glory, and continuing in such bitter enmity against him, has

indeed been great. It was truly said of them that "wrath was come upon them to the uttermost." The calamities which befell them in the destruction of their city, the length of their dispersion, the contempt they have endured, and, what is more than all, the judicial blindness and hardness of heart to which they are given up, are so many expressions of Divine displeasure against them, with which their former history furnishes no parallel. The remembrance therefore of this, while it fills them with the deepest self-abasement, furnishes them with the highest sensations of grateful joy. It is this compound sensation that is described in Hos. iii. 5, "They shall fear the Lord, and his goodness, in the latter days."

The language of ver. 2, though suited to Old Testament times, conveys the strongest ideas of joyful amazement. "Behold, *God* is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord *Jehovah* is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation." Had this part of the song been expressed in New Testament language, it might have been nearly in the words of the apostle, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."—"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." Of old he had been the salvation of their fathers; of late of the Gentiles: but now "all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." Such an interposition of free and great grace may well be introduced with the note of attention "behold!" And now he will be to them a refuge. Though their sins have been great as the sea, yet, without fear, they may trust in him to heal them; and though their builders formerly set him at nought, yet, without any apprehension of being confounded, they may rest their hopes upon him: and wherefore? Because in him they shall recognize "the everlasting *Jehovah*," the God of their fathers.

The effect of so great a salvation must needs be a general, an exceeding, a mighty joy. Such is that described in ver. 3, "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." It is said to have been the custom of the Jews, on the last day of the feast of tabernacles, to draw water in a golden pitcher from the well of Siloam, and to pour it, mixed with wine, on the sacrifice as it lay on the altar, singing all the while a part of this hymn, especially this third verse, with great rejoicings, and looking forward to that abundance of blessings which they expected in the times of the Messiah. If so it was, they were not far from the true intent either of their feast of tabernacles or of the prophecy. The words of our Saviour, in John vii. 37, will hence appear peculiarly appropriate:—"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto *me* and drink!" As the keeping of the feast of the passover was figurative of the joy and obedience of faith under the gospel, (1 Cor. v. 8,) so was the keeping of the feast of tabernacles: hence, in the prophecy of Zechariah, a rejection of Christ is expressed by a refusal to come up to Jerusalem to keep this feast, chap. xiv. 16, 19. But though some, even in the latter days, will thus stand out against the Saviour, yet the feast shall be kept by the great body of mankind, especially by God's ancient people the Jews. The salvation of Christ shall be to them as wells of water in a dry land, from which they shall draw in abundance. Such will be the types and prophecies of their own sacred writings; which, though full of living water, have, through their unbelief, been of no account to them. The

wells were deep, and they had nothing to draw with. Such also will be the doctrines and ordinances of the New Testament, in which they have heretofore seen no beauty, but rejected the counsel of God against themselves.

And now, being filled with joy themselves, they will not be able to contain it, but will feel an ardent desire to, recommend the Saviour to the Gentile nations. "In that day shall ye say, Praise the *Lord*, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name be exalted. Sing unto *JEHOVAH*; for he hath done excellent things; this is known in all the earth," ver. 4, 5. From this and other passages, especially Rom. xi. 12, 15, it appears that the conversion of the Jews will be a kind of resurrection to the world. In every way, God, according to his promise, will make Abraham's seed a blessing to mankind. Their fall and diminution were an occasion of our riches; but their recovery will be much more so. So great an event, "known in all the earth," will in a manner put infidelity out of countenance. Their coming over to Christ will be like Abner's coming over to David, which broke up the power of his enemies, and issued in the peaceable establishment of his kingdom.

Finally, Zion is congratulated and called upon to "cry out and shout, for that God will then dwell in the midst of her," ver. 6. I am not sure that Zion in this place is not to be understood literally of the city of Jerusalem. I may be mistaken in thinking that God has promised, not only to convert the great body of Abraham's descendants, but to restore them to their own country; but I am not able, on any other supposition, to understand several passages of Scripture; especially Zech. xii. 6, and Luke xxi. 24, "Jerusalem shall be inhabited again IN HER OWN PLACE, EVEN IN JERUSALEM.—They shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, UNTIL THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES BE FULFILLED." Whatever figurative meaning may be put upon the words of the prophet, which however, it appears to me, must be very forced; yet there can be no figure in those of our Lord, which clearly intimate that the same Jerusalem which shall be for a time trodden down by the Gentiles shall be no longer so than TILL the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled. But whether Zion in this passage be taken literally for Jerusalem, or figuratively for the whole church of God, both Jews and Gentiles being united in the faith of Christ, the presence and blessing of God will be her greatest glory. The name of the city from that day shall be called *Jehovah-shammah*, THE LORD IS THERE.

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## LETTER V.

Zech. xi., xii., xiii. 1.

THAT we may perceive the connexion of the prophecy in chap. xii., it will be proper to observe that chap. xi. contains a prediction of the overthrow of the Jewish nation by the Romans. It is introduced by the burning of the temple, composed of the wood of Lebanon, (ver. 1,) by the fall of some of their great men, (ver. 2,) and by the consternation of others, ver. 3. To represent the state of religion among them at this time, the prophet is directed to "take unto him the instruments;" that is, to personate certain shepherds which God would raise up in the land. First, the great and good Shepherd of the sheep, who should now make his appearance upon earth, ver. 4—14. Secondly, a foolish and sordid shepherd, to which they should

be given up after having rejected him, ver. 15—17. While personating the *former*, the prophet speaks of himself as commissioned to feed the flock of slaughter, especially the poor of the flock, whose possessors slew them, and held themselves guiltless, ver. 4, 5. These possessors, with the great body of the nation, are given up, ver. 6. But a remnant should be saved from among the poor, and these should be fed by the good Shepherd, (ver. 7,) who also would set himself against those who sought not them, but theirs, ver. 8, 9. By the breaking of his staves, Beauty and Bands, (the instruments of his rule as a shepherd,) is set forth the dissolving of the covenant of peculiarity made with Israel, and the giving them up to divisions one among another. This judgment should be so manifest that the believing part of the nation should see the hand of God in it, and that it was his design thereby to put an end to their place and nation, ver. 11. The cause of these great evils is found in their contemning, rejecting, and crucifying Christ, ver. 12, 13. And now, having rid themselves, as they supposed, of him, God would, in just judgment, raise up for them a foolish shepherd; denoting that they should not only be deserted of God, and punished by the Roman sword, but given up to the influence of a set of blind and sordid priests, who should lead them into the ditch, and there perish with them, ver. 15—18. Such appears to be the sum of chap. xi., which is altogether *against* the body of the Jewish nation: but chap. xii. contains a prophecy of their restoration, and is therefore called, “The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel,” ver. 1.

The events of this and the foregoing prophecy, though wide asunder as to time, yet very properly follow each other. Paul takes but little notice of the state of the Jews during their long dispersion; but passing over that chasm, as included in their being “broken off,” proceeds to speak of their being “grafted in again,” Rom. xi.

The prophecy finds Jerusalem “besieged” by enemies, but very differently circumstanced from what she was in the foregoing chapter. Her enemies were then avenging the cause of God and of his Christ; and therefore, whatever might be their motives, were successful: but in this siege God is on her side, and therefore she is “a cup of trembling” to her enemies. Of course, this must refer to the period when she shall be restored.

The character which Jehovah assumes in the preface to the prophecy is worthy of notice: “Thus saith the Lord, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.” These mighty works relate to the first creation of the world, and the mention of them may intimate that, at the time of the prophecy being fulfilled, they shall in a manner be acted over again. That which he will then accomplish towards his ancient people shall be a kind of new creation.

It were presumptuous to be very positive as to the meaning of a prophecy which is yet to be accomplished; but comparing it with other prophecies of the same event, the following particulars appear to be conveyed by it. First, That the Jews shall be restored to their own land prior to their conversion: “Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem,” ver. 6. This event may be accomplished in the ordinary course of providence, by some of the great conquerors of the world, who shall find their interest in it, and be induced, as Cyrus was in a former instance, to favour it. Secondly, That a grand combination will be formed against them with a view to dispossess them, ver. 2, 9. Thirdly, That the nations engaged in this combination will be repulsed, and sorely punished for their presumptuous attempt, which, after witnessing the remarkable fulfilment of prophecy towards the Jews, must be against the light of their own consciences: “Jerusalem shall be a cup of trembling (a cup as it were of

poison) to those who go up against her; a rock falling upon their heads; a hearth of fire among the wood; and a torch in a sheaf," ver. 2—6. Fourthly, That the country and the city shall be united against the enemy, ver. 5—7. Fifthly, That they shall be guarded by Providence, and strengthened to encounter the greatest difficulties: "The Lord will defend them, and he that is feeble among them shall be as David," &c., ver. 8. Sixthly, That, after all these temporal interpositions, the Lord will pour upon them a Spirit of grace and of supplications, and they shall lament over their sins, and the sins of their fathers, particularly in having crucified the Lord of glory, ver. 10.

This order of things seems perfectly to agree with what is said in Ezek. xxxvii., where the process is described, first by "a noise," then "a shaking, a coming together bone to his bone," a being covered with "sinews and flesh and skin," and last of all by their having breathed into them "the breath of life," ver. 7—9. To the same purpose they are described in ver. 13, 14, as first brought out of their graves, and then as knowing their deliverer.

The only difficulty attending this statement seems to arise from ver. 5, where, previously to the pouring out of the Spirit of grace upon them, the governors of Judah are supposed to strengthen themselves, and one another, in "the Lord of hosts, their God." But it is no unusual thing for the leaders of a people in time of war, though destitute of true religion, yet to have so much of a conviction of the dependence of all upon God as to strengthen themselves and their armies by a hope of Divine assistance. Joab could say to his brother, "Be of good courage, and let us play the man for our people, and for the cities of our God; and the Lord do that which seemeth him good," 2 Sam. x. 12. So Abijah, 2 Chron. xiii.

A few remarks on the *spiritual* part of the prophecy shall conclude this paper. First, The *subjects* of this great change; these will be both princes and people. In the pouring out of the Spirit, on the day of Pentecost, there were many of the latter, but few if any of the former; but now all descriptions of men shall bow to our Redeemer's sceptre. Secondly, The *cause* of it; namely, the pouring upon them "a Spirit of grace and supplications." The spirit of true religion is a Spirit of *grace* in respect of its source, and of *supplications* in respect of its issue, importunate prayer. Looking at the state of these people at present, we are grieved for the hardness of their hearts; but when the Spirit of the living God shall take the work in hand, the heart of stone shall become a heart of flesh. Thirdly, The *grand medium* of it; namely, the remembrance of Him whom their fathers crucified, and whom they themselves have pierced by justifying them in it. A believing view of Jesus on the cross will dissolve the most obdurate spirit in godly sorrow. Fourthly, the *intensity* of the grief; it shall be a *great* mourning, like that of a father for the loss of an only son, or like the lamentations at the death of Josiah, in the valley of Megiddon. Fifthly, Its *universality*: the land shall mourn, and every family of every remaining tribe. Scarcely a house shall be found, but, on entering it, you shall find them weeping over their former obstinacy and unbelief. Sixthly, the *individuality* and *retirement* of it: "Every family shall mourn apart, and their wives apart." They will not only weep together when they meet, but retire to lament in secret over their own iniquity. Scarcely a closet or private place shall be found, but some one will be watering it with his tears. Finally, the *remedy* to all this grief: "In that day, there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." By looking to Jesus they were wounded, and by looking to Jesus they are healed. The "first-fruits of this great work appeared on the day of Pente-

cost, when thousands were pricked to the heart, repented, and were baptized in that name which they had despised; but "the lump" is yet to appear. "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and amen!"

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## THE PROPHECIES

IN

ISAIAH XXVI. AND ITS CONNEXION,

AS RELATING TO

## THE TIMES OF THE MILLENNIUM,

AND THOSE WHICH PRECEDE IT, INCLUDING OUR OWN.

[Written in the beginning of 1815.]

It is very evident that the prophecies in Isaiah xxvi., and other chapters connected with it, relate to gospel times. It must be in them that the Lord of hosts makes a feast of fat things unto all people—destroys the face of the covering cast over all people—swalloweth up death in victory—and wipeth away tears from all faces, chap. xxv. 6—9. The only question is as to what *part* of the gospel dispensation this strong language can apply. Some of it appears to be too strong to agree with events which have yet occurred, and therefore has been generally understood of the latter-day glory, when Jews and Gentiles shall embrace the gospel to a far greater extent than has hitherto been seen. With this accords the language at the close of chap. xxiv., and which seems to glance at the conversion of God's *ancient* people. "Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before his *ancients* gloriously." With this also accords the whole xxvth chapter, which describes the triumphs of the church over her enemies, and to have been complete should, I conceive, have included the first two verses of the xxvith, where the city of God is represented as having salvation for walls and bulwarks, and as throwing open her gates and inviting the faithful to enter in.

But as certain parts of the xxvth chapter refer to the conflicts which precede the triumph, so does the remainder of the xxvith, and the first verse of the xxviith. Now it is in these prophecies, referring to times which *precede* the Millennium, that we shall find the events of our own times. By giving what appears to be the meaning of every verse, accompanied by a quotation of the verse itself, the reader will be able to judge of the justness of the application of the prophecy.

Ver. 3—6. The faithful are encouraged to trust in the Lord in troublous times; for before the city of God shall be encompassed with salvation, Babylon, the antichristian city, must be destroyed; which will be attended with such calamities that peace will in a manner be taken from the earth.—"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee,



because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. For he bringeth down them that dwell on high; the lofty city he layeth it low, even to the ground; he bringeth it even to the dust. The foot shall tread it down, even the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy."

Ver. 7. The church pleading with God takes encouragement from his regard to righteousness that he will not always suffer her enemies to triumph over her.—"The way of the just is uprightness: thou, most upright, dost weigh the path of the just."

Ver. 8, 9. The grievous persecutions which she had borne during the long and dark night of antichristian domination are viewed as Divine chastisements, or "judgments beginning at the house of God;" under which she declares her feelings, and hopes for deliverance.—"Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early."

Ver. 9, latter part. The ground of this hope is, not only that God has punishments in reserve for her enemies, but that the calamities which the infliction of these punishments will bring upon the world shall be made subservient to her increase.—"For when thy judgments are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."

Ver. 10, 11. The adherents of antichrist will not profit by these events; but, being given up to perverseness and blindness, neither mercies nor judgments will humble them: that, however, which was unaccomplished by forbearing goodness shall be accomplished by the strong arm of justice—they shall be humbled and consumed in fires of their own kindling.—"Let favour be shown to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord. Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people; yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them."

Ver. 12. The church expresseth her confidence that these calamities, though they should take peace from the earth, yet shall contribute to her prosperity; for all that she hath wrought, it is God that hath wrought it in and by her; and he will not forsake the work of his own hands.—"Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us."

Ver. 13, 14. She recounts her persecutions, cleaves to Christ, and anticipates the fall of her persecutors.—"O Lord our God, other lords besides thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name. They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise: therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish."

Ver. 15, 16. After the fall of the antichristian powers the church will be increased, and God will be glorified; especially by the conversion of the Jews, who under the chastising hand of God shall be brought to pray unto him.—"Thou hast increased the nation, O Lord, thou hast increased the nation: thou art glorified: thou hadst removed it far unto all the ends of the earth. Lord, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them."

Ver. 17, 18. She laments her ineffectual and abortive labours for ages preceding in subduing the world to Christ.—"Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight, O Lord. We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not

wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen."

Ver. 19. To these complaints of the church, God graciously answers by promises of better times.—"Thy dead shall live, my deceased, they shall arise (Lowth). Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead."

Ver. 20, 21, and chap. xxvii. 1. He answers further by inviting her to retire into her chambers, as for shelter from the storm. There will be no need for her to fight in this battle, but to pray in secret: it will be soon over: the blood of the martyrs must be avenged, and the antichristian power, that leviathan, that piercing and crooked serpent, must be slain by the "sore, and great, and strong" sword of Jehovah. Then the church of Christ shall shine forth in all her Millennial glory.—"In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day!" chap. xxvii. 2, 3.

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REMARKS ON ISAIAH XXVI. 9, IN REFERENCE TO THE PRESENT TIMES.

"When thy judgments are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."

If the foregoing piece contain the true meaning of these prophecies, there can be no doubt but the words in verse 9, refer to the calamities preparatory to the overthrow of the papal antichrist and the introduction of the Millennium. Some of these we have seen; others are yet to come; but the most interesting character pertaining to them is, that under them "the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." It is not enough to understand them of what *ought* to be, but of what *will* be. The inhabitants of the world have in all ages been taught righteousness by the judgments of God; but now they shall *learn* it. The same thing is foretold in Rev. xv. 4; where, in reference to the pouring out of the vials, it is asked, "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest." The sense is, that the judgments already found upon the earth, and those which are yet to come, will, with the word of God, which shall at the same time be spreading, be the means of effecting that great change in the moral state of the world which prophecy gives us to expect.

Let us observe the effects produced by the events which have already occurred. We are informed, by a serious and intelligent spectator, that a deep impression was made upon the continental armies by the late sanguinary contests. The Rev. Mr. HALLBECK, Moravian minister, who, in the summer of 1813, travelled through the north of Germany, while occupied by the French and Allied armies, and published a narrative of his journey, writes as follows:—"It is impossible to describe the ardour and enthusiasm which prevailed in Prussia, as soon as the people were permitted to take up arms against their oppressors. Scarcely were the intentions of the monarch known, before the whole country was in motion, and thousands flew to arms. Counts and barons, professors and students, masters and servants, enrolled themselves as *common* soldiers, and those who could not bear arms gave money. The ladies sold their jewels, their gold, their very hair, to aid the common cause; they left the toilet to provide for hospitals, to dig entrenchments, &c.

“This enthusiasm, to which modern history presents no equal, *was combined with a religious spirit pervading the whole nation.* The iron time (as it is called) since 1807 had subdued the pride of the people, and the terrible judgments in Russia had opened their eyes. The soldiers were solemnly consecrated for the war by their parish ministers. It was a most affecting scene to see some thousands of young warriors together, receiving instructions from their minister, and the blessing of the church, of their parents and relatives, before they went to fight for liberty. Every heart was moved, every eye shed tears.

“The same good disposition and unparalleled enthusiasm pervaded also the regular troops. They were no more the boasting, self-confident Prussians of 1809; on the contrary, modesty, and dependence on help from above, formed the general character of Blucher’s army. *WITH GOD, FOR OUR KING AND COUNTRY,* was the motto embroidered on their standards, engraven in their hearts. Cursing and swearing, the common vices of soldiers, were seldom heard; no songs were allowed to be sung till revised by the colonel, and approved by a clergyman. Many of these songs were of a religious, and all of a moral tendency. The regiments were not indeed provided with chaplains, but they attended Divine service as often as circumstances permitted.

“Eight hundred Prussians were once quartered in Herrnhut. The commanding officer had ordered the band to parade the streets as usual in the evening; but being told that there was a meeting for Divine worship at that hour, he postponed the music, and he and all the officers and soldiers attended the chapel.

“To this modest and pious spirit was joined a bravery equally enthusiastic, of which it is not easy to form an idea without having been a witness to it. *CONQUER OR DIE* was a resolution legible in the countenance of every soldier, which was not effaced by the most adverse circumstances, and which influenced those who were naturally of a weak and timid disposition.”

I lay no stress on the *durability* of these impressions: some of them may have continued, others may have subsided; but however this be, we may see how the mighty hand of God, when stretched out, can subdue the spirits of men. The inhabitants of Prussia, and other continental nations, have of late years been said to be remarkable for their infidelity; but infidelity at this time seems to have hid its head.

Further, is it not deserving of notice, that while some of the most awful judgments have been abroad in the earth, and men’s minds have been impressed by them, an impulse has been given to circulate the Holy Scriptures, such as was never before known? Without inquiring whence this impulse proceeded, its existence and extent are manifest to every observant eye. The remarks made upon this subject in respect of Russia, in the *Eclectic Review* for November, are worthy of notice, and will in part apply to other nations as well as Russia. “In contemplating the exertions which are made by Christians of all denominations for the universal diffusion of religious knowledge, it is indeed gratifying to reflect on the powerful influence which the Russian church, and the Russian people, may exert on the progress of Divine truth among the nations. Their capabilities in this view are extremely great, nearly surrounded as they are by many numerous tribes, who are sitting in darkness, and in the land of the shadow of death; and their zealous co-operation in the cause of revealed truth may be regarded as one of those events which, under the guidance of a Divine agency, bear the closest relation to the propagation of the gospel, and the immortal interests of the human race,” p. 431.

From what is said of the inhabitants of the world, that “when God’s

judgments are abroad in the earth, they will learn righteousness," we are not to suppose that this effect will be produced by the events of Providence *only*: the word of God, and the Spirit of God, will accompany them and co-operate with them. Such appears to be the actual state of things already in some degree, and such we may expect will be their progress.

These remarks may be thought to afford but little prospect of continued peace, but rather give us to expect a succession of judgments. I wish all success to every attempt at peace; but, so long as popery remains in the earth, I believe there will be no continued peace for it. "Is it peace, Jehu? What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel, and her witchcrafts, are so many?" Prophecy apart, it cannot escape the observation of thinking men that popery, notwithstanding its being raised by recent events to somewhat of its former greatness, is still dissatisfied. It must be a persecuting enemy of true religion, or nothing. There is not a papal nation in being, of any account, but what has in it the seeds of discontent and future wars. The preponderating powers of Europe will have to say, *We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed!*

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### THE UNPARDONABLE SIN.

THE forgiveness of sin is doubtless one of the most interesting subjects to a sinful creature; and if there be one sin upon which the Divine Being has thought fit to set a mark of peculiar displeasure, by declaring it unpardonable, it is worthy of the most serious inquiry to determine what it is. Perhaps the most likely method of coming at the truth will be by first taking a view of those passages of Scripture where it is either fully expressed or implied, and then making a few remarks upon them.

There is no express mention of the sin against the Holy Spirit under the former dispensation. It seems, however, that there was a period in the lives of Cain and Saul, and perhaps of some others, when they were given up of God to inevitable destruction. The first, or rather the only express mention that we have of it, is in the evangelists, where it is applied to the Pharisees, on occasion of their blasphemously asserting, "This fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils." Dr. Whitby thinks these passages were only designed to warn them of the sin, and that it was not possible to be actually committed till the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost; and assigns this as a reason, that Christ afterwards prayed for those very persons. But those for whom Christ prayed "knew not what they did;" they were in the same situation with Saul while a persecutor; "they did it ignorantly, and in unbelief." This, however, was not true of *all* his murderers. Those who made answer to Judas, who confessed that he had betrayed innocent blood, "See thou to that," could not, I am afraid, have this plea alleged on their behalf. It is true the multitude did it ignorantly, and many of their rulers, as Peter candidly acknowledged; but this, I should think, is more than could be said of them all. It is pretty evident that some of them acted upon the principles suggested by our Lord: "This is the heir, come let us kill him." It is no objection to this that it is said, "If they had known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;" for *knowledge* is not here put for a mere

conviction that he was the Messiah, but for that spiritual discernment which is possessed only by believers, being "revealed to them by the Spirit, who searcheth the deep things of God." From certain passages of Scripture it appears to me that some of the Pharisees were guilty of the unpardonable sin. See John ix. 41, and xii. 42, 43.

Perhaps the next intimation that is given of this sin is in Peter's address to Simon Magus: "Repent of this thy wickedness, and pray God, *if perhaps* the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." It does not appear that the apostle considered the *sorcerer* as having *certainly* committed the unpardonable sin; but it seems he considered it as a matter of doubt, and therefore, with a view to impress upon his mind the greatness of his wickedness, and the danger he was in, expressed himself in that doubtful manner which he was not used to do in ordinary cases.

The apostle Paul seems to have had an eye to this sin, when, speaking of himself, he says, "I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly and in unbelief." None will suppose that Saul's ignorance, much less his unbelief, had any thing in it meritorious, which could induce the Divine Being to show him mercy: on the contrary, it was sinful, and that for which he reckoned himself the chief of sinners. But it was not accompanied with such circumstances of aggravation as to exclude him from an interest in Divine mercy; it was not the unpardonable sin.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews there are several intimations of this sin; particularly in the following passages: "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."—"For if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses's law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace?"

Peter also describes the same characters: "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

Lastly, It must be with reference to this sin that John writes in his First Epistle: "If any man see his brother sin a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life.—There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he shall pray for it."—"We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."

The above are the principal, if not the only, passages in which reference is made to the unpardonable sin. From these, taken altogether, I shall offer the following remarks:—

First, When the Scriptures speak of any sin as *unpardonable*, or of the *impossibility* of those who have committed it being renewed again unto

repentance, we are not to understand them as expressing any natural limitation of either the power or the mercy of God, nor yet of the efficacy of the Saviour's blood; but merely of a limitation dictated by sovereign wisdom and righteousness.

Secondly, It is not any one particular *act* of sin that denominates it unpardonable, but the *circumstances* under which it is committed. The act, in the case of the Pharisees, was uttering blasphemous language against the miracles of Christ; in the supposed case of Saul, it was blasphemously persecuting, and otherwise injuriously treating, the Church of Christ; in the case of the Hebrews, it was apostacy from the truth; in the false teachers described by Peter, it was not only perverting the truth, but returning to sensual abomination. These acts being various, the unpardonable sin could not consist in any one of them in itself considered, but in their being committed under certain circumstances.

Thirdly, The peculiar circumstances under which any of these acts become unpardonable seems to be the party being possessed of a certain degree of *light*; and that not merely objective, as exhibited in the gospel, but subjective, as possessed by the understanding. This light, which is attributed to the Holy Spirit, seems to afford the specific reason of the unpardonable sin being represented as committed against him. The distinction which our Lord makes between blasphemy *against the Son of man* and that *against the Holy Spirit*, declaring the one pardonable and the other unpardonable, seems to consist in this: the former, during his humiliation, might be the effect of ignorance and unbelief; but the latter (imputing to Satanic influence those benevolent miracles which were not only wrought before their eyes by the Spirit of God, but approved themselves to their consciences to be of God) could be no other than wilful malignity. And this would be the case especially after the pouring out of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, when such a blaze of light shone forth in confirmation of the gospel: a blasphemous opposition to it at that period would, where the light was not only exhibited, but possessed in the understanding, be a black mark of reprobation. The blasphemy of Saul was accompanied with a great degree of objective light; but it did not so possess his understanding and conscience but that he did it ignorantly and in unbelief. Had he committed the same blasphemy knowingly, or in spite of a full persuasion in his conscience that the cause he opposed was the cause of God, it is supposed, by his own manner of speaking, that it would have been unpardonable, and that he would not have obtained mercy. The case of the Hebrews turns entirely upon the same circumstance: they not only had the gospel objectively exhibited before them, but became the subjects of deep convictions, and powerful impressions. They were "enlightened," and had "tasted the heavenly gift;" were made "partakers of the Holy Spirit; tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come." None of these expressions, it is true, denotes that Divine change which *accompanies salvation*, being expressly distinguished from it, (and John also, in his First Epistle, intimates that those *who are* "born of God," cannot be guilty of this sin,) yet they undoubtedly express powerful impressions, and deep convictions, together with some extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, which were common in those times. All this rendered a departure from the truth what the apostle, in the tenth chapter of the same Epistle, calls "sinning wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth; treading under foot the Son of God, and doing despite to the Spirit of grace." It is also upon this circumstance of *light* that the case of those apostates mentioned by Peter turns. "After they have *known* the way of righteousness, to turn from the holy commandment" is that which seals their doom.

Fourthly, The *impossibility* of such characters being recovered and saved arises from two causes:—

1. The only way, or medium, of a sinner's salvation is by the sacrifice of Christ; but the nature of their sin is such that they "wilfully tread him under foot, and treat the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, as an unholy thing." Now if the sacrifice of Christ be thus treated, there is no other way of escape: "There remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful looking for of judgment." Hence it becomes a hopeless undertaking for the servants of God to attempt any thing for their recovery. What can they do? Nothing but what they have done already in vain. The grounds which they have ordinarily to go over, in saving sinners from the wrath to come, are, "Repentance from dead works; faith towards God; baptism" of water, and in the primitive times of the Holy Spirit, accompanied with "the laying on of hands;" exhibiting to them "the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment;" but these things have been *known and rejected*, have lost their force: why should they be repeated? No, saith the apostle, "leaving these first principles," and those who have rejected them, in the hand of God, we will "go on" with our work "unto perfection."—"The ploughman doth not plough *all day* to sow"—and "bread-corn is bruised, because he will not *ever* be threshing it."

2. The only efficient cause of a sinner's being brought to repentance, and so to forgiveness, is the almighty and sovereign influence of the Holy Spirit; and the only hope that is left for such characters must arise from the exertion of His power, with whom all things are naturally possible: "But of him they are given up! they have done despite to the Spirit of grace," and he hath utterly abandoned them to their own delusions! See Heb. vi. 7, 8.

Fifthly, The cases which in our times appear to approach the nearest to this sin are those of persons who apostatize from the truth after having enjoyed great religious advantages, obtained much light, felt strong convictions, and made considerable progress in reforming their conduct. The apostacy of such characters, as of some among the Hebrews, is sometimes *sentimental*. Having long felt the gospel way of salvation to grate upon their feelings, they fall in with some flesh-pleasing scheme, either that of open infidelity, or some one of those which approach the nearest to it; and now, their conduct becoming equally loose with their principles, when reproved by their friends, they keep themselves in countenance by professing to have changed their sentiments in religious matters. In them is fulfilled what was predicted of some by the apostle Paul: "They received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie;—and be damned."

The apostacy of others, like those described in the Second Epistle of Peter, is of a more *practical* nature. Having long felt the yoke of religion galling to their inclinations, they burst the bonds and let loose the reins of lust; and to ward off reproof, and keep themselves in countenance, they affect to treat all religion with contempt, raking together the faults of professing Christians, as an excuse for their own iniquities. Such characters are commonly the worst of all, and the most dangerous to society; nor do I recollect any instance of their having been "renewed again unto repentance:" "twice dead," they seem doomed to be "plucked up by the roots." In them is verified what our Lord speaks, of a man out of whom should be cast an unclean spirit, which goeth forth in search of a new habitation, seeking rest, but finding none, and at length resolves on a return to his old abode. "And when he cometh, he findeth it empty, swept and garnished. Then

he goeth, and taketh with him seven other spirits, more wicked than himself, and they enter in, and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first."

I am afraid that to the above might be added a great number of characters who, in early life, were of a decent and grave deportment; and who, possessing promising abilities, were encouraged by their friends to engage in *the work of the ministry*. Their main study being to cultivate their powers, they have at length attained the art of conveying truth and commending virtue in a style of pleasing energy. But as they have never loved nor lived upon the truth which they have communicated, so neither have they practised the virtues which they have recommended. Slaves to popularity, avarice, or lust, they pass through life under a disguise: and being conversant with Divine things as surgeons and soldiers are with the shedding of human blood, they cease to have any effect upon them with respect to their own souls. I would not presume to pass sentence on all such characters; but neither would I be in their situation for the whole world!

The chief difficulties which attend the account of the unpardonable sin affect ministers, in their praying for and preaching to sinners and dejected souls, who are apt to draw dark conclusions against themselves. With respect to *prayer*, we have directions given us on this head, 1 John v. 16. We are not to pray that God would forgive men *this sin*, because this would be contradicting the revealed will of God; but as we cannot tell with certainty who are the subjects of it, we may pray for sinners, without distinction, that God would give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; always submitting our petitions to the sovereign direction of unerring wisdom. But it may be asked, with respect to *preaching*, How can a minister proclaim the mercy of God to his auditory in an indefinite way? How can he invite them to a participation of the blessings of the gospel? How can he declare that if any one of them, even the greatest sinner among them, return to God by Jesus Christ, he will be accepted; when, for aught he knows, there may be persons in his presence who may be in the situation above described, and for whom no mercy is designed? To this I answer, The same objection may be made against the doctrine of *election*; and is made by the adversaries of that doctrine. Let a minister pursue his work, and leave the effect to God. What he declares of the willingness of Christ to pardon and receive all who return to him is true; and it might be said of any man, in truth, that if he returned to God by Jesus Christ, he would be forgiven. The impossibility, with respect to those who have committed the unpardonable sin, respects their repentance as well as their forgiveness; and even that is not a natural, but a moral impossibility.

With respect to *dejected minds*, let it be observed, that no person, let his crimes have been what they may, if he be grieved at heart for having committed them, and sincerely ask forgiveness in the name of Christ, needs to fear that he shall be rejected. Such grief is itself a proof that he has *not* committed the sin against the Holy Spirit, because it is a mark of that sin to be accompanied with a hard and impenitent heart. Such characters may feel the remorse of a Cain, a Saul, or a Judas; but a tear of godly sorrow never dropped from their eyes.



## THE APPEARANCE TO ELIJAH.

1 Kings xix.

[WRITTEN IN 1799.]

ELIJAH lived in a time of great apostacy. His history is more particularly related than that of most of the other prophets, and is very interesting. The most distinguishing event of his time was a sore famine. For three years and six months the heavens were shut up. Of this Ahab was previously warned; and to prove that it was a visitation from God for sin, he was assured by Elijah that, as the Lord God of Israel lived, there should be neither dew nor rain, but according to his word. Hitherto he preserves his character, not only as a man, but as a man of God. We admire his magnanimity also, when, towards the close of this afflictive period, he looked Ahab in the face and reprov'd him. Still more do we admire him when, singly by himself, he braved the host of Baal's adherents, and confounded them before the people. But, alas, what is man! After all this, he is intimidated by the threatenings of Jezebel, and flees for his life. After going a day's journey into the wilderness, he sits down under a juniper tree, and requests for himself that he may die. Hence he arose and went to Horeb, the mount of God. Entering into a cave, he was there interrogated by him whose cause he had seemed to desert, What dost thou here, Elijah? He attempts to excuse himself by accusing Israel. He had been very jealous for the Lord God of Israel; but they had digged down his altars and slain his prophets with the sword; he only was left, and they sought his life. Thus, according to his account, it seemed time for him to flee. But that which is worse than all, in excusing himself, he does not barely accuse Israel, but seems tacitly to reflect upon the Lord himself, as though he had done little or nothing to vindicate his own name, and what then could his poor servant do there alone?

Jehovah could no doubt have confounded the complaining prophet; but forbearing, like himself, when dealing with erring creatures, he makes him no answer, but calls him forth to appear on the top of the mount. Here he is made to witness a very extraordinary scene.—“The Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave.”

“The Lord was not in the wind;”—that is, he did not answer Elijah out of the whirlwind, as he did Job; nor out of the earthquake, nor out of the fire. These awful appearances were only harbingers which preceded the voice of Jehovah. On hearing the still small voice, like the seraphim on the appearance of the Divine glory, he wrapped his face in his mantle, and retired to his cave. The interrogation, “What dost thou here, Elijah?” is repeated, and Elijah repeats his answer. The Lord replies, by directing him to go on his way to the wilderness of Damascus; to anoint Hazael to be king over Syria, Jehu to be king over Israel, and Elisha to be a prophet in the place of himself. This was an answer to Elijah's tacit reflection. It was saying, I have judgments enough in reserve, both temporal and spiritual, to vindicate my name, and Israel shall feel them in due time; for “it shall come to pass that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay, and him that escapeth

the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay." But is *all* Israel gone off from God? Is it as Elijah supposes, that he only is left; and is it all wrath and terror that is revealed against them? No; there is a heart-reviving exception at the end: "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the names which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him."

These great events undoubtedly bear a near resemblance to the extraordinary appearances on the mount; and it seems probable, if not more than probable, that the one were designed to represent the other. If so, the wind, the earthquake, and the fire, would refer to those dire calamities with which God was about to punish Israel for their apostacy; and the still small voice to the mercy and peace which should follow. Particularly, first, by the great and strong wind that rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks, understand Hazeael's wars, by which "the strong holds of Israel were set on fire, their young men slain with the sword, their children dashed, and their women with child ripped up:" by these means God punished the common people. Secondly, by the earthquake understand the revolution of Jehu, who "smote the house of Ahab, and avenged the blood of the prophets, and of all the Lord's servants, at the hand of Jezebel:" by this God punished the royal family. Thirdly, by the fire understand Elisha's trying prophecies, and the judgments which accompanied them: by these it is probable the idolatrous priests and false prophets were confounded. Fourthly, by the still small voice understand the mercy and goodness which followed these dire calamities. It was doubtless soothing to Elijah's mind to be told of seven thousand faithful men in reserve; and while they remained in the nation a reserve of mercy in its favour might be expected, notwithstanding all their transgressions. And this was actually experienced under the reigns of Jehoahaz the son and Joash the grandson of Jehu. The former "besought the Lord, and the Lord hearkened unto him; for he saw the oppression of Israel, because the king of Syria oppressed them.—Hazeael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz; but the Lord was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence as yet; so Hazeael king of Assyria died, and Benhadad his son reigned in his stead."

As there appears to have been a resemblance in the wind, the earthquake, the fire, and the still small voice, to the events which succeeded, so there is something in the *order* of these things analogous to the general tenor of the Divine proceedings. It is common for the still small voice to succeed the wind, the earthquake, and the fire; or, in other words, for the blessings of mercy and peace to be preceded by terrible things in righteousness.

When God revealed his word unto Moses, and by him to Israel, the terrors of Mount Sinai were preparatory to other things of a different nature. Many of the appearances on that solemn occasion resembled those on the present; and indeed there appears a manifest allusion in the account of Elijah to that in the nineteenth chapter of Exodus. Nor does the still small voice which terminated the one less resemble the declarations of mercy which followed the other. Jehovah proclaimed himself, "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth;" promising also "to raise up unto them a prophet from the midst of them, like unto Moses, to whom they should hearken."

The dispensations of Providence have generally moved in a similar order. Many terrible judgments have fallen on the world; but they have been commonly followed with peace and mercy to the church. The plagues of Egypt, and the destruction of Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea, terminated in the joyful deliverance of the people of God. The same was true of the

overthrow of Babylon by the Persians. Thus it was that by terrible things in righteousness God answered the prayers of his people. The great calamities with which the world was afflicted, by the successive struggles of the four great monarchies of Babylon, Persia, Macedon, and Rome, terminated in the peaceful empire of the Son of God. The diadem was overturned, overturned, and overturned again, till he came whose right it was, and to him it was given.

Similar observations might be made on the Lord's proceedings in the dispensation of his grace. As the thunders of Sinai preceded the blessings of Zion, so the terrible is still seen in many instances to go before the peaceful. Deep conviction may produce fearful expectation of eternal ruin; but if it terminate in a well-grounded peace, we do not regret the pain of mind, because it renders the hope of the gospel more welcome.

Finally, Is there not reason to hope from these things that the present convulsions of the world will be followed with peace and prosperity to the church? The fall of ancient Babylon was followed by the liberation of the people of God; and it is intimated in prophecy that the fall of the New Testament Babylon shall be followed by the "marriage-supper of the Lamb." The present may be the time of whirlwinds, earthquakes, and fires, and God as the God of grace may be in none of them; but they may be preparatory to the still small voice of truth and peace. In this God will be present, and will be heard. Then "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it." Should this be the issue of the present convulsed state of the nations, afflictive as it may be, it will be more than compensated, and serve as a foil to heighten the glory that shall follow.

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THE LYING SPIRIT PERSUADING AHAB.

1 Kings xxii. 21—23.

WHEN Ahab sent for Micaiah, there was evidently no sincerity in his request. Like many others, who ask counsel of their friends, and even seek direction of God, not with a view to be influenced, but in hope of being countenanced by it, he was determined to go against Ramoth-gilead, let Micaiah say what he might. The messenger sent to call Micaiah seems to have been furnished with a *secret* message; and tried what he could do at tampering with the prophet. Hence it appears evident that Ahab did not desire to know the mind of God, but chose delusion. Micaiah came, and Ahab thus accosted him: "Micaiah, shall we go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we forbear?" Micaiah answered in a strain of irony, (which might be very evident from his tone and manner of delivery,) "Go and prosper. The Lord will doubtless deliver it into the hand of the king;" for who can hesitate on the truth of that which has the testimony of four hundred prophets to confirm it?

Ahab felt the irony, and conjured him to be serious. Micaiah then assumed another tone, and told him the truth without reserve; and which amounted to nothing less than that he should lose his life in the battle. Ahab, full of rancour, appealed to Jehoshaphat, that he had told him beforehand what would be the effect of sending for this man. Micaiah, like a man of God, now looked the very monarch in the face, and said, "Hear the word of the Lord!" It may be thought incredible that I only should be right, and

four hundred prophets in the wrong: I will relate a vision that will perfectly account for it:—

I beheld the Lord, the great disposer of all events, sitting upon his throne, surrounded by the host of heaven. Fully acquainted with the whole of thy ungodly life, and viewing thee as ripe for destruction, he determined to destroy thee; and seeing that, in this instance, thou hast preferred flattery to truth, he has determined to destroy thee by means of flattery. Know then, Ahab, that hell and all its agents, delusion and all its instruments, are under his control; they go and come at his bidding. That spirit to whom thou hast sold thyself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord now desires thee for his prey. He that has seduced thee into sin now asks permission of God to deceive thy prophets, that he may plunge thee into destruction; and God has granted him his desire. And that which Satan is doing for his own ends God will do for his. There is as much of the judicial hand of God in a lying spirit having misled thy prophets, as of readiness in the evil one to entangle and seize thee as his prey.

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MYSTERY OF PROVIDENCE.

Job. xii. 6—25.

THE great controversy between Job and his friends respected the system of providence. They maintained that God governed the world upon the principle of minute retribution, rendering to every man in the present life according to his works. When, therefore, great calamities befell an individual, they concluded that he was more wicked than other men. He, on the contrary, maintained that the system of providence proceeded on no such principles, but on a large scale, full of inscrutable wisdom; and that good and evil came alike to men, whether they were righteous or wicked.

In proof of this, he appeals to the following things:—

First, The success which often attends the worst of men, even in the worst of causes: “The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure, into whose hand God bringeth abundantly.”

Secondly, The large proportion which wicked men possess of the earth and its productions: “But 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.” As if he should say, Ask them to whom they belong. Is it to good men only, or chiefly? Is it for the righteous few, that the animals breed, or the productions of the earth vegetate? Is it not also, yea principally, the proud and the luxurious?

Thirdly, Adverse providences towards individuals and families, which are dispensed alike to good and bad, which there is no withstanding, and from which there is no escaping: “Behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again: he shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening.”

Fourthly, Public calamities, which also come alike to all; such as drought and consequent famine at one time; and desolating inundations at another: “Behold, he withholdeth the waters, and they dry up; also, he sendeth them out, and they overturn the earth.”

Fifthly, The absolute and supreme control of God over all the devices and intrigues of men. Instead of preserving the weak, and punishing the mighty, according to the minute rules of retributive justice, he in this world

lays his mighty hand on both, and causes each to subserve his infinitely wise purposes: "With him is strength and wisdom; the deceived and the deceiver are his."

Lastly, He appeals to those events which agitate the world, and involve the overthrow of nations; in which calamities come alike to all, without respect to character.

It is a very affecting picture which is here drawn, from the 17th verse to the end of the chapter, of the overthrow of a nation by invasion. It is described as follows:

The great advisers of public measures are driven from their seats, and the administrators of government are like men beside themselves, not knowing what measures to take: "He leadeth counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools."

The strong band of power which kept all orders of the state in subjection is dissolved, and the sovereign himself becomes bound with the cord of a captive: "He looseth the bond of kings, and girdeth their loins with a girdle."

Governors of provinces are led captive, and the commanders of armies defeated in battle: "He leadeth princes away spoiled, and overthroweth the mighty."

The patriotic orator, whose eloquence has so often charmed a nation, and whose counsel has been frequently resorted to in a perilous hour, is heard no more; the wisdom also of the most experienced statesman is nonplussed: "He removeth away the speech of the trusty, and taketh away the understanding of the aged."

The most illustrious characters are stripped of their excellency, and those whose words made nations tremble, having lost their influence, are become weak as other men: "He poureth contempt upon princes, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty."

On such an awful occasion, a darkness supernatural seems to have burst upon the world; as though the shades of death had found their way from beneath, and had covered the face of the earth, so that men are bewildered and lost in their pursuits: "He discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth out to light the shadow of death."

Such an event has an influence on surrounding nations. Like a mountain sinking into the sea and agitating the waters, it puts every thing out of place. Some are increased by its spoils, others ruined by its overthrow, and even the same nation is by turns both sunk and raised, contracted and enlarged: "He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them: he enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them again."

Finally, Those great characters of the land who have escaped the hands of the conqueror, yet, having lost all spirit to resist or to stand their ground, betake themselves to flight. Wandering up and down the world, like men who have lost their way in a wilderness, they become intoxicated with grief and dismay, and know not what measures to take to retrieve their losses; or if they did, have no resolution to pursue them: "He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, and causeth them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way. They grope in the dark without light, and he maketh them to stagger like a drunken man."

O my soul! can I meditate on such a catastrophe without feeling for others, or fearing for my native country? Yet, if such should be its lot, it is a part of that great system of providence that directs all human suffering, and will ultimately issue in the greatest good. Meanwhile, "having received a kingdom that cannot be moved," may I have grace that I may serve God acceptably with reverence and with godly fear.

## WISDOM PROPER TO MAN.

Job xxviii.

IN the warm disputes between Job and his friends, the great question was, Whether the providence of God towards men, in a way of prosperity or adversity, afforded any criterion of character. They contended it did; and therefore concluded from the sore calamities which had befallen him that he was a wicked man. He, on the contrary, contended that it did not; and that there is a depth in God's ways which surpasseth moral scrutiny. Such is the drift of his argument all through this chapter; in which he allows that man had dug deep, but contends that it was not deep enough for this; that this was wisdom peculiar to God, and that the wisdom which was proper to man was of another description.

Man, he allows, had found out many things; he had not only surveyed all that was visible on the face of the earth, but had gone into the bowels of it in search of hidden treasures. By carrying artificial light into the mineral regions, he had in a manner contracted the reign of darkness. Subterranean floods had yielded to his control. Leaving far behind him that part of his species who obtained bread by cultivating the surface, he had descended in search of the sparkling ore and the brilliant gems. He had trodden a path unoccupied by either bird or beast. By applying his skill to the massy rocks, though so deep as to form as it were the *roots of mountains*, he had piece by piece fairly overturned them. Being incommoded by waters, he had, for the purpose of drawing them off, and for washing away the rubbish, that the precious objects of his pursuit might become visible, made channels at the bottom of the mine like *rivers*; and, lest they should rise and overflow him, he had contrived by the use of machinery to diminish and thereby to confine them within proper bounds. In short, by his skill and perseverance he had brought forth the precious articles to light. See him walking upon the earth in triumph! Who can deny him their applause?

After all these deep and successful researches, however, one question remained unanswered—"Where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding?" The vein, or mine, where wisdom grows was yet unexplored. The depths of providence were still beyond human reach. Industry could not discover it, nor all its precious treasures purchase it! You may search, not the earth only, but the ocean, and still the question will return, "Whence cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding?" It is hid from the eyes of all living, even from the most soaring minds. Death or futurity may throw some light upon it; but even that will be partial. A perfect comprehension of it is the prerogative of God only. He only who made all things can comprehend his own designs.

There is, however, a species of wisdom within the province of man; and let him attend to that as his own proper concern. Unto man he said, "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."

From the whole, we see there are three species of wisdom:—The first is the wisdom of this world, which is common among men;—the next is the wisdom peculiar to God, but to which men too frequently aspire;—and the last is the wisdom from above, which is proper to man.

With respect to the first, there is much to admire. The extent to which human ingenuity will go, in accomplishing worldly objects, is astonishing. The energies herein exerted are worthy of a better cause. What self-denial, what resolution, what contrivance, what application, what patience, what perseverance! There is scarcely a danger, but men will encounter it; or

a difficulty, but they will surmount it. That which strength cannot effect at once, art and application will accomplish by degrees. But, alas! the prize for which all these energies are exerted is perishing, and will shortly be of no account. "Where then is wisdom? and where is the place of understanding?" Surely it is not here!

With respect to the second, it is not Job's friends only that have intruded into things which they have not seen. "It is well," said a great writer, "for man to know the length of his tether." Our Saviour was asked, "Whether there were few that should be saved?" But he refused a direct answer; and there are hundreds of questions started in divinity, which, I believe, Christ and his apostles would have treated in the same manner. I have seen attempts to ascertain *how* God exists in three persons,—*how* Divine predestination consists with human agency and accountableness,—*how* a pure creature came to entertain the idea of casting off the government of his Creator; and many other things of the kind: but they always seemed to me to darken counsel with words without knowledge. We find the solution of no such question in the word of God; and we find Moses warning the Israelites that "secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever." We also hear David declaring, "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother; my soul is even as a weaned child." Let vain men on this account go on to speak of the Scriptures as not adapted to "any high perfection in knowledge;"—let them charge the sacred writers, and even their Lord himself, with ignorance;\* but let not serious Christians aim to be wise above what is written. When we see a writer of this description discussing subjects too high for him, and concerning which the Scriptures are silent, however we may respect his character or his talents, we must needs say to him as Job does to the miner, "Where is wisdom? and where is the place of understanding?" It is beyond the limits of thy researches.

The third and last kind of wisdom is that which is proper to man. "Unto man he said, The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." It is practical, and not merely speculative. All speculative knowledge is either in itself injurious, or, through the corruption of the human heart, dangerous; but this directly tends to humble, and so to profit the soul. The very words are of a humbling nature; it is the language of a wise master to a weak but conceited servant, charging him to keep to that employment which he has set him about, and not to neglect it by interfering with what does not concern him. It is language that abases the pride of science; for in fearing the Lord, and departing from evil, the unlearned and learned stand upon the same ground. Science, it is true, is in many ways friendly to religion; but, to render it truly profitable, it is necessary that, amidst all its acquirements, a man should "become a fool that he may be wise." Finally, the language implies that man is so sunk and entangled in *evil*, that there is work enough for his *understanding*, during the short space allotted him in this world, to *depart* from it. Instead of perplexing himself with things too high for him, let him ask, "Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way?" How is the love of evil to be conquered? What principle is that which will raise my soul from the bondage of corruption? Where is the good way, that I may walk in it, and find rest for my soul? "Here is wisdom, and here is the place of understanding," at least, that which is proper to man.

\* Lindsey's Apology, Chap. II. Priestley on Necessity, p. 133.

## INWARD WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.

Psal. lxxxv. 8; xxxv. 3.

THE meaning of these passages requires to be ascertained from the context. The former appears to have been written after the captivity, and on account of the Jews having fallen into sad declensions, which had brought on fresh troubles. In the foregoing part of the Psalm, the writer acknowledges God's great goodness in their restoration; and on this grounds a plea that he would again turn them from their sins, and cause his anger to cease. And having offered up his petition, "Show us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation," he sets himself as it were upon his watch tower, to receive an answer, which his confidence in the Divine goodness presumed would be an answer of peace. The word "shalom," in the Old Testament, commonly signifies prosperity. This was the object for which he had been praying; and when he says, "God will speak peace unto his people," he means, I take it, that he will bestow prosperity upon them. For God to speak peace is the same thing as to bestow it; he speaks, and it is done; he commands, and it stands fast.

The meaning of the other passage is much the same. It is a prayer of David, that God would save him from his enemies; as if he should say, Speak but the word, "I am thy salvation," and all my enemies will be disappointed.

Concerning believers of the present day, the question amounts to this: *In what form or manner does God communicate peace to our minds, and the knowledge of our interest in his salvation?*

There is no doubt but that true Christians do possess, though not without interruption, peace of mind, joy in the Holy Ghost, and a solid, well-grounded persuasion of their interest in eternal life; and some have represented these enjoyments as conveyed to the heart by immediate revelation from heaven, or by the suggestion of some passage of Scripture to the mind, the import of which seems to include the happy intelligence. Suppose, for example, a person to be under great dejection and fear respecting his interest in Christ, and while he is poring over his case the passage above alluded to is suggested to his mind, "I am thy salvation;" some would suppose this was no other than the voice of God speaking peace to his soul, and that for him to question the goodness of his state after this would be unbelief.

If this be God's way of manifesting himself to his people, then revelation is not perfect; but God is making new revelations, and revelations of new truths continually; for as to the interest that any individual has in spiritual blessings, be it ever so much a truth, it is no where directly revealed in the Scriptures; nor is there any possible way of proving it thence, except by *inference*. There is not a passage in the Bible that says, concerning any one of us, "I am thy salvation." The Scripture speaks only of *characters*; and if we answer to these characters, we can prove that the things promised belong to us, but not otherwise. I own that I consider all such suggestions, wherein it is not the truth contained in the passage itself, but a presumption of its being immediately sent from God to the party, that affords the comfort, as real enthusiasm, and as destitute of all foundation in the word of God. I do not deny that many godly people have been carried away by such things; but I have seen evils, more than a few, which have arisen from them.

Those persons who ground their evidence for heaven on impressions of



Scripture on their minds are generally favoured, as they suppose, with many other revelations, besides those which relate to their interest in eternal life. They are often *directed* as to present duty, and *informed* of future events. If in a state of hesitation as to the path of duty, they pray to the Lord; so far they do well. But in addition to this, instead of inquiring into the mind of God as revealed in his word, they expect some immediate suggestion from him. And if, while they are thinking of the conduct in question, such a passage as that occur to their minds, "This is the way, walk ye in it," they immediately conclude that this is a direction from God to follow that particular course which at the time occupied the mind, and which generally, if not always, proves to be the course to which their hearts were previously inclined. By such means many have been deluded into great errors, to the dishonour of God and the ruin of their future peace.

By the same means others have been led to suppose themselves in the secret of God concerning *future events*. They have been praying, it may be, for the conversion of a favourite child, and some such passage as this has been suggested to their minds. "I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." Hence they have concluded that the child would some time be converted and saved. And this their confidence has been communicated till the child himself has heard of it; and being willing to catch at any thing that might buoy up his vain hope, he has presumed upon a future conversion while living in a course of sin. At length, however, the parent has witnessed the death of the child, and that without any signs of a change. The consequence has been despondency, and calling in question his own personal religion. If, says he, this promise did not come from God, I have no reason to think any other did; and so all may be delusion.

This is not the worst. Godly persons are not the only characters who have passages of Scripture impressed upon their minds, and that "with power," as it is often termed. The most abandoned sinners, if they have been used to read and hear the word of God, can talk of such things as these. I have seldom known persons of this description but who have some such false hope, by which they quiet their minds amidst a career of iniquity. Twenty or thirty years ago, they will tell you, they were under strong convictions, and they had a promise; and have ever since had some hope that they should at last be saved, though they must confess that their life has been very far from what it should have been.

But the question will again be asked, *In what way does God speak peace to his people, or say unto a soul, I am thy salvation?*

If I were to answer, By bestowing gospel peace upon them, or enabling them to discern and approve the gospel way of salvation, it would be a just application of the passages where these expressions are found, and would accord with other scriptures. The Lord directs poor sinners, saying, "Ask for the good old way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls," Jer. vi. 16. Our Lord takes up this language, and applies the good old way to himself, saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find rest to your souls," Matt. xi. 28, 29. Thus it is by an approving view of God's way of salvation, such a view as leads us to walk in it, that we may obtain peace: and thus it is that God speaks peace to the soul, and says, "I am thy salvation."

It is very indifferent by what means we are brought to embrace the gospel way of salvation, if we do but cordially embrace it. It may be by silent reflection, by reading or hearing the word, or by some suitable part of Scripture occurring to the mind, by means of which the soul is led to see its lost condition, and the only door of hope opened by the gospel.

There is such a harmony in Divine truth, that a proper view of any one branch of it will lead on to a discovery of others; and such a connexion that we cannot cordially approve of a part, but that the whole will follow. And no sooner is the gospel in possession of the heart than joy and peace will ordinarily accompany it; for if we behold the glory of God's way of saving sinners, and approve of it, we must, in a greater or less degree, be conscious of it; and knowing that the whole tenor of the New Testament promises eternal life to believers, we cannot but conclude ourselves interested in it. Believing on the Son of God, we are justified; and being thus justified, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, Rom. v. 1.

PASSAGES IN THE BOOK OF PROVERBS.\*

CHAP. xii. 1, "Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge; but he that hateth reproof is brutish."

He and he only that loves the means loves the end. The means of knowledge are "instruction" in what is right, and "reproof" for what is wrong. He who is an enemy to either of these means is an enemy to the end; and, whatever he may pretend to, he deserves not the name of a man, but of a "brute."

Ver. 3, "A man shall not be established by wickedness; but the root of the righteous shall not be moved."

Men are apt to think of gaining their ends by wicked means, but they shall not succeed. In the end their building shall fall; but righteousness will stand at last, when all is said and done.

Ver. 5, "The thoughts of the righteous are right; but the counsels of the wicked are deceit."

A righteous man, in taking counsel, does not merely consult what will be for his worldly interest, but whether the thing itself be right in the sight of God and man; and as to those who never take this into consideration, though they think they have advantage of an upright man, in that they are not scrupulously confined to rule as he is, yet it is all self-deception. They shall either be disappointed of their ends, or disappointed in them. "Do they not err that devise evil? But mercy and truth shall be to them that devise good," chap. xiv. 22.

Chap. xiii. 11, "Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished; but he that gathereth by labour shall increase."

Lightly come, say we, lightly go. What is ill-gotten is commonly ill-spent. Yea, not only wealth obtained by injustice, but that also which is obtained by mean and niggardly actions.

Ver. 14, "The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death."

Place a wise man in the seat of government, and the "law" he enacts will not be such as shall be grievous to the people, but rather such as shall be a blessing to them, and like a fence to guard the traveller from falling into a pit.

Ver. 19, "The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul; but it is abomination to fools to depart from evil."

\* It is deeply to be regretted that a series of Lectures which Mr. Fuller delivered on the whole book of Proverbs, and which were transcribed from his short-hand notes, have been lost. They had been nearly worked off at the press of his son, Mr. J. G. Fuller, of Bristol, when a fire occurred which burnt every copy, together with the manuscript. One cannot conceive the extent of the loss thus incurred, for the order of his mind was precisely that which is needed for the illustration of this important portion of the Sacred Volume.—B.

The accomplishment of desire is essential to happiness; this is only to be expected in the way of righteousness: but it is abomination to fools to depart from evil.

Chap. xiv. 2, "He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the Lord: but he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him."

All our actions, in some respects, have God for their object. Real uprightness is fearing God; and perverseness, by disregarding his authority, is a contempt of God.

Ver. 6, "A scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not: but knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth."

The state and disposition of the heart determine our success in the pursuit of truth. If our inquiries be influenced by a spirit of pride and self-sufficiency, we shall stumble at every thing we meet with; but he who knows his own weakness, and conducts his inquiries with humility, shall find knowledge easy of attainment. "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way," Psal. xxv. 9.

Ver. 7, "Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge."

Silence is the best answer to some persons; disputing with them will be of no use.

Ver. 23, "In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury."

Tell me not of those who *talk* most, but of those who *do* most.

Chap. xxx. 24—28, "There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise. The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer: the conies\* are a feeble flock, yet make they their houses in the rocks: the locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands: the spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces."

Man is here sent to four of the most diminutive parts of the creation, to learn wisdom from their instinctive sagacity. Each of them is "little, but exceeding wise." Vain man would be wise, but it cannot be. Ere he can be wise, he must become a fool. Man is naturally more diminutive in the sight of God than the smallest insect can be in our sight; and by sin has rendered himself of little account indeed in a moral view. Child of man! know thine insignificance, and follow the example of these little creatures, who are placed before thee to furnish thee with instruction.

Go to the *ants*, and know in this thy day the things which belong to thy peace, ere they be for ever hid from thine eyes.

Go to the *rabbits*, and learn to trust not in thine own strength, but in the power of omnipotent grace.

Go to the *locusts*, which, without king or commander, preserve the strictest order; and be ashamed that the best laws, human or Divine, are insufficient to prevent thy discords, or preserve moral order in the world.

Go to the *spider*, and observe the slender curtains by which she is surrounded. Hail, rain, or wind would sweep them all away; beasts of the field would tread them under foot; birds of the air would seize the inhabitant for their prey. But she avails herself of the abodes of the lord of creation for a shelter, and even of the sumptuous buildings of the most exalted characters. Learn hence, feeble and despicable as thou art, to trust for safety where alone it can be found; aspire to the heaven of heavens, and lay hold of eternal life.

\* The word by some is rendered *mountain mice*.

## MEDIOCRITY IN WISDOM AND VIRTUE SATIRIZED.

Eccles. vii. 15—19.

THERE have been various opinions on the advice of the wise man, "Be not righteous over much," &c. Great numbers have produced it with a view to censure religious zeal, and in favour of a spirit of indifference. Others, who would abhor such an abuse of it, have yet thought it directed against *intemperate* zeal. Others have thought *righteousness* and *wisdom* here to mean a spirit of *self-righteousness*, and a being *wise in our own eyes*. Others have thought the verses to be a caution against *presumption* on the one hand, and *despair* on the other. And some have considered the whole book as a dialogue between a libertine and a moral philosopher; and that the above passage is the language of the former. It is not my design to find fault with any except the *first*; though I acknowledge they have none of them afforded me satisfaction. The following paraphrase is submitted to the judgment of the intelligent reader.

Suppose Solomon to be addressing himself to a young man, which he frequently does, under the character of a *son*, not only in the Proverbs, but in this book also, chap. xi. 9; xii. 1, 12. And suppose verses 16 and 17 to be an *irony*, or a cutting *sarcasm* upon the *unrighteous* and *foolish* taste of the world.

Ver. 15, "All things have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that longeth his life in his wickedness."

I have lived to see many strange things in my lifetime; things that have made me lose all liking to the present state. I have seen uprightness, instead of promoting a man in the esteem of those about him, only serve to bring him to ruin. I have also seen wickedness, instead of exposing a man to the loss of life or estate, often go unpunished, yea, and even be the means of his promotion.

Ver. 16, "Be not righteous over much, neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself?"

My son, if you wish to go through the world with applause, hearken to me. You must not be very *righteous*, I assure you! nor yet very *wise*. A man whose conscience will stick at nothing will get promoted before you; and a vain, confident fool will gain the popular applause, while you, with your sterling but modest wisdom, will be utterly neglected. Be not over much wise nor righteous, my son: why should you ruin yourself?

Ver. 17, "Be not over much wicked; neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time?"

Only take care you be not *too much* wicked; for, however mankind are averse to tenderness of conscience, they do not like an *arrant* villain. If you play too much at that game, you may lose your life by it. Neither must you be *too much* of a *fool*; for however mankind are not fond of sterling wisdom, yet barefaced folly will not always go down with them: if you would please the world, and get honour among the generality of men, you must be neither a sterling wise man nor a stark fool.

As it is the distinguishing mark of an irony to close seriously, and as such a close gives it its edge and force (see 1 Kings xxii. 15, 17; Eccles. xi. 9); so now it is supposed the irony ends, and the serious style is resumed.

Ver. 18, "It is good that thou shouldest take hold of this; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all."

As if he should say, But hearken, my son; another word before we part. Notice what I say to you, and abide by it. Let the world say what they will, and let things go as they may in the world, righteousness and wisdom shall be found best at last; and he that feareth God will not dare to sacrifice these excellences to obtain a few temporary honours: he will sooner live and die in obscurity.

Ver. 19, "Wisdom strengtheneth the wise more than ten mighty men which are in the city."

A consciousness of his being in the right, too, will wonderfully sustain his mind; far more than any popular applause could do, or even the rewards and honours of the great.

If the above be the sense of the passage, then, it may be observed, how foreign as well as foolish is that sense which some have put upon it, as if it were intended to recommend a kind of *mediocrity* of virtue and vice; whereas this is the very thing intended to be satirized! A sensualist might as well plead for his practices from chap. xi. 9, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth," &c., as a lukewarm professor use this passage to plead for his indifference.

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FULFILMENT OF PROPHECY.\*

Isa. ix. 7.

PROPHECY is with great propriety called "a light that shineth in a dark place." There is not only a general darkness attending the present state, under which the light of revelation is as a lamp to our feet; but a more particular one with respect to the events of futurity, into which the light of prophecy, and that only, can penetrate. We are not to indulge an idle curiosity to pry into things which God hath been pleased to conceal; but neither ought we to neglect those things which are not concealed, but rather to search them out. To the "sure word of prophecy we do well to take heed."

The context contains a glorious prediction of the coming and kingdom of the Messiah, a part of which we have already seen accomplished. We can now say in the language of history, what was then said only in the language of prophecy, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." We have seen the "government upon his shoulders," and acknowledged him under all those expressive names by which he is there described, "Wonderful, Counsellor, mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of peace." There is one part of the prophecy, however, which yet remains to be fulfilled, and an important part too; so important as to interest the very heart of God. If *Louth's* version be just, "*the graves of the armed warrior, and the garment rolled in much blood, shall be for a burning, even fuel for the fire,*" (and it certainly agrees with what follows of the government of the Prince of peace,) this remains at present to be accomplished. Nor is this all: there is an *increase* in the government of the Messiah which has not yet been carried

\* This essay was written, many years before its author's death, for the *Missionary Magazine*. A few months before his removal, Mr. Fuller visited Birmingham on behalf of the Mission; when he was scarcely able to ascend the pulpit, or to speak so as to be heard. He addressed the people for about a quarter of an hour, and delivered this paper almost verbatim. I shall never forget the impression produced, especially when he uttered with deep feeling the words, "We lose our strength in this service;—we cannot act out our zeal by reason of infirmities and death; but He always lives—never grows weak; and we die rejoicing in the thought that 'the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall perform this.'"—B.

to its full extent. We have seen him sitting upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it, with judgment and with justice; but we have not yet seen judgment sent forth unto victory. Christ has yet to conquer a large portion of heathen superstition, Mahomedan delusion, popish corruption, Jewish obstinacy, and deistical malignity.

But it is not my design to insist so much on the specific objects of prophecy, as on the ground of assurance that we possess of its being accomplished; much has already come to pass, and the zeal of the Lord of hosts is pledged for the fulfilment of what remains.

Zeal, as it respects the disposition of creatures, is an ardent affection of the mind. It comes from a word which signifies *to burn*. But this does not sufficiently distinguish it from other affections; for the same may be said of love and anger. Among other things, it is distinguished from these affections by its object. Love and anger commonly terminate on persons; but zeal on a thing or things. Zeal is that ardour of mind which prompts us to pursue a course or undertaking with earnestness and perseverance, and to encounter every difficulty that may stand in the way of attaining our object. To render it justifiable, it requires that the object be good; that it be a good proportioned in magnitude to the effort; and that it be itself not a mere momentary passion, but an abiding principle. Each of these ideas is included in the words of the apostle to the Galatians, "It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing;" and each will apply to the zeal of God, as well as to that of creatures.

It may be questioned by some whether zeal is properly applied to the Divine Being, any more than anger and repentance. The reason why the latter, when applied to God, are interpreted figuratively, is, if I mistake not, that taken in their literal sense they, in their own nature, imply imperfection; but I know not that this can be said of zeal, any more than of love; and we are certainly not to conceive of God as void of pleasure or displeasure, or imagine that he is unconcerned with the affairs of his creatures. We might as well deprive him of existence as reduce him to a stock. We have the fullest evidence that his heart is deeply and invariably interested in his own cause; and it is fit it should; it is a cause which embraces every thing great and good, and therefore worthy of it.

The strength of zeal is estimated by the degree of *attention* which it excites. Where we see the thoughts absorbed in an object, the mind rejoicing in the contemplation of it, and other things pursued only in subserviency to it, we ascribe great zeal to the party. And thus it is, or nearly thus, that the Scriptures represent the Divine Being as engaged in the establishment of his own cause. It occupied his thoughts before the worlds were made. His infinite wisdom was exercised concerning it; "rejoicing in the habitable part of the earth; and its delights were with the sons of men." All his other works have been pursued in subserviency to this. The work to be accomplished by Christ is that great work to which all others are preparatory; for all things were created not only *by him*, but *for him*.

The strength of zeal is estimated also by the *efforts used* and the *expense bestowed* in carrying it into execution. It was not the pleasure of God to exert his power to the uttermost at any period, but to accomplish his designs by slow degrees, that creatures at every step might perceive and admire; yet, from the day that war was first declared against the kingdom of Satan, never did he lose sight of his grand object, which was to establish another kingdom upon its ruins, or, as the Scriptures express it, "to send forth judgment unto victory." For this he called Abraham, blessed and increased him, watched over his posterity, and made of them a great nation;—for this they were brought out of Egypt with a high hand, preserved in the wilder-

ness, planted in Canaan, and every nation punished that set themselves to oppose them;—for this Jehovah condescended to become their Legislator, gave them a body of laws, set up his worship amongst them, preserved them amidst the hatred of surrounding nations, and raised up his servants the prophets to bear testimony in their day, and to commit to writing the lively oracles of truth. If God interpose by a series of *miracles*, we may be assured it is for some great object, and something that lies near his heart. He would not turn the established laws of nature out of their course, for the accomplishment of little things. If the great exertions of Divine power in Egypt, in the wilderness, and through the whole history of Israel, had terminated in the events of those times,—if the Divine Being had no other object in view, than taking part with one nation against a number of others,—we might well be surprised, and almost question, as some on this account have done, whether the religion of the Old Testament was a religion worthy of God. But if those Divine interpositions, unimportant as some of their events, unconnected with other things, may appear, were so many parts of one great design, they were worthy of him who is great in counsel and mighty in working.

We have no reason to think the Divine Being would have made such *sacrifices*, as of Egypt, and the seven nations of Canaan, wicked as they were, but for the sake of some greater good that should result from it. To them it was a just punishment for their iniquity; but to the world, in its succeeding generations, as well as to Israel, it was a proceeding full of wisdom and mercy, and while we speak of the *efforts* and *sacrifices* which the Lord hath made in carrying this great cause into execution, the labours and sufferings of his servants must come into account. Their tears have not escaped his notice, and their blood has been precious in his sight; nor would he have suffered millions of them to have fallen in a contest the issue of which would not more than make amends for all. But why do I speak of the sacrifice of nations, or of the blood of martyrs? He hath given his only begotten Son, and given him to be made a sacrifice. For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

Now if such has been the zeal of Jehovah's mind in the fulfilment of this great cause; if it has occupied his thoughts before the worlds were made—if he rejoiced in the contemplation of its issue—if all his other works were pursued in subserviency to it—and if the greatest sacrifices have been made to accomplish it—may we not hence form a judgment of the force of that sacred pledge that is given us for every part of it being in due time carried into execution?

The zeal of the Lord of hosts, under whose banner we fight, ought, undoubtedly, to stimulate ours. It is the distinguishing character of a Christian to be of one heart with God and with Christ; this was the object of our Saviour's intercessory prayer, that we all might be one. If he, who in righteousness doth judge and make war, is described as riding on a white horse, the armies of heaven must also follow him upon white horses. Can we conceive of any encouragement to Christian activity equal to this? The zeal of prophets, apostles, and martyrs animates us; the efforts to spread the gospel among all denominations of serious Christians provoke us; and the disinterested love of those who have left all to bear the name of Christ amongst the heathen excites in us a lively hope that some good fruits will follow; but what is all this to the zeal of the Lord of hosts? The great cause in which we are engaged lies nearer his heart than ours. Our little fires were kindled at his altar, and are fed by him continually. We are damped by difficulties, and dismayed by repeated disappointments, but he is not dis-

mayed. What are Hindoo castes, Otaheitian voluptuousness, African barbarism, Popish prejudice, Jewish obstinacy, or deistical malignity? Who will set the briers and thorns against him in the day of battle? He will go through them; he will burn them up together.

Finally, it is a truth that ought to sink deep into our hearts, that though God is pleased to honour us with being instruments in promoting his cause in the world, yet it is not because he stands in need of us. His cause will go on whether we help or hinder. If we are wicked, we may perish in our wickedness, but we cannot impede his designs. If, through weakness, fickleness, or unbelief, we go not up to possess the land; if missionary societies fail in their undertakings, and missionaries themselves be discouraged through want of success; the work will nevertheless go on. Deliverance will arise. When our carcasses are dead in the wilderness, our children will renew the contest and succeed. The promise of Jehovah is pledged. The sacrifice of his Son will be rewarded. The souls under the altar will be heard.

#### THE BURDEN OF DUMAH.

Isa. xxi. 11, 12.

IN offering an exposition of a difficult passage of Scripture, which has so much divided interpreters, it doubtless becomes us to be diffident; yet I hope no apology need be made for attempts to elucidate any part of the sacred oracles.

There are three distinct prophecies in this chapter, and they are all termed *burdens*, as containing heavy judgments. The first respects Babylon, called "the desert of the sea," whose overflow by the Medes and Persians is predicted in the first ten verses; the next *Dumah*, Idumea, or Edom, inhabiting Mount Seir; and the last Arabia.

The fall of Babylon by the Medes and Persians is announced under the form of a *watchman* stationed to discover approaching objects, with orders to declare what he saw, ver. 6—9. It was an event peculiarly interesting to Judah. Babylon was the floor on which Judah was to be thrashed, till the refuse should be separated from the grain. The event which destroyed the one delivered the other. It was on account of this interest which the people of God had in the fall of this oppressive city that the Scriptures deign to notice it, as is intimated in that pathetic address in ver. 10, "O my threshing, and the corn of my floor: that which I have heard of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, have I declared unto you."

The fall of Babylon was interesting to other nations as well as Judah; particularly to the Idumeans or Edomites, who were reduced to servitude by its arms within a few years after the taking of Jerusalem. Now, seeing that Judah had received a favourable report, Edom must needs inquire of the watchman (like Pharaoh's baker of Joseph, after he had announced good tidings to the butler) whether there were nothing equally favourable for them. The answer is, NOTHING; but, on the contrary, the lot of Judah's enemies, "a burden."

The revolution would indeed, for a time, excite the joy of the conquered nations; all the trees of the forest would triumph on that occasion; saying to Babylon, "Since thou art fallen, no feller is come up against us;" but the Edomites should meet with a disappointment. To them a change of government should be only a change of masters. The fair morning of their hopes should issue in a long and dark night of despondency. In the day



of Babylon's fall, according to the prayer of the captives, when every prisoner was lifting up his head in hope, Edom was *remembered*, as excepted from an act of grace, on account of his singular atrocities, Psal. cxxxvii. 7—9.

The Edomites were very impatient under the Babylonish yoke, and very importunate in their inquiries after deliverance; reiterating the question, "What of the night? watchman, what of the night?" When will this dark and long captivity be ended? And now that their hopes are repulsed by the watchman's answer, they are exceedingly unwilling to relinquish them. Loth to depart with an answer so ungrateful, they linger, and *inquire* again and again, in hopes that the sentence may be reversed. But they are told that all their lingering is in vain. "If ye will inquire, inquire ye, return, come" again; yet shall your answer be the same.

And what was the crime of the Edomites that should draw down upon them this heavy *burden*, this irresistible doom? *Their inveterate hatred of the people of God.* "For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever," Obad. 10. Perhaps there was no nation whose treatment of Israel was so invariably spiteful, and whose enmity was accompanied with such aggravating circumstances. They were descended from Abraham and Isaac, and were treated by Israel, at the time they came out of Egypt, as brethren; but as then they returned evil for good, (Numb. xx. 14—21,) so it was ever afterwards. Their conduct, on the melancholy occasion of Jerusalem's being taken by the Chaldeans, was infamous beyond every thing. They rejoiced in it, joined the plunderers, insulted their afflicted brethren, and stood in the cross-ways to cut off, or deliver up, those of them that had escaped, Obad. 10—16.

The passage affords a tremendous lesson to ungodly sinners, and especially to those who, having descended from pious parents, and possessed religious advantages, are, notwithstanding, distinguished by their enmity to true religion. The situation of the Edomites rendered it impossible for them to be so ignorant as other heathen nations of the God of Israel; and their hatred appears to have been proportioned to their knowledge. Such is the character of great numbers in the religious world. They have both seen and hated the truth. The consequence will be, if grace prevent not, they will flatter themselves awhile with vain hopes; but, ere they are aware, their morning will be changed into endless night.

Edom was once addressed in the language of kindness and brotherly affection; but having turned a deaf ear to this, all their inquiries after deliverance are now utterly disregarded. Such will be the end of sinners. "When once the Judge hath risen up, and shut the door," they may begin to knock, may inquire and return, and come again, but all will be in vain: a night of ever-during darkness must be their portion.

The passage also, taken in its connexion, holds up to us the different situation of the friends and enemies of God under public calamities. It is natural in such seasons for all to inquire, "What of the night? watchman, what of the night?" Each also may experience a portion of successive *light* and *darkness* in his lot. But the grand difference lies in what shall be *the issue of things*. God's people were thrashed on the floor of Babylon; and when purified, were presently restored. To them there arose light in darkness. Weeping continued for a night, but joy came in the morning. Not so with Edom; their night came last. Such will be the portion of God's enemies: they may wish for changes, in hope of their circumstances being bettered; but the principal thing wanting is a change in themselves. While strangers to this, the oracles of heaven prophesy no good concerning them. A morning may come; but the night cometh also.

## APPLICATION OF ABSOLUTE PROMISES,

Such as Isa. xliii. 25.

THE sense of this passage, like most others, requires to be ascertained from the context. God is addressing Jacob, or Israel, as a nation, and reminding them of their great depravity; whence he asserts that all the mercy exercised towards them must be free or unmerited. God often spared them as a nation, when he might utterly have destroyed them, and must have done so had he dealt with them according to their sins; and his thus remitting the punishment of their iniquity was a kind of national pardon, Numb. xiv. 19, 20. Such a pardon was bestowed of God, for his "own name's sake;" or, as he often reminds them, out of regard to the covenant which he had made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and was extended equally to the godly and ungodly among them. To fulfil the promise which he had made to the patriarchs, of preserving their posterity in being as a nation, till Shiloh the Messiah should come, it was necessary that many such national remissions should be bestowed; though multitudes among them were uninterested in such a pardon as is connected with eternal life.

If the forementioned passage include any thing more than the above, if it comprehend such a forgiveness of sins as implies the special favour of God, it could belong to none but the godly among them. The truth taught in the passage will doubtless apply to them, and to all other godly persons; namely, that the forgiveness of their sins is wholly owing to the free grace of God. It is not for any thing in us, but for his own name's sake, that he saveth and calleth us, forgiveth and accepteth us. As to naming this an "absolute promise," all promises of spiritual blessings are in this sense absolute, though made to characters of a certain description; yet it is not on account of any goodness in them, but for his own name's sake, that every blessing is conferred. Where promises are addressed to particular *characters*, as in 1 John i. 9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins," they are designed to point out the subjects interested in them, and to exhibit encouragements to return to God. Where no character is described which is of a spiritual nature, as in the passage in question, the design is to point out the *cause* of salvation. But the Scriptures ought to be taken together, and not in detached sentences. No person has a warrant to conclude himself interested in a promise, wherein God merely teaches the cause of forgiveness, unless he possess that contrition which leads him to "confess and forsake his sins;" for this would be to have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, 1 John i. 6; Prov. xxviii. 13.

Still it is inquired, What use may the people of God in all ages make of those promises and declarations of Scripture which were made to particular persons on special occasions? "As thy day is, so shall thy strength be."—"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."—"I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."—"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee," Deut. xxxiii. 25, 27; Josh. i. 5; Isa. xliii. 2.

I answer, examine *the truth* contained in each of the promises, and try whether it fairly applies to your particular case, as well as theirs to whom it was originally addressed. General truths, or truths of general use, are often delivered in Scripture to particular persons, and on special occasions. If the above passages were originally addressed to men considered as the people of God in the highest sense, that is, to the truly godly among the Israelites,

they are equally applicable to the people of God in all ages of time, when placed in similar circumstances. Or if otherwise, if they had an immediate reference to God's providential care over Israel as a nation, still it is just to reason from the less to the greater. Dear as that nation was to God, yet "Israelites indeed," the spiritual children of Abraham, are still more so. That, therefore, which to them would contain only blessings of an earthly nature, to the others would include blessings spiritual, heavenly, and without end. There is nothing in any of these passages, that I recollect, but what in other parts of Scripture is abundantly promised to all the people of God in all ages of time. It is therefore consistent with the whole tenor of God's word, that Christians, through patience and comfort of such promises of Holy Scripture, might have hope.

I shall add one thing which may afford assistance to some who are desirous of knowing whether they have an interest in the Divine promises. If the blessing contained in any promise of a spiritual nature be such as to meet your desires; if you be willing to receive it in the way that God bestows it; if you would prefer this blessing, could you but obtain it, above any thing and every thing of a worldly nature, it is undoubtedly your own: for every one that thirsteth is welcome to the waters of life.

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DESTRUCTION OF MYSTICAL BABYLON.

Isa. lxiii. 1—6.

It is not uncommon, I believe, to understand this sublime passage of the coming of the Messiah, to shed his blood for the salvation of his people;\* but it is evidently the design of the Holy Spirit to describe the apparel of the conqueror, not as red with his own blood, but with that of his enemies. The event described is not any personal appearance of the Messiah, but a tremendous carnage among the wicked, which he would accomplish by his providence, and which should issue in favour of his church. The dreadful overthrow of Jerusalem, and that of the Roman heathen empire, are each represented by "the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven;" each being a day of judgment, as it were, in miniature, Luke xxi. ; Rev. vi. 12—17. The objects of his vengeance are described under the name *Edom*, the ancient enemy of Israel, in much the same way as Rome is called *Babylon*, as being another Babylon to the church of God.

The period to which the prophecy refers may, I think, be collected with a good degree of certainty, partly from the context, and partly from the nineteenth chapter of the Revelation of John, where many things appear to be borrowed from this passage. The foregoing chapter, namely, the sixty-second, is manifestly prophetic of glorious times yet to come; times when "the righteousness of the church shall go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth"—when she shall be "a crown of glory in the hand of her God"—when she shall be "called Hephzi-bah, and her land Beulah; for the Lord will delight in her, and her land shall be married"—and when "God himself shall rejoice over her, as a bridegroom rejoiceth over his bride."

The last three verses seem to have an allusion to the taking of old Babylon, and to the consequent deliverance of the church from her captivity, in

\* This erroneous idea is countenanced by a misprint in some editions of Dr. Watts's Hymns, (28, 1 B. line 20,) where the pronoun "my" is substituted for *their*.

which Cyrus and his armies, though messengers of death to the former, were to the latter the harbingers of life and peace. And while they should be "going through and through the gates," the friends of Zion are commanded to "prepare the way, and to lift up the standard." Analogous to this shall be the overthrow of mystical Babylon. Her gates, which have long been barred, must be thrown open. At them destruction shall enter to her, but salvation to those whom she has oppressed and persecuted; and while this is going on by instruments that "mean not so," let the friends of Christ be active in their proper sphere, "preparing the way," removing obstructions, and "lifting up the standard" of evangelical truth. Lo, then "cometh the salvation of Zion: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him!" The issue is, the church shall become "a holy people, the redeemed of the Lord; and she shall be called, Sought out, a city not forsaken."

It is thus that the sublime passage under consideration is introduced. It is not enough to say, the salvation of Zion *will* come; but we are presented, as it were, with a sight of Him, glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength, declaring to his admiring people that the day of vengeance is in his heart, and the year of his redeemed, the jubilee of the church, *is come!*

Then follows a penitential confession of the Jewish church, which is supposed to be overwhelmed and melted into repentance by his great goodness and the multitude of his loving-kindnesses towards them, amidst all their disobedience and rebellion against him. Hence it is not difficult to perceive that the prophecy is yet to be fulfilled. But another source of evidence of the same thing may be taken from the nineteenth of the Revelation, where many things, as already noticed, are borrowed from this passage. As in Isaiah, so here, we see a glorious personage in warlike attire: "His name is Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. He is clothed in a vesture dipped in blood, and treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." The fowls of heaven are called together "to eat the flesh of kings, and of captains, and of mighty men, and of horses, and of them that sat on them, and of men both free and bond, small and great." The issue of this dreadful war is, that the beast and the false prophet are taken, Satan is bound, and Christ reigns.

But little if any doubt, I think, can be entertained of the events in these two passages being the same, and of their being designed to describe the tremendous wars by which the great Head of the church accomplishes the ruin of antichrist. "Behold, he cometh as a thief: blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame."

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#### EZEKIEL'S VISIONS.

Ezek. i. and x.

THESE visions seem very obscure. Most expositors consider the "living creatures" to be angels; but they appear to be the same as the "four beasts," or living creatures, in Rev. v. 8, 9. And these are redeemed men; for they sung, "Thou hast redeemed us." Others interpret them by the four beasts in the Revelation, understanding both of gospel ministers. But

what relation had gospel ministers with the visions of Ezekiel, or the prophecies that follow? Probably the following observations may cast some light upon the subject.

1. It was not unusual for the prophets, when they first received their commission, to be favoured with some extraordinary vision, Isa. vi.; Rev. i.

2. These visions had something in them suited to the occasion. The year that king Uzziah died, Isaiah had a vision of Jehovah "sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." The great High Priest of the church, "walking among the seven golden candlesticks," denoted the interest he took in the affairs of the church, to which the prophecies of the Revelation referred. We may therefore expect to find something in Ezekiel's visions suited to the state of things at that time.

3. They may therefore be understood in general as a representation of the God and King of Israel, with a glorious retinue, in a movable position, as ready to take leave of Jerusalem. God had been used to "dwell between the cherubim" in the temple: this was the character under which he was often addressed, Psal. lxxx. i. The cherubim formed, as it were, the retinue or attendants of the God and King of Israel. While he *dwelt* in Zion, they were *stationary*; but now he was about to depart from his abode, and therefore his retinue are represented as in a movable position, connected with a kind of wheel chariot, or movable vehicle. This accords with the glory of God departing from the temple, and standing upon the threshold, Ezek. x. 4. This also would render the exclamation, "O wheel!" very affecting, as the sight of a chariot ready to take away your dearest friend, chap. x. 13.

4. This retinue may perhaps be interpreted by a reference to the "living creatures" in the Revelation, who, as we have noticed, appear to be redeemed men. Who then amongst men were the attendants of God? The priests and prophets under the Old Testament, and evangelical ministers under the New. By the "living creatures" therefore, in Ezekiel, may be understood those servants of God who attended him in that day, of which the cherubim in the temple were emblematical; and by those of John, the ministers of the gospel who attended him under that dispensation, and took the lead in the worship and progress of the church.

The *stationary* situation of the cherubim in the temple might afford a constant lesson to the servants of God. Their figure and position would point out to them their duty. And the *appearance* of them to Isaiah and Ezekiel in vision would impress them with a lively sense of the importance of that office they were going to assume.

Perhaps, after all, the retinue of the God and King of Israel included not only the priests and prophets, but the holy angels. The seraphim in Isaiah's vision seem most easily applied to them; and in allusion to the stooping posture of the cherubim over the ark and mercy-seat in the temple, the angels are said to "look into" the things of the gospel, 1 Pet. i. 12.

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DANIEL'S CONFLICT WITH THE PERSIAN COURT.

Dan. x. 13.

THIS vision is said to be *in the third year of Cyrus*, that is, two years after the proclamation for Judah's return, Ezra i. That we may understand it, it is necessary to review the situation of persons and things at the

time. Daniel himself did not return with the other captives into Judea, but remained in Persia till his death, which was in a few years. As they were still dependent on the Persian government, they needed a friend at court to counteract the machinations of enemies, which would certainly be at work against them; it was therefore wisely ordered that he should remain where he was. He would serve the interests of the church more by this than by going.

But though absent from his brethren in body, he was present with them in spirit. The welfare of Jerusalem lay near his heart. Previously to the vision which he saw, he is said to have "mourned three full weeks." What could be the cause of this mourning? The first four chapters of the book of Ezra, I conceive, will furnish an answer. It was the state of things in Judea, which was not unknown to Daniel, that afflicted him. His eye and heart had followed Sheshbazzar and his goodly company in some such manner as ours have followed those disinterested servants of Christ who have gone forth to proclaim the word of life among the heathen. The pious Jews set out under favourable auspices; prophecy encouraged them, the royal proclamation was on their side, their brethren blessed and prayed for them, and the hand of God was with them. No sooner had they arrived at Jerusalem than they "set up the altar," and prepared to rebuild the temple. In the *second year* of their coming to Jerusalem, that is, in the *third year* of Cyrus, things were in such a state of forwardness that the foundation of the Lord's house was laid: and though the old men, who had seen the glory of the former house, lamented the disparity, yet, upon the whole, it was a time of great joy. But, alas, when all were filled with expectation of seeing the temple erected, *the adversaries of Judah* were suffered to retard the work! First, they endeavoured to weaken the hands of the builders; and when this could not be accomplished, they "hired counselors" against them at the court of Persia; and, strange as it may seem, Cyrus himself appears to have been influenced by them in such a degree as to discourage the work which he had begun to patronize; for we are told that they frustrated the purposes of the builders *all the days of Cyrus, even until the reign of Darius* (Hystaspes) *king of Persia*, a period of about fifteen years.

Now as this counsel, which operated in the Persian court and put a stop to the building of the temple, could not be unknown to Daniel, who was upon the spot, we may easily perceive the cause of his mourning "three full weeks, eating no pleasant bread," and "setting his heart to chasten himself before his God," ver. 2, 3, 12. Hence, also, we may understand the seasonableness of the visions which are recorded in the tenth and eleventh chapters, respecting the oppositions the church should meet with, and the help that should be afforded her.

After three weeks' mourning and chastening himself, the prophet, being by the river Hiddekel, saw a vision. A great personage appeared to him, who, by the description given of him, (verses 5, 6) could be no other than the Son of God.—See Rev. i. 13—15. At first he seems to have been awake, and heard the words which were spoken to him; but afterwards was cast into a deep sleep, with his face to the ground. While asleep, an angel, who seems to have accompanied this august personage, touched him, and set him upon his feet; and, as he stood trembling, thus addressed him:—"Fear not, Daniel; for, from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days; but lo, Michael, the first of the chief princes, came to help me, and I remained there with the kings of Persia. Now

I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days." It may appear strange that the heavenly messenger should be withstood by the prince of Persia, and detained for one and twenty days. But the language, I apprehend, is figurative and prophetic. Under the form of the prince of Persia opposing the angel, who was commissioned with words of peace to the prophet, is signified the opposition which should be made for a time by the Persian government to the rebuilding of the temple. The prince of Persia does not mean, perhaps, any one of its kings in particular, but the power or government of Persia, as in other parts of this prophecy a king is put for a kingdom or government, chap. vii. 17. The Persian government, which was heathen, was under the influence of the god of this world, and therefore had a natural tendency to oppose the kingdom of God. The conflict which is here described, between the angels and the power of Persia, represents the influence of invisible agents upon the counsels of princes. While Satan, by means of the Samaritans, was blowing up the envy, jealousy, and ambition of this court, and thereby provoking it to oppose the church, the holy angels were employed in counteracting these machinations. Without doubt it is an allusion to this language, and expressive of the same truth, that the papal persecutions carried on against the Christian church are described "as a war in heaven; Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon and his angels," Rev. xii. And as, during the detention of the angel, the prophet "mourned and chastened himself;" so, during the obstruction of the work of God, the church should have to do the same. Finally, As the angel came at length to the prophet with words of peace and comfort, so the people of God, after a while, should be relieved from their affliction, and be permitted to resume their labours. And, with respect to more distant times, though exposed to various hardships and cruel persecutions, during the wars, intrigues, and struggles of the surrounding nations, to which they would be subject; yet Michael, their prince, would *stand up on their behalf*, and bring all things to a glorious issue.

From the whole, we see in this account how much the holy angels are interested in the welfare of the church on earth, and the promotion of true religion. We know so little of the invisible world, that we should not have supposed an angel could have said what he did to John; "I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus." Though we might have admitted that these glorious intelligences are "fellow servants," employed by the same Lord and Master, yet we could scarcely have imagined that they were employed about the *same work* as ourselves, the promotion of the gospel. The young man who was with Elisha would not have supposed that they were surrounded with "horses and chariots of fire," to protect them from the wrath of the Syrians; yet so it was. Assuredly it affords a source of great encouragement, that though principalities and powers are engaged against us, yet principalities and powers are also engaged for us; and that in all our efforts to promote the gospel they are our fellow labourers. Who can tell how much we are indebted to their suggestions to the minds of leading characters for the warding off of persecutions, and the concessions which of late ages have been made to the rights of conscience? When we read accounts of the perils and hairbreadth escapes which those servants of Christ have experienced that are gone forth among the heathen, we tremble and rejoice. To us it often seems as if the continuance of their labours, and in some cases of their lives, has depended on the humour of individuals; but events which to us may appear merely casual may have been influenced by invisible agency. A single turn of thought in some leading character has given a favourable

turn to their affairs; and that thought might be suggested by an angel, who was all intent on their preservation and the progress of their undertaking.

Nor is it merely from the ministry of angels that we are here encouraged; "Michael, our prince, standeth for us!" Whatever they effect, it is owing to his *holding with them in these things*. If, instead of fears and distrustful hesitations, we lived under the influence of these important truths, much more would be done for God than is done, and that which was done might be expected to be followed with a much greater blessing than that which we ordinarily perceive. We should think of nothing, in order to determine our conduct, but what is duty; and be always ready to die, if called to it, for the name of the Lord Jesus.

#### THE ROYAL TRIBE.

Zech. x. 4.

"OUT of him," namely, Judah. Judah had all along been a favoured tribe, whence proceeded their governors, who were as "corner-stones," in the building: as "nails," on which was suspended the glory of the nation; as "battle-bows" for annoying the enemy, and preserving order at home: see Isa. xxii. 23, 24. The word נָשׂ signifies to oblige to perform work, or to pay money, either by right or by power. Here it manifestly denotes a *legal exaction*, and therefore ought not to have been rendered "oppressor."

Out of Judah also should proceed the *Messiah*, the greatest of all rulers, in whom all these characters are united; and it seems to be of his reign that the passage speaks, and out of regard to him that God would visit his ancient flock, and have mercy upon them, and cause them to be as though he had not cast them off.

#### THE LATTER DAYS.

Mal. iii. 18.

THE conduct of God in the administration of his providence, however dark and mysterious it may have appeared at particular seasons, even in the eyes of his own people, has always been the result of infinite and unerring wisdom; and not the least event has at any time taken place, whether in the history of nations or that of individuals, which has not been designed of God to illustrate and promote the glory of his own name. His path indeed has often been in the sea, and his footsteps in the mighty waters; and men have been ready to exclaim in beholding the triumph of the ungodly, or the depression of those who feared the name of the Lord, "Surely God seeth not, neither doth the God of Jacob regard;" but the event has shown, or assuredly will show ere long, that as the ears of the Lord are always open to the cry of his people, so his face is uniformly set against all those who do wickedly. In the ages that are past the Lord in his dealings towards men has, for the most part, reserved the wicked for the day of wrath. In the present life they have hitherto been the most prosperous, and their success in unhallowed enterprises has oftentimes been ready to stumble the



minds of the Lord's own dear children; but when they went into the sanctuary and viewed their end—when God drew aside the veil, and showed them their misery in the eternal state—oh how were their minds impressed with solemn awe! how did they exclaim, Surely, Lord, “thou didst set them in slippery places, and in a moment thou castedst them down into destruction: they are utterly consumed with terrors!” The ungodly, however mighty and exalted in power, now appear to them objects of the greatest pity. They perceive that their triumphing is but for a moment, and that, though for a while they may exult as princes, their latter end is that they perish for ever. The firm persuasion of this truth has a suitable effect upon the minds of the people of God. It completely cures them of their envy of sinners, and they desire rather to suffer affliction for the name of Jesus, than to enjoy those pleasures, if such they may be called, which are low and debasing in their nature, temporary and uncertain in their duration, and assuredly leading to destruction in their issue. But still, with regard to the bulk of men, the charm remains. Not only do the honours, riches, and pleasures of a present life attract their notice, but also the characters of those that enjoy them. These they behold living without God in the world, openly despising his authority, and casting all his commandments behind their backs; and as sentence against their evil works is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of multitudes are fully set in them to join their evil and ungodly courses. One generation thus passeth away, and another succeeds in the same round of wickedness and carnal security, and God endureth with much long-suffering those vessels of wrath who are thus fitting themselves for signal and everlasting destruction.

But the long-suffering and forbearance of God appear to have their limits, even in a present life. There seems, from the predictions of the word of God, to be a time coming when such a distinction of character shall be made as shall serve to impress the minds of men with a solemn conviction that God will not be mocked, and when the discriminating nature of his judgments shall enable them to discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not. This is not an inference drawn from a doubtful or solitary passage of Scripture. It appears to be predicted in explicit language by many of the prophets; and, if the writer do not mistake, some characters of the period are given so plainly as to enable them that believe to ascertain when it is drawing nigh. A reference to the prophets themselves will afford the best illustration of this remark. In the 2d chapter of Isaiah's prophecy, we read of God “arising to shake terribly the earth.” “The day of the Lord,” it is said, “shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and he shall be brought low: and the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day; and the idols shall be utterly abolished.” In the 34th chapter of the same book, it is said, “The indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies;” and it is styled, “the day of the Lord's vengeance, the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion.” It is abundantly manifest that the first prediction remains yet to be accomplished; and others of the prophets will equally show that the latter refers, not to any period prior, but subsequent to the destruction of the Jewish state. In the 23d chapter of the prophecy of Jeremiah, at ver. 19, it is said, “Behold, a whirlwind of the Lord is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind; it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked. The anger of the Lord shall not return till he have executed and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart. In the latter days” (a phrase uniformly applied to express the times of Christianity) “ye shall consider it perfectly.” In the 30th chapter the same declaration is repeated,

and, to mark the period, it is said, chap. xxxi., "At the same time will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people." The whole of the 25th chapter seems to be a prediction respecting the same time: at ver. 30 it is said, "the Lord shall roar from on high; he shall shout against all the inhabitants of the earth. He hath a controversy with all nations. He will plead with all flesh, and will give them that are wicked to the sword. Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth." Daniel seems to point to the very same time, when he says, in chap. xii. of his prophecy, "There shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time." That this has not yet taken place is plain from his immediately adding, "at that time thy people shall be delivered;" evidently referring to the return of the Jews in the last days.

It is in this awful manner, it would seem, that God means to arise and plead his own cause. It is in this awful manner that Messiah intends to arise and assert his right to universal empire, and to introduce his glorious and peaceful government among all the nations of the habitable earth. And what if he be already risen up? the inquiry is not only important, but it is the indispensable duty of every professing Christian, lest that denunciation should apply to him, "Because they regard not the operation of the Lord, therefore will he destroy them, and not build them up."

In connexion with the passages formerly quoted, there is a very striking one in the book of the prophet Zephaniah, which states in the most unequivocal manner that the universal spread of truth and of righteousness shall be preceded or accompanied by universal judgment. In chap. iii. 8, "Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey, for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger, for all the earth shall be devoured by the fire of my jealousy. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord with one consent. From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering." This passage serves as a key to the others, inasmuch as it shows that the period predicted shall be coincident with God's turning to the nations a pure language; and the others at the same time serve to show, that though the judgments of God shall be universal, yet they shall be discriminating—that they shall chiefly fall on the heads of the wicked. It is too plain that all the kingdoms of the earth have been guilty of much sin; and therefore all of them are to suffer exemplary punishment. This, it would appear, God intends to employ as a means of awakening men every where to call upon his name. If they refuse to repent and turn to the Lord, "they shall be devoured with the sword, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." The purpose of God, in regard to the period referred to, seems to be that men shall either be saved by the gospel or destroyed by judgments, and thus the earth shall be cleansed, in order to its becoming a quiet resting-place for the servants of Jesus: "There shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation." Our Lord uses similar language respecting the destruction of Jerusalem. Like many declarations in the prophecies, this may be considered as having both a primary and a plenary accomplishment. In both views, it may be capable of a consistent interpretation. The sufferings of the siege of Jerusalem may probably have been greater *in their nature* than any that ever have been or shall be; but in respect of the *universality of their extent*, the judgments of God which shall be poured out in the last days may render the language of the prophecy equally and exclu-

sively applicable in that sense. That this time has already passed will not be proved, until it be shown that all nations have already united in calling upon the Lord with one consent, as prophesied by Zephaniah. When, however, in obedience to the command of Christ, we mark the signs of the times—when we behold the Lord putting it into the hearts of his people to commiserate the state of the heathen, and messengers going forth to gather them unto Jesus—and when at the same time we mark the judgments of God extending from nation to nation—surely we discern enough to incite to holy watchfulness, lest the day of the Lord should come upon us at a moment when we are not aware. “Behold, I come as a thief,” says Jesus, “blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and men see his shame.” Let sinners in Zion be afraid; let them seek the Lord now while he is to be found, and call upon him while he is near, lest suddenly wrath should come upon them to the uttermost.

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KINGDOM OF HEAVEN FORCED.

Matt. xi. 12, 13.

THERE is no doubt, I think, that the question sent by John to Jesus—“Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?”—must have arisen from a misconception of the design of his appearance, probably of the same kind with that which occupied the mind of Christ’s disciples, as to the nature of his kingdom. It has been a question whether John himself was the subject of this misconception, or some of his disciples whom he personated. There is certainly an air of reproof contained in the answer, ver. 4—6. First, In its being *indirect*. Jesus would not say whether he was the Messiah or not; but left it for his works, and their correspondence with prophecy, to determine the question. Secondly, In its implying that his outward meanness had proved an occasion of offence. Whether it were John or his disciples, some must have been offended, and sinfully too, else such language would not have been used.

It may be thought that John himself, like the disciples of Christ, might be infected with the notion of the kingdom of Christ being a temporal kingdom; that on his being cast into prison, he expected Christ would publicly assume his throne, and release him; and that hearing of nothing more than of his being followed up and down by a number of poor people, and by few if any of better condition, he was stumbled, and knew not what to make of things. But on reviewing the chapter, and comparing it with other things spoken of John, it seems more natural to think that the doubt belonged to his disciples. Two reasons may here be mentioned for this. First, There appears to have been a greater degree of gospel light in the mind of John than in any of Christ’s disciples prior to his resurrection. They never seem to have understood the doctrine of his putting away sin by the sacrifice of himself till the thing was accomplished; but he pointed his disciples to the Saviour as the “Lamb of God that should take (or bear) away the sin of the world.” And when an attempt was made to excite his jealousy, (John iii. 25, 26,) his answer contains an exhibition of the person and work of Christ, worthy of an evangelical minister. “The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” He was a burning and a shining light,

while as yet darkness covered their minds. He was not allowed to enter into the gospel rest; but he had a Pisgah's view of it beyond any of his contemporaries. Secondly, Jesus, on the departure of the messengers, vindicated him before the multitudes, and that from being "a reed shaken with the wind," as the message which had been sent by him would seem to represent him.

The chief design of our Lord, however, in this his vindication of John, was to establish his ministry and former testimonies, and by consequence his own Messiahship. These, by the message recently sent, were in danger of suffering in the esteem of the people. It is in respect of this his ministry, as the Messiah's harbinger, rather than of his personal qualities, that he is declared to be "more than a prophet," and yet "less than the least in the kingdom of heaven." Thus it is that Jesus continues magnifying his own spiritual kingdom, and describing the interest which it had already excited from the time that John had proclaimed it. The Pharisees and lawyers indeed refused to enter in, and did all they could to hinder others; but the common people and the publicans "justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John." See Luke vii. 18—30. By comparing this passage with that in question, it is manifest that this was the *violence* which the kingdom of heaven suffered. As the two blind men, when rebuked by the multitude, and charged to hold their peace, cried the more a great deal, and pressed towards the Saviour, so the publicans and sinners were not to be deterred by the rebukes of their leaders; but, on hearing of the kingdom of God, "pressed into it."

To account for the mighty effects of John's ministry, on those who believed it, and to show the inexcusableness of those who disbelieved it, his preaching is contrasted with that of Moses and the prophets. They speak of things as *at a distance*, but he of things *as at hand*. There seems to be an ellipsis in ver. 13, which requires to be supplied as follows. "All the prophets and the law prophesied until John," *but he did more than prophesy*. He declared that the Messiah was now among them, and that his kingdom was at hand. Hence, the door being opened, there was a pressing into it; it was taken in a manner by force.

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CHRISTIAN FORGIVENESS.

Matt. xviii. 23, and following verses.

THE manifest design of the parable is to impress upon us the duty of forgiveness one to another, from the consideration of God's freely forgiving us. That in the parable, I imagine, which struck the querist\* as inconsistent with Calvinistic principles, was the supposition of a man being given up to the tormentors whose sins had been forgiven. Some expositors, in order to solve this difficulty, suppose the punishment to mean his being given up to *church* censures; others, to temporal calamities, and the accusations of a guilty conscience. But it appears to me that this is altogether foreign from the design of Christ. Our Lord certainly meant to suggest to *all the professors of Christianity, all the subjects of his visible kingdom*, that unless they forgave men their trespasses they themselves should not be forgiven, but should be cast into endless torment. The true solution of the

\* This article first appeared in the Evangelical Magazine, in reply to the inquiries of a correspondent.

difficulty I take to be this: It is common with our Lord in his parables to address men *upon their own principles*; not according to what they were in fact, but what they were in profession and expectation. For example, "There is joy over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons *which need no repentance*.—The *whole* need not a physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call *the righteous*, but sinners to repentance." Not that there were any among mankind who were *righteous, whole, and needed no repentance*, in fact, but merely in their own account. The *elder son* in the parable, in Luke xv., is doubtless intended to represent the scribes and Pharisees, who at that time drew near and murmured at Christ's receiving sinners, ver. 1, 2. And yet this elder son is allowed to be very obedient, (at least he is not contradicted in this matter,) and to have a large interest in his father's inheritance; not because it was so in fact, but as reasoning with them upon their own principles.

But what is nearer still to the case in hand is the parable addressed to Simon the Pharisee. Our Lord here supposes that Simon was a *little sinner*, and a *forgiven sinner*; and yet in fact he was neither. No set of men were greater sinners in reality than the Pharisees; and this man gave proof of his being in an impenitent and unforgiven state. But Christ reasoned with him upon his own principles: q. d. You reckon yourself a *little sinner*, and that what few failings you have will doubtless be forgiven you: well, be it so; this woman is a great sinner, and so accounts herself: I forgave her all her transgressions, and therefore you need not wonder at her conduct; her love to me is greater than yours, even allowing, for argument's sake, that your love is sincere.

Thus, in the parable under consideration, our Lord solemnly warns all the members of his visible kingdom, who professed to be the people of God, and who had their expectations of being forgiven of him, without determining whether their professions were sincere or their expectations well-founded, that if they forgave not men their trespasses, neither would his heavenly Father forgive them their trespasses. Whether they were sincere or not, made no difference as to the argument: If a person lays his account with being forgiven of God, and is unforgiving to his brother, his conduct is inconsistent and wicked; for being under the power of self-deception, his motive is the same as if it had been otherwise.

There are some subjects on which I feel myself incapable of throwing any fresh light. Where this is the case I think it my duty to decline them. Under this description I must reckon the questions of a correspondent who signs himself A BEREAN; and another who has addressed me under the signature of CANDIDUS, concerning *the decrees of God*. I feel difficulties upon those great subjects, on which, at present, I had rather pray than write.

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 PARABLE OF THE UNJUST STEWARD.

Luke xvi. 1—12.

It will not be expected that we should affix a distinct idea to every term in a parable. There are some parts of almost every composition of this kind which belong to what may be called the *drapery* of it; and were we to aim at a minute explication of them, we should presently feel ourselves lost in mazes of folly and impertinence. The first and chief object in the exposition of parables is to find out the *leading design* of the speaker. The

leading design in this parable is manifestly to expose the sin of *covetousness*. So it was understood by the Pharisees, who, as the sacred writer observes, (ver. 14,) "were covetous," and who, "when they heard these things, derided him." They perceived the parable was aimed at a sin in which they lived; but instead of being reproved and humbled, they affected, like the same kind of people in the present day, to carry it off with a high hand, and treated the reprovcr with derision.

To show the evil of the sin of covetousness, our Lord represents every man in the possession of worldly property as a *steward* under God, and intimates that a time will come when we must give account of our stewardship, and be no longer stewards. From the supposed case of one of the "children of this world," who, on being summoned to give account of his stewardship, took measures to ingratiate himself with his lord's tenants, our Saviour takes occasion to reprove the folly of avarice, and to enforce the practice of charity and liberality; by which that worldly property which had hitherto been unjustly detained from the necessitous, and which therefore was in danger of proving injurious to the souls of its possessors, might be turned to their everlasting advantage. "The children of this world," he observed, "are wiser in their generation than the children of light." The expedient supposed to be used by one of the former is introduced in order to shame the latter, and to provoke them to be as wise for their souls as the others are for their bodies.

The want of integrity in the unjust steward does not appear to consist in his giving back a part of the rents to his lord's tenants, but in his having embezzled and misapplied his property. The abatements which he is supposed to have made seem to have been, whatever might be his motive, but an exercise of justice towards those whom for his own private interest he had oppressed. In oppressing the tenants and defrauding his lord, the unjust steward fitly represents the conduct of those who at the same time withhold what is meet from the poor and from the Lord, appropriating what Providence puts into their hands to merely selfish purposes.

Worldly riches are called "the mammon of unrighteousness," not because it is unrighteous to be rich, nor, as I am inclined to think, on account of their having been *obtained* by unrighteous methods; but rather because of their being unrighteously *detained* from the poor and needy. Our riches may have been righteously obtained with respect to men, and yet unrighteously detained with respect to God, and with respect to the poor, who are his tenants, his representatives in this world. Such an unrighteous detention of our worldly wealth is tantamount to the conduct of the unjust steward, who "wasted his lord's goods." That which is not applied to the purposes for which it was intrusted in our hands is embezzled and misapplied in God's account. In this view the most covetous persons are the greatest wasters; and every one who possesses more than he ought, by having detained it from the poor and needy, is in possession of unrighteous mammon, is an unjust steward, and must shortly have to give account of his stewardship!

But if the mere detention of our property beyond what is fit and right constitute it the mammon of unrighteousness, who then is innocent? Who that is in possession of wealth can wash his hands, and say, "I am clear in this matter; I owe nothing to religion, nothing to the poor?" Alas, every one must feel self-condemned! The prevalence of this sin may account for our Lord's speaking of riches in general, in ver. 11, as the unrighteous mammon. There is perhaps a part at least of every man's property that, if *all* had their dues, would not be his.

And what is to be done with this overplus, this unrighteous mammon?

The answer is, Apply it to the uses to which it ought to have been applied before; not only communicate liberally of your substance to all those purposes for which you are intrusted with it, which ought to be your general course, but, like Zaccheus, pay up your arrears. This will be "making friends of," or *by*, "the mammon of unrighteousness; laying up treasure in heaven; laying up in store for ourselves a good foundation against the time to come, that we may lay hold on eternal life."

It is true, the mere communication of relief to the needy, if unaccompanied by love, will avail us nothing; and even if it spring from love, there is nothing in it that can, strictly speaking, merit the kingdom of God; yet, God having graciously promised eternal life as the reward of those who give but a cup of cold water to a disciple of Christ because he belongs to him, a compliance with the one affords a foundation to expect the other. As God graciously rewards even his own work in this world, so it will be in that to come: those who have sown sparingly here will reap sparingly hereafter, while those who have sown plentifully shall reap plentifully. We may as truly be said, by laying out ourselves for God, to lay up treasure in heaven, as if eternal life were literally the reward of human merit; and though when we have done all, we are unprofitable servants, having done no more than was our duty to do, yet, through the superabounding goodness of God, we may be said by these means to make to ourselves friends, who will bear such witness in our favour as that we shall be received into everlasting habitations.

To enforce the exercise of liberality, our Lord holds up the disparity between earthly and heavenly riches; the one as *little*, the other as *much*; the one as *unrighteous, deceitful, or false* mammon, the other as the *true* riches; this as pertaining to *another* man, of which we are only stewards, that as being properly *our own*, an inalienable and eternal inheritance; seriously warning us, at the same time, that if we continue unfaithful in the one, we can never expect to be put in possession of the other.

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THE CONVERTED THIEF.

Luke xxiii. 39—43.

It is an opinion entertained by some who imbibe what is called *rational* Christianity, that character being formed by habits, and habits by a series of actions, sudden conversions are impossible. It would seem to be in support of this hypothesis that doubts have been suggested as to the previous character of the converted thief, as whether his crime might not consist in some affair of a political nature, which, being accounted seditious, affected his life; and whether he might not, upon the whole, have been a good character notwithstanding. There is nothing, however, in the story that countenances such a notion. He is called a *malefactor* or *evil-doer*; and the term here rendered a *thief* signifies as much as a *robber*. It is the same word that is used of Barabbas, who was a *robber and murderer*. Besides, he condemns himself; who then shall go about to justify him?

Those who imbibe this opinion could have nothing to say to a condemned malefactor, unless it were to examine him as to the reality and heinousness of his crimes, hoping to find him less guilty than was alleged. If on inquiry they find he has been a bad character, they must give him up as to any change being effected in this life. The gospel which they preach will

not reach his case. He must die, therefore, in his sins, and whither the Saviour is gone he cannot go!

Some that have not carried matters to this length have yet considered the conversion of bad characters as every thing but hopeless. They do not say it is impossible, but conceive it to be exceedingly improbable; as if the probability of a sinner's conversion depended on his previous character, and was influenced by it. Jesus, however, commissioned his disciples to "preach repentance and remission of sins, in his name, among all nations, *beginning at Jerusalem*," the crimes of whose inhabitants, in crucifying the Lord of glory, were such that, compared with them, those of ordinary malefactors are but little follies.

The doctrine of grace to the chief of sinners never seems to be *guarded* in the Scriptures in the manner we sometimes see it in human writings. The salvation of a great sinner is not there held up as a *singular instance*, which we are not to expect to see repeated; but rather as a proof that no sinner need despair on account of the magnitude of his sins.—"For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a *pattern* to them who should hereafter believe on him to everlasting life."

The way in which the Scriptures guard the doctrine of grace is not by limiting its operations, but by insisting upon its *effects*. They put no questions to a sinner coming to Jesus for mercy, as to the magnitude of his sins; but they declare without reserve, that "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." On this principle let us carefully inspect the case of the converted thief, and apply it as we go along to cases in our own times.

First, He frankly *acknowledges his guilt and the justice of his condemnation*.—"We, indeed, justly;"—"we receive the due reward of our deeds." The sinner who palliates or prevaricates as to any part of his conduct is not a new creature, and therefore is not in Christ.

It is possible, however, that a convict may, through the fallibility of the most upright judge and jury, be condemned to die for a crime of which he is not guilty, although he has been guilty of many other crimes; while, therefore, he acknowledges the justice of God in his condemnation, he cannot in respect of the proceedings of man say, with the dying thief, *I suffer justly*. Such a case as this may occur, and where it does it is doubtless right for the party to speak the truth. But before he is entitled to credit, the credibility of the evidence against him requires to be carefully and impartially considered. Truth also is consistent, and very rarely devoid of evidence. Before he is entitled to credit, in the denial of what has been legally proved against him, it should be considered also that he may have an *interest* in trying to persuade those about him of his innocence in respect of the crime for which he is condemned to suffer, as it is by this only that he can hope for an application being made on his behalf for the mitigation of his punishment. When a compassionate minister attends a convict in such circumstances, and hears him confess how great a sinner he has been in other things, though as to the crime for which he is about to suffer he is innocent, he may be induced to believe him, and this the convict will quickly perceive, and will go on by every means in his power to work up his feelings. The convict may even exaggerate his other crimes for the sake of producing a belief of his innocence of the crime for which he stands condemned. But it ought to be considered that, for the crimes which he confesses, he lies under no indictment, and therefore they do not affect his life; but for the crime which he denies, he stands not only indicted, but condemned;—this therefore affecting his life, he is under the



strongest temptation that can be conceived to deny it. The sum is, that when a person is found guilty by a humane judge and an impartial jury, it may be laid down as a *general* rule that he *is* guilty, and no professions of repentance while he continues to deny it can be sincere; and though there are *particular exceptions* to this rule, yet no convict ought to be considered as one of them on his own bare word, unaccompanied with evidence, especially when he is under the greatest possible temptation, though he were guilty, to wish to be thought innocent.

Secondly, The few things uttered by the dying thief had no bearing on his temporal interest, but were *the pure dictates of truth and righteousness*. In condemning his own conduct, he justified his countrymen as to their treatment of *him*; yet at the same time he condemned them as to their treatment of Jesus. If, by the former, he might be supposed to conciliate them, and induce them to make interest for his being taken down from the cross, the latter would have a contrary effect. His words, therefore, *taken together*, must have arisen from a regard to what was true and right.

Thirdly, His repentance toward God was accompanied with "faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ."—The prayer that he offered was that of faith, and, considering his circumstances, of great faith. A man of his habits cannot be supposed to have been much acquainted with the prophecies or the miracles of Christ. Excepting the general notion, which may be considered as common to every Jew, that the Messiah would come, he would probably know little or nothing of religion. It is not unlikely that, till he saw Jesus in the hands of the rulers, he knew nothing of him; and now that he saw him, it was under every circumstance of weakness and disgrace; his enemies were triumphing over him, his friends had mostly forsaken him, public opinion was against him, and his very crucifixion was deemed inconsistent with his Messiahship. The lowliness of his condition from the beginning was a great stumbling-block to the Jews, and the circumstances of his death must render it more so, especially to one who had never seen him but in this situation. Even those who had believed in him were made to doubt by his crucifixion. Yet under all these disadvantages he had the fullest conviction of his Messiahship, or he could not have offered the prayer which he did, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom!" By the request to be remembered, he must have meant as much as if he had asked to be *saved*, which implies his belief in Jesus as the Saviour. Indeed he must have believed him to be the Saviour even of the chief of sinners, or *he* would not have hoped to be remembered by him. A self-righteous spectator would have cried shame on such a petition; and had he himself been influenced by that spirit, he might have suppressed it, as being unworthy of so great a favour. He must also have believed that this Jesus, though now expiring upon the cross, would shortly be in possession of a kingdom in the heavenly world. In this again he was before the apostles, whose notions of an earthly kingdom blinded their minds. Finally, it would seem as if he believed that in that blessed kingdom Jesus would "make intercession for transgressors;" why else did he ask to be remembered by him? This is certain, that if he had possessed the clearest views of the intercession of Christ, he could not have expressed himself better.

How full and appropriate was the term which his heart dictated! It is as if he had said, Think of me when it shall be well with thee.—He might have said, *Pardon* me, *save* me, *bless* me; but the words "*remember me*" include them all. An interest in Christ's heart will comprehend an interest in all his benefits. Nor was the term less appropriate to the *condition* of the petitioner; an outcast from society, who will remember *him*? The

public would think no more of him; his friends would be glad to forget him, as having disgraced the family; but there is one with whom he ventures to lodge a petition, "Lord, remember me!"

How shall we account for so large a portion of faith and spiritual understanding in one circumstanced as he was, and in so short a time? Without Divine influence it cannot be accounted for, but with it that which he saw and heard was sufficient for every purpose. When led to the place of execution, he heard the answer of Jesus to the women who lamented him,— "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children: for behold the days are coming in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then they shall begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us: for if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" He had also heard the prayer for his enemies, when they were nailing him to the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." To a heart which the Lord had opened, these sayings would be more than so many sermons. Nor was this all; he would gather from the very jeers of his enemies that Jesus professed to be Christ, the Son of God, and the Saviour of men. Even the impenitent thief knew this, and joined in reproaching him for it. The superscription written over him, "*This is the King of the Jews,*" was equal to saying, This is the Messiah; and so contained a testimony for him, on which account the Jews wished to have it altered. He would also perceive the spirit of the sufferer and that of his persecutors. Altogether, he saw that he had *done nothing amiss*; and his mind, being open to conviction, would quickly admit the consequences—He must be what he professes to be, Christ, the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world.

From this conviction proceeded his petition to be remembered by him; and, considering the well-known character of Christ, it was not surprising that it should be heard and answered. He had declared in his discourses, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out;" and he acted up to it.—"Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Of the reproaches that were cast upon him by his enemies he took no notice; but the prayer of the contrite and believing sinner arrested his attention. At a time when he was grappling with the powers of darkness, and sustaining the load of human guilt, we should have thought he might have been excused from attending to individual applications; but a sinner can never come to him in an unacceptable time. He gives him an answer of peace, and that without delay. There was a case in which he held the petitioner awhile in suspense, alleging, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to the dogs;" but this was an urgent case. In a very little time the spark of life would be extinguished. The word must be *nigh* him, or it will be unavailing. Had he been required to ascend to heaven or to descend into the deep for the blessing, it had been utterly out of reach. Had it been necessary for him to possess a set of virtuous habits, each acquired by a series of virtuous acts, the way had been too circuitous for him: but the word of faith was *nigh* him, and he laid hold of it; with his heart believing unto righteousness, and with his mouth making confession unto salvation.

As the request to be remembered included much, so did the answer. To be *with Christ in paradise*, not only supposes that his soul would exist when separated from the body, but intimates the forgiveness of his sins, and all that was necessary to salvation. It exceeds all that he asked or thought: he asked to be *remembered* by him, and is told he shall *be with him*: he asked to be remembered *at a future time*, he knew not when; and

is assured that, *before the day should end*, they would be together in paradise. And, lest it should seem too much to be true, Jesus prefaced the assurance with the solemn asseveration, "Verily I say unto thee." The dying man, no doubt, believed him, and rejoiced in hope of eternal life.

But, fourthly, Though assured of being with Christ in paradise, *there is no mention of his making this a part of his confession, or telling the spectators that he was going to heaven.*—What was said on this subject was by Christ, and not by him. Is it unnatural to suppose that the circumstances under which he died would induce him to suppress things which might have been proper in other circumstances? Had he been a martyr to the truth, he might have declared, with great propriety, that though they had cast him out, God would receive him; or had he died in his bed, like other righteous men, he might have said with an apostle, "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;" but, dying as a malefactor, whatever were his hopes or joys, he would not be forward to speak of them. If, in cases where men are "buffeted for their faults," the most exemplary patience loses its *glory and thankworthiness*, much more where they are executed for their crimes. It must appear to the dying thief, and I think to any true penitent in his situation, that the expressions of a lively hope would have *no glory*, but must rather appear incongruous and disgusting. In such circumstances, therefore, he would rather choose to steal out of the world in silence. Duty required him to acknowledge his sin, and he did so, without prevarication or reserve. Let the world think ill of his conduct; the more they do this, the better; but as to their thinking well of his future state, he discovered no concern about it.

Besides, except his acknowledgment of the justice of his sentence, he had no claim to the credence of the spectators for the sincerity of his repentance. Unless his life had been prolonged, he could give no *proof* of it; what right then had he to expect to be credited as to his future happiness? The testimony of a single witness was not admitted in certain cases under the Mosaic law: whatever, therefore, such a witness might know, he would not be forward to utter, and still less to claim credit for the truth of that of which he could produce no legal proof: so the truly penitent convict, knowing that he has no such means of proving his sincerity as he would have if his life were prolonged, will not be eager in proclaiming it.

The above remarks are submitted to the serious consideration of those ministers or private Christians who are called to attend persons under sentence of death. Let the case of the dying thief have all its weight in encouraging us to use means for their conversion; but let us not hastily flatter ourselves, and still less the unhappy convict, that we have succeeded. If his supposed penitence be attended with an eagerness to proclaim his own sincerity, and his certain expectation of future happiness, it should be strongly suspected; and if with a denial of what has been clearly proved against him, or a disposition to palliate or prevaricate, utterly discredited.

The boasting language so common among convicts who profess to repent and believe the gospel, in our times, has caused some to ask whether the gallows was not the surest way to heaven.

There certainly are principles, apart from religion, which account for much that in such circumstances passes for conversion. Besides what has been observed under the first remark, of men being induced to profess repentance for their other sins while they deny that for which they are to suffer, in hope of saving their lives, there may be *strong feelings* respecting a future state, while yet there is no true repentance. When a man has received the sentence of death, and knows he must shortly stand before his

Maker, is it surprising that *his heart fails him*? And if, when his character and condition are faithfully stated to him, *he weeps*, is it any wonder? I add, if when the hope of salvation by Jesus Christ is held up to him, he catches at it with eagerness, as his only refuge against terror, and if a gleam of hope be thus kindled in his mind, and he be encouraged to think well of his state, it does not require the supernatural influences of the Holy Spirit to cause him to *weep for joy*. And this in the account of a good minister, whose desires are ardently drawn forth for his salvation, will render him an object of *hope*. But, after all, should the convict be pardoned, the minister, if he be wise as well as good, will have many painful apprehensions lest the event that terminates his terrors should also terminate his religion?

If only one in ten of those for whom hope is entertained in the hour of terror should, on their lives being prolonged, prove truly religious characters, it is sufficient to encourage the utmost efforts for the conversion of such unhappy men, but not to justify our pronouncing on every one, who dies with apparent contrition, that he is gone to heaven.

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JOHN'S TESTIMONY TO JESUS.

John iii. 22—36.

WHILE John and Jesus were both baptizing at a little distance from each other, there arose questions between some of the disciples of the former and the Jews about purifying. Whether they conceived of baptism as a mode of purifying, and thought they had enough of this already, or whatever they thought, they were manifestly disposed to set John at variance with Jesus, by endeavouring to work upon his jealousies. Probably the objection was first made by the Jews to some of John's disciples; and they, being staggered by it, came with it to their master: "Rabbi," say they, "he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come unto him." If John had been under the influence of such principles as govern the greater part of mankind, this poison must have taken effect. Its import was nothing less than this: This Jesus whom you exalt is become your rival, and draws away your disciples after him. Can he be the Messiah?

John, instead of being fired with jealousy, feels indignant at the attempt to place him in competition with his Lord, and rejects the idea with great force of language. "A man," saith he, "can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven;" and be assured it was never given me from heaven to be a competitor with the Saviour of the world, ver. 27. "Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him," ver. 28. And as to "all men coming to him," it is as it should be. Instead of undermining the proof of his Messiahship, it establishes it: for "he that hath the bride" (i. e. the people who believe in him) "is the bridegroom." Envy not, I beseech you, therefore for my sake. It is enough for me to be "the bridegroom's friend." I have seen him, and heard his voice, and this to me is joy unspeakable, ver. 29. That of which you complain is the course in which things will continue to move; "for he must increase, and I decrease," ver. 30. Nor ought any to desire it to be otherwise; for "he that cometh from above (as Jesus doth) is above all: he that is of the earth (as I am) is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from

heaven is above all," and ought not, therefore, to be compared with a worm of the dust, ver. 31.

Having thus commended his person, he proceeds to commend his doctrine, and, like an evangelical minister, to exhibit him as the only author of salvation. He describes his testimony as different from all others, in that it consists of things which he had "seen and heard" in heaven as being privy to all the Divine counsels; whereas those who were of the earth could only believe and therefore speak. But though he spoke as never man spoke, yet men in general rejected his testimony; those however who received it, as there were some that did, (ver. 32,) in so doing not only did him just honour, but subscribed to the veracity of God in all the promises and prophecies of his word; while those who rejected it, however they might make their boast of God, treated his oracles as lies, and himself as a liar, ver. 33. The reason for his thus identifying the testimony of Christ and the truth of God is, that God had "sent him, and he spake the very words of God;" and this not only as having been privy to all his counsels, but as partaking of his Spirit without measure, ver. 34.

He proceeds to warn them of the danger of being found fighting against God. "The Father," saith he, "loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hands." Will you set yourselves against the mind and purpose of God? He is his chief delight. His heart is set on honouring him. To him he hath committed all the great concerns of his moral empire, that he may restore it to order, and carry into execution all his designs of mercy and judgment. Be ye therefore of God's mind, ver 35. If ye believe on the Son, everlasting life is yours: if ye believe not the Son, you will never see life; but "the wrath of God" revealed from heaven against you, in all the curses of his righteous law, will be bound for ever upon you! ver. 36.

Let the reader seriously consider this testimony of John. Let him remember that it is as applicable to us in these days as it was to the parties immediately addressed. It is the same doctrine as that which our Lord himself delivered to Nicodemus, in verses 14—18, and is that word by which we shall be judged at the last day: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

## TRIAL OF SPIRITS.

1 John iv. 1.

THE predicted enmity between the seed of the woman and of the serpent has been peculiarly fulfilled in the times of the gospel. No sooner was the Christian church established, by the preaching of the cross, than it began to be assailed by a flood of false doctrine. Christ had his ministers in every quarter, and Satan had his. It is in this way that the devil has wrought his greatest achievements. The persecutions of the first three centuries accomplished but little in his favour, but the corruptions of the fourth intro-

duced a species of apostacy which has deluged the Christian world for more than a thousand years.

The design of God in permitting these things may surpass our comprehension: we are told, however, that "it must needs be that offences come," and that "there must be heresies among us, that they who are approved may be made manifest." The existence of such things, therefore, should neither vex nor surprise us, but merely excite in us that circumspection which is necessary in walking among pits and snares. Such was the temper of mind which the apostle John aimed to excite in the primitive Christians. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world." If such caution was necessary for the primitive Christians, unless we could depend on the floods of false doctrine having of late ages subsided, or on our having better securities against them than those who were contemporary with the apostles, it must be necessary for us. As neither of these suppositions can be admitted, I may be allowed to apply the warning language of the apostle to our own times.

The *spirits* which are to be tried seem to refer not so much to persons as to things; things which are presented for belief, or *doctrines*. The "spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh" appears to be the same thing as the doctrine that is opposed to that great truth.\* This doctrine may be called a *spirit*, not only as professing to come from Divine inspiration, but on account of its *energies*. False doctrines are described as contagious winds, that waft poison into the minds of men; a pestilence that walketh in darkness, insinuating its malignant influence in so insensible a manner that the work of death is effected ere the party is aware.

Beloved, believe not every doctrine that is proposed to you, whatever may be the pretensions or the confidence of the proposer. Error seldom or never goes abroad undisguised.

Believe not every doctrine that comes to you in a *rational* garb. There is nothing in true religion repugnant to sound reason; but a system that hangs upon subtle reasoning is not the gospel. There is no cause but what may be made to appear plausible by ingenious men; of this any one may satisfy himself who listens but a few hours to the speeches of the bar or the senate. For a doctrine to be of God, it must not only be conveyed in plain language, such as without any force put upon it naturally suggests the idea to a humble and intelligent reader, but must quadrate with the whole word of God, and be productive of effects similar to that of Christ and his apostles. The same Divine oracle which teaches us to "incline our ear unto wisdom, and apply our heart to understanding," directs to "cry and lift up our voice for it, to trust in the Lord with all our heart, and not to lean to our *own* understanding."

Believe not every doctrine that comes to you in a *holy* garb. That the gospel is holy, and of a holy tendency, cannot be doubted by one who believes it; but holiness itself is capable in a degree of being assumed. The false teachers, who corrupted the Corinthians, found it necessary, in order to accomplish their ends, to "transform themselves into the apostles of Christ: and no marvel," saith Paul, "for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." It is no uncommon thing for the gospel to be undermined by a pretended zeal for morality. The Pharisees were wont to be considered as almost the only friends to good works: alleging against Jesus, that he kept company with *sinner*s, and ate with them. Yet they were denounced as hypocrites. If an evangelical minister among us be called to

\* The three unclean spirits coming out of the mouth of the dragon, of the beast, and of the false prophet, (Rev. xvi. 13,) may be no other than delusive and destructive principles.

contend for the purity, spirituality, and perpetual authority of the Divine law, or for any particular branch of practical godliness; it is not unusual for others, who are very differently affected to evangelical truth, to claim kindred with him, and to wish to have it thought that all the suspicions that had been entertained of them were merely owing to their zeal for holiness. But there are few men who are farther off from the holiness of the New Testament than those who urge the duty to the neglect of the principles from which it rises. We must both "rebuke and exhort," but it must be with "all long-suffering and doctrine."

Believe not every doctrine that comes to you in an *evangelical* garb. Nothing can be truly evangelical but it must be of God; but, under the pretence of this, some of the most pernicious errors have been introduced. That species of religion which by the professed adherence to faith, "maketh void the law" is chiefly under the disguise of exalting grace. Of this kind was the religion of those of whom James writes, whose "faith was dead, being alone." Of this kind was the religion of those awful characters described by Peter and Jude. "Speaking great swelling words of vanity, alluring through the lusts of the flesh and much wantonness those who were clean escaped from them who live in error, promising them *liberty*, while they themselves were the servants of corruption." Finally, Of this nature appears to have been "the doctrine of the Nicolaitans," which led to unholy *deeds*, and which the Lord *hated*.

Believe no doctrine in matters of religion but what is of *God*. This is the criterion by which we are directed to try the spirits. For a doctrine to be of God, it must be expressive of *the mind of God as revealed in his word*. If we lose sight of this, we shall soon be lost in the mazes of uncertainty. "We are of God," saith the apostle; "he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." The doctrine of the apostles being itself of God was a test by which to try the spirits, and such it still continues. We see in their writings the very mind of God on all the great subjects pertaining to his character, government, and gospel. If they write of God, it is with the profoundest reverence, as of Him who is "blessed for ever;" if of his law, it is "holy, just, and good;" if of sin, it is "exceeding sinful;" if of sinners, they are "under the curse;" if of Christ, "as concerning the flesh, he was of the seed of David;" but, as concerning his original nature, "the Son of God, over all, God blessed for ever;" if of salvation, it is "of grace, through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God." Finally, If they describe the end for which Christ gave himself for us, it was that he might "redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." This doctrine is of God; and he that knoweth God heareth it. But that which begets high thoughts of ourselves, low thoughts of God, light thoughts of sin, and mean thoughts of Christ, is not of God, and it is at the hazard of our salvation to receive it.

Lastly, That which is of God will lead us to *side with God in the great controversy between him and his apostate creatures*. The spirit of apostacy has always been complaining of the ways of the Lord as *unequal*. His precepts are too rigid at least for a poor fallen creature; his threatenings are too severe; it is hard to punish with everlasting destruction the errors of a few years; it had been hard if he had not sent his Son to save us; and is still hard if, after doing all we can, we must stand upon the same ground as the chief of sinners: surely he does not mean, after all, to punish unbelievers with eternal punishment.—Such are the workings of an apostate mind, and every false system of religion favours them. But that which is of God will take a different course. While it teaches us to seek the salvation of our

fellow sinners, it will never suffer us to palliate or excuse their sin. Its language is, "I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way.—Thou art holy in all thy ways, and righteous in all thy works.—Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further.—Thou shalt be justified when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest.—If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand?—God be merciful to me a sinner."

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CHRIST WASHING THE DISCIPLES' FEET.

John xiii.

THIS significant action, so full of kindness and condescension on the part of our Saviour, is recorded for our example. Happy shall we be, if we truly copy it. Here is no affectation of humility, but humility itself; nor is it performed as a mere ceremony, but to teach us "in love to serve one another." Its being done at a time when "Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father," renders it additionally impressive. It was the same night in which he was betrayed; a night in which it might have been thought his own approaching trials would have engrossed his whole attention; yet then he was fully employed in behalf of others; setting an example of brotherly affection, ordaining a standing memorial of his death, fortifying, by a speech full of unparalleled consolation, the hearts of his disciples, and commending them to the care of God his Father. "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows," not only in making his soul an offering for sin, but in every step that led on to that awful crisis.

Laying aside his garments, he took a towel, girded himself with it, poured the water into a bason, and went from one to another, performing the work of a menial servant. When it came to Peter's turn, his feelings revolted at the idea. "Lord," saith he, viewing his dignity on the one hand, and his own insignificance on the other, "dost *thou* wash *my* feet?" Jesus answered, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter;" intimating that he had a reason for so doing, which, though it might not be manifest at present, would at a future time be rendered plain. "Nay," saith Peter, almost indignantly, "thou shalt never wash my feet!" As though he had said,—This is too much, and what I never can submit to!

Jesus answered him, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." What! if he washed not his feet? No, his soul, from the pollution of sin. Transitions like this, from things natural to things spiritual, were usual with our Saviour. Thus, when he had healed a blind man, he took occasion to observe, "For judgment I am come into this world, that they who see not may see; and that they who see may be made blind." The answer in the present instance was to this effect—Dost thou account it too great a stoop for me to wash thy feet? Let me tell thee, I must stoop lower than this, or woe be to thee! I must cleanse thee from a defilement much more loathsome than this, or thou canst have no part with me in my kingdom.

Peter, perceiving now that he spoke of the purifying of his soul from sin, suddenly changed his tone. "Lord," saith he, "not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." q. d. If this be thy meaning, I know that I need to be cleansed throughout.



Jesus saith unto him, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit; and ye are clean, but not all." As it is sufficient for persons who have bathed their bodies in the stream to wash off the defilement attached to their feet by walking on the shore, so they that have believed in Christ shall never come into condemnation, and need not the repetition of a passing from death to life, but merely an application for the pardon of their daily sins. Such was the character of all the disciples, except Judas, who, notwithstanding his profession, was yet in his sins.

From this interesting conversation, we are taught several important truths.

First, We may sin against Christ, under a show of modesty and reverence for his name. There is no doubt but that Peter's first objection sprang from these motives; and had he yielded to the first answer, perhaps he had been blameless; but to resist after he was assured that his Lord had a good reason for what he did, though he at present did not comprehend it, was setting up his own wisdom and will against his. Nor was this the first instance in which Peter was guilty of so doing. When our Saviour spoke of going up to Jerusalem, and of suffering many things, and being killed, and rising again the third day, he rebuked him, saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee." In all this he "savoured not the things that were of God, but the things that were of men."

There is much of this spirit in our self-righteous objections to the grace of the gospel, and self-willed oppositions to Christ's revealed will. One pleads that salvation by mere grace is dishonourable to God's moral government; but let him know, from the example of Peter, that there may be a regard to Christ's honour which he doth not require at our hands; and that we should act much more becoming by acquiescing in his will, than by obtruding our own conceits in opposition to it. Another alleges, It is too much for a sinner so unworthy as I am to hope for so great salvation.—But can you do with less? and is it the comparatively worthy that mercy delighteth to honour? True wisdom will fall in with that way of honouring God which is revealed in the gospel; and genuine modesty will not dispute with the Saviour, but humbly take him at his word. And the same spirit that receives his grace without hesitation will obey his precepts without delay; not asking why or wherefore the Lord requireth this, but accounting it our meat to do his will.

Secondly, A cordial and practical acquiescence in the way of salvation through the blood of Christ is necessary to a participation of his benefits. It may seem rather singular that Christ should suspend his blessing on his own act—"If I wash thee not," &c., but that act supposes the concurrence of the party. He stood ready to wash Peter, and stands ready to wash the foulest of sinners. If therefore they be not washed, it is owing to their preference of pollution, or their self-righteous objections to the way of being cleansed. To feel ourselves entirely polluted, and ready to perish—to despair of being cleansed by any thing that we can perform, or work ourselves up to—to place no dependence on prayers or tears, on our bitterest repentance or most unfeigned faith, considered as acts of holiness—and to repair, altogether vile as we are, to the blood of Jesus, as to a fountain set open for sin and for uncleanness—this is the hinge of true religion, without which we shall have no interest with him in his benefits, nor portion with him in his heavenly kingdom. If we come not to him as polluted sinners to be washed, our iniquities are still upon our head; and if we die in this state, they will go down with us to the grave, rise with us at the resurrection, be found upon us at judgment, and for ever bar against us those gates through which nothing unclean can enter. In this case, so far as we are concerned, the Saviour might as well have never come into the world, nor

have laid down his life; nay, better; for if our filthiness be found upon us at the last day, it will be the bitterest of all aggravations that the kingdom of Christ has been nigh unto us.

Thirdly, Though the believer, who hath passed from death to life, shall never come into condemnation; yet he standeth in need of continual cleansing from his daily defilements. The notion that it is inconsistent for a believer to pray for the pardon of his sins is contrary to the express directions of Christ, and to the example of the godly in all ages. It belongs to a "life of faith on the Son of God;" and without it, whatever self-flattering ideas we may entertain, we are dead while we live; and in whatever degree we come short of such a life, wearing away our transgressions by forgetfulness, instead of washing them away by repeated application to the blood of the cross, we incur the displeasure of Christ, and forsake our own mercies.

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#### FINAL RESTITUTION.

Acts iii. 21.

OF all the sentiments advanced in the religious world, there are few perhaps that are likely to have a greater spread than that of *final and universal salvation, or the release of wicked men and devils, at some unknown period after the day of judgment*. It is not supposed that this sentiment is attended with such convincing evidence as must bear all before it: far from it; but it is a sentiment suited to the corrupt passions and prejudices of men; and we know the propensity of our minds to believe a thing to be as we would wish to have it.

It is one presumptive argument, however, against the sentiment referred to, that it is destitute of real *utility*. Admitting it to be true, of what use is it? Who are encouraged by it? Not the upright; they are safe without it. It is the ungodly sinner, if any. He is encouraged, it is true; not however to forsake his sins, or to flee to the remedy; but to conclude that he shall have peace at last, "though he walk after the imagination of his heart, to add drunkenness to thirst." If it be a truth, it seems to be of such a nature that the world would be much better without the knowledge of it than with it. On the other hand, admitting it to be an error, it must be allowed to be tremendous in its consequences. Nothing ought more to be dreaded than that which tends to deceive the souls of men, and that in matters of everlasting consequence!

The following thoughts are not offered as a discussion of the subject, but merely as what may throw some light upon one particular passage of Scripture upon which it is frequently grounded. This passage is in Acts iii. 21, "Jesus Christ—whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." On this passage I would offer the three following observations.

First, *The times of restitution cannot mean any time or times beyond those of the resurrection and the last judgment*. This is evident from the passage itself compared with various other scriptures. The heavens have received Christ, and will retain him till the times of restitution of all things—but the whole tenor of Scripture declares that the heavens will not retain Christ beyond the times of the resurrection and the last judgment—therefore the times of restitution cannot be beyond that period.

Christ's being retained in the heavens till the times of the restitution of all things is said to have been "spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began." This, if applied to the kingdom of the Messiah terminating in the resurrection and the last judgment, is true; for from Enoch to Malachi this was a subject to which all the prophets bore witness. But if applied to some future period after the final judgment, when wicked men and devils shall be released, it is not true, the abettors of this notion themselves being judges. What evidence can they pretend to, supposing the thing itself were a truth, that God by the mouth of all his holy prophets said any thing about it? Much less that Christ should be retained in the heavens till the arrival of this supposed period. On the contrary, by the mouth of all his holy prophets he hath said just the reverse. He hath all along represented Christ's second coming as being immediately *before* and *in order to* the last judgment, and not *after* it, Jude 14, 15; Job xix. 25, 26; Psa. l. 3, 4; xcvi. 13; xcvi. 9; Joel iii. 13.

Secondly, *The times of the resurrection and the last judgment are with peculiar propriety called the times of restitution of all things, because that is the period when the moral disorder of the creation shall come to an end.* By the introduction and prevalence of moral evil, every thing in creation has been disjointed and thrown into a state of anarchy and confusion. God's authority has been set aside, his just revenue of glory withheld, and even the *creatures*, which were all designed to promote righteousness, order, and happiness, are abused, and made to subserve the gratifications of brutal appetite. The sun emits his rays, and the clouds let fall their showers, the mountains abound with cattle, and the valleys with corn; and all to furnish man with what he subverts to the vilest purposes. All this is *unnatural* to the creation. The grand end of every being, intelligent or unintelligent, was to subserve the Creator's glory. If the creatures of God are made to promote the cause of iniquity, it is unnatural. It is a *vanity to which they are unwillingly*, as it were, *made subject*, and under which, as under a burden, "they groan and travail in pain," longing for the "glorious liberty of the sons of God," which shall arrive at the resurrection. The empire of sin shall then be utterly destroyed, order fully restored, and peace and righteousness flow in their ancient channels.

But nothing of all this implies the restoration of wicked men and devils to their original state. If a rebellion break out in the dominions of an earthly king, which is carried to such a height that the laws are set aside, the royal authority disregarded, and all the productions of that part of his dominions appropriated to purposes of hostility; if after this the king should crush the conspiracy, reinstate himself upon his throne, and call the offenders to justice; if he should pardon some, punish others, and restore law, peace, and order to his whole dominions; this might be termed a restitution of all things; but who would imagine that this implied the restitution of all the rebels to their ancient dignities and honours?

Thirdly, *The times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, and the times of restitution of all things, appear to be the same; and a share in both is held up as a motive to repentance and conversion.* The apostle, in the text, says, "Repent therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. And he shall send Jesus Christ, who before was preached unto you; whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." This, if applied to the times of the resurrection and the last judgment, is all rational and beautiful; but if applied to some period after those times, when devils and wicked men shall be released, it

is absurd and contradictory. Is it possible to suppose Peter's meaning should be to the following purpose:—Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when these times of refreshing and restitution shall come; though, after all, your sins shall *then* be blotted out, whether you repent and be converted or not?

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THE HONOUR CONFERRED ON WEAKER DISCIPLES.

1 Cor. xiii. 24.

AMONG other disorders in the church at Corinth, they were lifted up with their gifts. Hence this whole chapter is spent on the subject. Indeed the same spirit is noticed at the outset of the Epistle, (chap. i. 12,) where, though he mentions his own name, and those of Apollos, &c., as the idols of their admiration, yet it was only in a figure, (chap. iv. 6,) that he might with a better grace pull them down. Probably the objects of their idolatry were neither Paul nor Apollos, but their own false teachers. In order to impress a true sense of things upon their minds, he represents them under the form of a human body, composed of many members, insinuating that it was no less absurd for invidious distinctions and divisions to take place on account of different gifts, than it would be for certain members of the body to be exalted, and the rest set at nought.

The apostle first addresses himself to the inferior members, who were in danger of being discouraged: "If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?" And, afterwards, to the superior members who were in danger of discouraging them: "And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you." Finally, he notices the peculiar honour which we confer upon those parts of the body which are least comely or honourable: "And those members of the body which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour, and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness." And he intimates in the text that God does the same to his church. Consequently we ought to follow the example, giving more honour, rather than less, to the feeble members of Christ's body. What is this? *What is the peculiar honour which God has conferred on the less splendid members of the church, rather than the other?*

First, That which distinguishes the ordinary members of Christ's body is of far greater importance than that which distinguishes the extraordinary, or gifted ones. The one is *grace*, the other *gifts*. This idea is held up in the text. After speaking of apostles and prophets, and pastors and teachers, &c., he allows them to covet the best *gifts*. "Yet," says he, "show I unto you a more excellent way." And what was this but *charity*, or love? Hence he goes on to contrast gifts and tongues with charity, in chap. xiii., giving the decided preference to the latter. Now this was *giving honour to the part that lacked*; making that which was common to Christians, even the meanest, of infinitely greater account than that which was possessed by a few of the gifted among them.

Secondly, The most gifted members of Christ's body, in a proper state of mind, when they have expressed their strongest desires, and the objects in which they have gloried, have never selected those things which were peculiar to them as gifted, but those which are possessed by good men in

common. The highest object of David's desire was that which was possessed by the meanest good man. "*One thing* have I desired of the Lord; that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." That in which Paul glorified was not his greatness, but his infirmity, and the "cross of Christ;" and that which he desired was to be "found in him, not having his own righteousness."

Thirdly, The greater is subordinate to the less, and not the less to the greater. Churches are not for ministers, but ministers for churches. The poor, the feeble, and the afflicted are not ordained to honour a splendid orator, by attending upon him and admiring him; but the most accomplished orator, or even apostle, to be "their servant for Jesus' sake." As the eye and the hand are subservient to the body, so, "whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or life, or death, *all are yours.*" The greatest of all must be the servant of all: "And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

Fourthly, In their vocation God has conferred peculiar honour upon the poor, and the weak, and the feeble, in taking the generality of his people from among them. "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.—Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

Fifthly, All the consolations and promises of God are addressed to us, not as gifted, but as gracious. God speaks encouraging words to both rich and poor; but mark the difference: "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted; but the rich in that he is made low; because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away." See also the beatitudes.

Sixthly, That which distinguishes the gifted members of Christ is only for time, and is found in hypocrites; but that which is common to the weak is "a well, springing up unto eternal life."—"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

This subject may be applied to *the suppression of vanity, and the removal of despondency.*

Gifts and knowledge puff men up now as well as formerly. A poor or feeble-minded Christian is in danger of being overlooked, and men are valued by the splendour of their appearance or talents. Ministers also, of less splendid abilities, are often despised by those who have itching ears and curious minds. But these things ought not so to be. We have seen that God does not proceed on any such principle. If ye say, I am for this great man, and I for that, "are ye not carnal?" And if any one set himself above his brethren, let him know that he could not do without them. "The eye," beautiful and piercing as it is, "cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee." The greatest of Christian ministers, such as Paul, felt his need of his brethren. Hence he frequently entreats their *prayers* for him. The influence which the early attendance, lively attention, and affec-

tionate reception of the word in common Christians has upon a minister's heart is indescribable. Oh what a difference do we feel in preaching to a humble, spiritual, and affectionate congregation, to what we do when addressing a haughty, worldly, and unfeeling people! The uniform demeanour of serious Christians in life recommends the doctrines delivered from the pulpit; yea, it has been known to carry conviction where the gospel itself has been preached without effect. Listen, ye wives! "Be in subjection to your own husbands, that if any obey not the word, they also may, without the word, be won by the conversation of the wives."

And as some are puffed up in these times, as well as formerly, so others are consequently cast down. Many a poor Christian, because he is poor, thinks himself a dry tree, of little or no use, like the strangers, or eunuchs (Isa. lvi.); and many a feeble-minded, low-spirited Christian, whose words are few, feels the same. Yea, many a worthy minister of less splendid talents, being overlooked by others, feels his heart sink within him, and is as if he were not of the body. "But if the foot say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body?" &c. Assuredly it is a necessary part of it. "Nay, much more, those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary." And as God has put more abundant honour upon the part which lacked, let them not be discouraged.

That one question, "Is it not of the body?" is full of meaning. It denotes that you are connected with Christ your Head, and partakers of his fulness, even all that is common to the body. Particularly, you have an interest in Christ's love: "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." In his salvation: "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the church: and he is the Saviour of the body."—In all that is communicated from him, you have a part: "But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up unto him in all things which is the Head, even Christ; from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love." Yea, you are necessary to his *relative* fulness, the fulness of him that filleth all in all: "which is the body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." If the least member were gone, it would not be a full or perfect body.

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#### VINDICATION OF THE APOSTLE PAUL.

2 Cor. xii. 16.

THIS passage is so far from being friendly to the exercise of guile, that it is a manifest disavowal of it. It is an *irony*. The apostle does not describe what had actually been his conduct, but that of which he stood accused by the Corinthian teachers. They insinuate that he was a sly, crafty man, going about "preaching, persuading, and catching people with guile." Paul acknowledges that he and his colleagues did indeed "persuade men," and could not do otherwise; for "the love of Christ constrained them," chap. v. 11, 14. But he indignantly repels the insinuation of its being from mercenary motives. "We have wronged no man," says he; "we have corrupted no man; we have defrauded no man," vii. 2. Having denied the charge, he shows the *absurdity* of it. Mercenary men, who wish to draw people after them, have an *end* to answer; and what end,

says Paul, could I have in view, in *persuading* you to embrace the gospel? Have I gained any thing by you? When I was with you, was I burdensome to you? No; nor, as things are, will I be burdensome. "*Yet, being crafty,*" forsooth, "*I caught you with guile!*"

Oh, said the accusers, he affected great disinterestedness at first, that he might the more easily take you in afterwards. He declined taking any thing with his own hands, with the intention of sending others to collect it for him at a more convenient season! "Did I then make a gain of you," replies the apostle, "by any of them whom I sent unto you? I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother: did Titus make a gain of you? Walked we not in the same spirit? walked we not in the same steps?" chap. xii. 17, 18.

Nothing is more evident than that "all guile and hypocrisy were laid aside" by the primitive ministers. "Our rejoicing is this," says the apostle, "the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity not in fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward," chap. i. 12.

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TRUTH THE OBJECT OF ANGELICAL RESEARCH.

1 Pet. i. 12.

It is a truth allowed by all Christians, that the dispensation under which we live affords us far greater advantages for spirituality and heavenly enjoyment than any other which preceded it. To us life and immortality are brought to light. The spirit that properly belongs to it is not a spirit of bondage, but of adoption; crying, "Abba, Father." The happiness attainable under it approaches nearer to that of the heavenly world; so nigh does its land border as it were upon it, that believers in the present state are said to be "come to Mount Sion, to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to the innumerable company of angels, to the spirits of the just made perfect," &c. Yet it is not less true that the greater part of professing Christians live as though they stood upon no such ground, and possessed no such opportunities. We possess an Old Testament spirit amidst New Testament advantages. A promise is left us of entering into rest; but we seem, at least, to come short of it. How is this? Is it not owing, in a great degree, to the *neglect of the gospel?* Having assented to a system of doctrines, we fancy we know almost the whole that is to be known upon this subject, and have nothing more to do than to hold them fast against the errors of the times, and take heed that we do not dishonour them by inconsistency of conduct. Hence what is called religious conversation seldom turns upon the gospel, unless any part of it be called in question; but either upon our own want of spirituality, or the pleasures that we have formerly experienced, or perhaps upon the talents of this or that popular preacher.

When a company of Christians meet together, and feel a wish for improving conversation, let one of them take a Bible and read, and, as he reads, let him frequently pause, and let any one who can make a remark, or ask a serious question, so as upon the whole to promote the understanding of what is read. This would draw off the attention from less profitable things; and the blessing of the Lord attending it would, ere we are aware, produce those holy pleasures which, while poring over our own barrenness, we shall sigh after in vain.

To comfort the primitive Christians, who were "in heaviness through manifold temptations," Peter took no other method than that of declaring unto them the glorious truths of the gospel, and the vast advantages which they had over all others of former ages, in possessing the knowledge of them. Three things in particular he holds up to their consideration: 1. That the prophets were ministering servants to us: "Not unto themselves, but unto us, did they minister things which are now reported." They sowed that we might reap. 2. That the things which they foretold, and which we possess, were the objects of their own most intense research: "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently; searching what, and what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify, when it testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." 3. That such is the excellence and glory of the gospel as not only to be the study of prophets, but of angels: "Which things the angels desire to look into."

It is generally supposed, I believe, that the phrase "look into"\* alludes to the cherubim which were placed bending over the mercy-seat, and looking as it were with intenseness at it. Thus Mary stooped, and looked into the sepulchre, in hope of discovering her Lord; and thus believers are described as *looking into* the perfect law of liberty, or the gospel of Christ.

In former ages, the angels employed their capacious powers on other themes. At first, the display of the Divine perfections in creation furnished them with matter for praise and gladness: "The morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy." Afterwards, the providence of God, in the government of the world, enlarged their mental boundary; "One cried to another, saying Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory!" But since the coming of the Son of God in our nature, and the laying down of his life, they appear to be so engaged on this subject, as to be comparatively indifferent to every other. In the other works of God they had seen sometimes one perfection glorified, and sometimes another; but here all unite their beams, and form one general blaze. These are the things, therefore, which now they "desire to look into."

The powers of angels are far superior to those of men. Their means of instruction also, and long experience of Divine things, must render them far more capable of understanding the gospel than we. Yet, with all their advantages and discoveries, such is the fulness of the subject, that they are at an infinite distance from comprehending it: all that is said of them is that *they desire to look into it*.

Angels were doubtless acquainted with the general design of salvation, from its first discovery to man; but the particular way in which it should be accomplished appears to have been, in a great measure, hidden from them. It was a way so much above what any creature would have expected, that though there were hints of it under the Old Testament, and some very plain intimations, yet it was far from being clearly comprehended. The prophets, as we have seen, did not fully understand their own prophecies, but diligently searched into the meaning of them; neither did the apostles, with all their advantages, prior to the event; neither did evil angels, with all their subtlety; for if Satan had known that from the death of Christ his cause would receive so deadly a wound, it is scarcely conceivable that he would have stirred up Judas and the Jewish rulers to accomplish it. He appears to have entertained a kind of forlorn hope, that, by getting him put to death in the most ignominious form, and by the only religious nation upon earth, he should be able to stamp everlasting infamy upon his name, and that all

\* Παρακλιτω, to bend or stoop.



future generations would be ashamed to own him. The disappointment and unexpected shock that he and his adherents met with on this occasion seem plainly intimated by our Saviour's having "spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them on his cross;" and though the holy angels might be supposed to understand much more than fallen ones, yet were they not equal to this subject till events made it manifest. Hence it is said "from the beginning of the world to have been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers might be known by the church (that is, by the redemption of the church) the manifold wisdom of God." When the event transpired, therefore, it was like a flood of light bursting forth upon them. The resurrection of Christ filled all heaven with transport. Hence, perhaps, we may account for the question of the angel to Mary, "Woman, why weepest thou?" q. d. Did you but know all, you would not weep! It is not you that should weep now, but your adversaries!

The cross of Christ, instead of issuing in disgrace, is followed with glory. His friends learned to glory in it; yea, and to glory in nothing else: and well they might. It was glorious to see the powers of darkness stripped naked, as it were, to their shame; to see Satan foiled by the woman's Seed, and his schemes exposed to the derision of the universe; to see him taken in his own net, and falling into the pit that himself had digged. It was glorious to contemplate the numerous and important bearings of this one great event. By this the Divine displeasure against sin is manifested in stronger language than if the world had been made a sacrifice;—by this a way is opened for the consistent exercise of mercy to the chief of sinners;—by a believing view of this peace arises in the mind, and at the same time purity in the heart;—for this he is crowned with glory and honour in the heavens, principalities and powers being made subject to him. This is the only hope of a lost world, the only medium of acceptance with God, and the only admissible plea in our approaches before him. This it is which will put every grace in exercise in this world, and impart all the happiness in that to come of which created minds are susceptible.

These are a few of the bearings of the doctrine of the cross. Is it any wonder that angels should desire to look into it? Rather is it not matter of wonder and shame that we, who are more immediately interested in it than they, should be so far behind? How is it that we should be the last to bring back the King, who are his bone and his flesh! Our Redeemer took not upon him the nature of angels; yet they love him, and the gospel of salvation by him: and wherefore? They love God, and therefore rejoice in every thing that glorifies him in the highest;—they love men, and therefore rejoice in that which brings peace on earth and good-will to them;—they rejoice in every instance of the prosperity of Christ's kingdom, and in being themselves made subject to him. Had we but their love, with our interest, we should not only emulate, but exceed their highest praise. While they, in innumerable myriads, were 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," we should not only say, "Amen;" but add, "Thou art worthy; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation!"

## REGENERATION BY THE WORD OF GOD.

1 Pet. i. 23.

THE incorruptible "seed," by which, according to this passage, we are born again, alludes to the first principle, not in vegetables, but in animals; and what this is in generation, the word of God is allowed to be in regeneration. This I apprehend is giving all the scope to the passage which can reasonably be desired.

That there is a Divine influence in this change which is immediate, or without any instrument whatever, is supposed in a former communication;\* but I do not consider this as expressive of *the whole change* denoted by the term *regeneration*. I admit regeneration to be by the word of God, and that this truth is taught us by the passage in question, and also in James i. 18; nor does this concession appear to clash with the above position. When God created man, he breathed into him the breath of life, and man became a living soul. And in procreation, unless we maintain that souls are generated by human instrumentality, there is an immediate Divine agency, very similar to that in creation, and which is expressed by "forming the spirit of man within him." Now as this is consistent with man's being brought into existence by the instrumentality of man, why should not an immediate influence from Him who "quickeneth all things" be consistent with the instrumentality of the word in regeneration?

Regeneration has frequently been distinguished from conversion; and I have no doubt but the terms are of different signification, as are also the terms creation and resurrection, by which the same Divine change is indicated. I am inclined to think that these terms are not designed to express the different stages of God's work upon the soul, but the same Divine work under different ideas or representations. It has been said that regeneration expresses that part of the change wherein we are *passive*, and conversion that wherein we are *active*; but the idea of passivity, as well as activity, is included in conversion. God turns us ere we turn to him. Sinners are said to be converted, as well as to convert. On the other hand, the idea of activity, as well as of passivity, is included in regeneration. Whatever may be said of the generation of an animal, we can form no conception of the change in the temper of a rational soul, or, as the Scriptures express it, of "renewing the spirit of our minds," without the mind being in exercise. It is passive with respect to the agency of the Holy Spirit in producing the change, so as to contribute nothing towards it; but the very nature of the change itself, being from a state of enmity to love, implies activity of mind. It does not therefore seem perfectly accurate to say we are first endued with spiritual life, and then we become active; no otherwise, at least, than as by the order of nature, seeing that activity is of the very essence of spiritual life.

Now, considering regeneration as expressive of that entire change by which we enter as it were a new moral world, and possess a new kind of being, (and in this sense I think it is always to be understood in the New Testament,) it is as proper to say we are regenerated by the word of God, as it is to say that "Abraham begat Isaac;" though in Isaac's coming into the world he was the subject of a Divine agency in which Abraham had no concern.

\* The Power and Influence of Truth.

## PASSAGES APPARENTLY CONTRADICTORY.

“And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.”—John v. 40.

“No man can come to me except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him. \* \* \* It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.”

“Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not: and he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.”—John vi. 44, 45, 64, 65.

ADMITTING the Divine authority of the Holy Scriptures, their harmony ought not to be called in question; yet it must be allowed by every considerate reader that there are *apparent* difficulties. Nor is it unlawful, but laudable, to wish to see those difficulties removed, and to aim at a perception of the particular beauty of God’s word, as well as a general persuasion of its harmony.

My thoughts on the above passages will be comprised in the seven following observations:—

First, *There is no way of obtaining eternal life but by Jesus Christ.* This observation is fully implied in the first passage, and I suppose may stand without any further confirmation.

Secondly, *They that enjoy eternal life must come to Christ for it.* *Coming* is not an act of the body, but of the mind and heart. It is a term which in the New Testament is commonly used as synonymous with *believing* in Christ. In common speech we frequently apply it to the yielding of a person’s mind who has heretofore been in a state of enmity or variance. When we see a change in his views of things, his proud spirit begin to subside, his prejudice give way, the high tone of his expressions lowered, and his heart inclining towards a reconciliation, we say, *He is coming.*

Thirdly, *It is the revealed will of Christ that every one who hears the gospel should come to him for life.* This position, I should think, is equally evident from the text in question as either of the above. Our Lord would not have complained of the Jews for not coming to him, nor have imputed it to the obstinacy of their *will*, if the contrary had not been their duty, as well as their highest interest. Every one who hears the gospel must either feel willing to be saved in God’s way, or unwilling, or neither the one nor the other. If we are willing, we are true believers; if unwilling, we are what the Scriptures style *disobedient*, like these Jews, and like them fall under the displeasure of Christ. But may we not be neutral? That a being positively unwilling to be saved in God’s way is sinful seems to be almost self-evident; but is there no such thing as a *medium*? To which I answer, If there be a medium between a being willing and unwilling, it must consist in that state of mind wherein a person feels *indifferent*; that is, neither *for* Christ nor *against* him. But this is declared to be impossible: “He that is not against us,” said Christ, “is on our side.” If a person could feel indifferent in this case, that indifference would be deemed disloyalty. As the curse fell upon Meroz for his *not* coming forth to the help of the Lord against the mighty, so an Anathema Maranatha is denounced against any man that loveth *not* our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. It is inconsistent with the perfections of God to allow any sinner who hears the gospel of Christ to feel their aversion or indifference towards him.

Fourthly, *The depravity of human nature is such that no man, of his own accord, will come to Christ for life.* This position, it may be objected, is

not sufficiently evident from Christ's words in the first of these passages; seeing it does not follow that, because the Jews would not come to him, therefore none else would. To this it is replied, Be it so; it is sufficiently evident from this passage, taken in connexion with other scriptures, and even with those two with which it is here attempted to be reconciled. To come to Christ for life is to feel the danger of our situation, and be in real earnest after escape; in such earnest as one that was fleeing to the city of refuge, with the avenger of blood in pursuit of him. But men are naturally at ease, or if awakened by the alarms of providence or conscience, are disposed to fly to any refuge rather than Christ. To come to Christ for eternal life is to feel and acknowledge ourselves destitute of every claim on his favour, and worthy of eternal death; but this is too humiliating to human pride. To come to Christ for life, in short, is to give up our own righteousness, and be justified by his; our own wisdom, and be guided by his; and our own will, and be ruled by his: it is to receive him as our all in all: but man by nature is unwilling to part from his idols; he had rather hazard his soul's eternal welfare than give them up.

Fifthly, *The degree of this depravity is such as that, figuratively speaking, men cannot come to Christ for life.* It is not here supposed that they would come to Christ but cannot; nor that they could not come if they would. It is true, when the word *cannot* is used in its literal and proper sense—that is, when it is applied to a natural inability—this idea is always implied: “Abijah *could not* see, by reason of his age.—“The king of Moab would have broken through the hosts of his enemies, but he *could not*”—“The mariners rowed hard to bring the ship to land, but they *could not*.” In each of these cases there was properly a want of power, which denominated the parties unable, though they were, or might be supposed to be, ever so willing. But it is usual, both in Scripture and in common speech, to express the state of a person under the dominion of an exceedingly strong propensity by the terms *cannot, unable, &c.* “They that are in the flesh *cannot* please God.”—“Why do ye not understand my speech? Because ye *cannot* hear my word.”—“Having eyes full of adultery, and *cannot* cease from sin.”—“Joseph's brethren *could not* speak peaceably to him.”—“How *can* ye, being evil, speak good things?”—“How *can* ye believe, who receive honour one of another?” Now, when the word is used in this sense, it would be a contradiction to suppose a willingness, or an incapacity in case of willingness, seeing it is the want of willingness wherein the incapacity consists.

That the term *cannot*, in John vi. 44, denotes the strength of evil propensities, and not any natural and excusable hinderance, is evident from the *cure* here mentioned; namely, *the Father's drawing*. When we are drawn by Divine influence to come to Christ, it is a drawing of the *heart* towards that to which it was before averse; consequently it was *the aversion of the heart* wherein the inability consisted.

It has been usual with writers to express the difference between these two different kinds of inability by the terms *natural* and *moral*. To this it has been objected, “that the scripture knows of no such distinction.” If by this is meant that the Scripture does not expressly make such a distinction, it is true; but if this be a proof that the Scripture knows nothing of the thing, it will at the same time prove that the Scripture knows nothing of the doctrines of the Trinity, Divine providence, the satisfaction of Christ, with many other acknowledged truths of the last importance. After all, terms are not worth disputing about, provided the ideas included under them are admitted. That the ideas in this case are Scriptural is sufficiently evident from the forecited passages. Every person of common understand-

ing, whether he will or not, must of necessity perceive a difference between the inability of the mariners recorded in Jonah and that of the adulterers mentioned by Peter; and that the one rendered the parties excusable, and the other consituted them the more highly culpable. Let this difference be but admitted, it matters not what terms are used, provided they do but sufficiently express it.

Sixthly, *A conviction of the righteousness of God's government, of the spirituality and goodness of his law, the evil of sin, our lost condition by nature, and the justice of our condemnation, is necessary in order to our coming to Christ.* I think each of these ideas is included in the phrase "learned of the Father." Without this, there can be no solid conviction of the need of a Saviour. The sinner will be whole in his own account; and *they that are whole need not a physician.* A knowledge of the Father, as the Law-giver of the world, must precede a hearty reception of Christ as a Saviour. It is "through the law we become dead to the law, that we may live unto God. The law is our schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ." It is therefore very unreasonable, as well as unscriptural, for any, under the pretence of knowing Christ, to decry the law of God, seeing it is by learning at that school we are prepared to come to Christ.

Lastly, *There is absolute necessity of a special Divine agency in order to our coming to Christ.* "No man can come unto me, except the Father, who sent me, draw him." Those who deny the grace of God to be invincible in its operations, understand this, and other passages, of what is sometimes called, I think, moral influence; that is, such influence as men may have upon the minds of each other in a way of persuasion. And so they suppose the sense of the text is, that no man can come to Christ unless he have the gospel preached unto him. But it ought to be considered that "drawing," in ver. 44, is tantamount to having "learned of the Father," in ver. 45, where it is declared that "every man that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto Christ." But it is not every one that hath been objectively instructed by the preaching of the gospel who comes to Christ: it must therefore be such an instruction and drawing as is peculiar to true believers; such a drawing as that whereon our coming certainly follows: and thus we believe "according to the working of his mighty power."

Upon the whole, we see from these passages taken together, first, if any man is lost, whom he has to blame for it—HIMSELF; secondly, if any man is saved, whom he has to praise for it—God.

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"It repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart."—Gen. vi. 6.

"The Lord is not a man, that he should repent."—1 Sam. xv. 29.

THE seeming contradiction in these passages arises from the same term being used in the one metaphorically, and in the other literally. It is literally true that repentance is not predicable of the Divine nature, inasmuch as it implies mutability and imperfection in knowledge and wisdom, neither of which can be applied to the infinitely blessed God. But, in order to address himself impressively to us, he frequently personates a creature, or speaks to us after the manner of men. It may be doubted whether the displeasure of God against the wickedness of men could have been fully expressed in literal terms, or with any thing like the effect produced by metaphorical language. To evince this, I shall take the liberty to introduce a few brief expository notes which I have by me on the six preceding verses in Genesis:—This chapter gives us an account of the corruption which preceded the flood, and which moved an infinitely good and merciful Being to bring it upon the earth. We may notice,

1. The *occasion* of this corruption, viz. the increase of population: it was "when men began to multiply on the face of the earth" that they began to corrupt one another. Population is itself a good; but it often becomes the occasion of evil; because men, when numbers of them assemble together, excite and provoke one another to sin. Hence it is that sin commonly grows rankest in populous places. We are originally made to be helpers of one another; but sin perverts the course of things, and renders us tempters of one another. We draw and are drawn into innumerable evils. "O draw me not with the workers of iniquity!"

2. The first step towards this corrupt state of things was the mixing of the church and the world in marriages. "The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all whom they chose." "The sons of God" were those of the family of Seth, of whom we read lately that they "called upon the name of the Lord," iv. 16. "The daughters of men" were of the race of Cain, whose parents, having gone forth "from the presence of the Lord," or turned their back on religion, were a kind of athiests. This was a conjunction between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, which must needs be unnatural and mischievous. The object of a good man's choice should be a "help-meet." We need to be helped in our way to heaven, and not hindered and corrupted. Hence God forbade all such alliances with idolaters (Deut. vii. 3, 4); and hence also Christian marriages were limited to those "only in the Lord" (1 Cor. vii. 39): the examples which we have seen to the contrary have, by their lamentable effects, fully justified these restrictions. They corrupt and ruin many a promising character; and we see by this history that they were the first cause of the ruin of a world!

3. The great offence which God took at this conduct, and what grew out of it. "The Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh; yet his days shall be a hundred and twenty years." Had the sons of God kept themselves to themselves, and preserved their purity, God, it may be supposed, would have spared the world for their sakes; but they mingled together, and became one people. This he considered as a heinous crime. The name by which they are called is worthy of notice—*man*. Seeing the sons of God have become one people with the daughters of men, they have lost their honourable distinction, and are called by the common name of the species. The special notice taken of the conduct of professors, rather than of others, is likewise observable. *He* also, or *they* also, as some read it, namely, the sons of God, are *flesh*; viz. they, as well as the others, are become corrupt. By the *Spirit of God* is meant the Holy Spirit *in the prophets*, by which he preached and contended with the wicked.—See Neh. ix. 30; 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20. But now, seeing the professedly righteous, who should have stood firm, had, as it were, joined the standard of the enemy, God resolved to give them all up together, or to decline any further strivings with them. "The ploughman will not plough all day to sow—bread-corn is *bruised*, because he will not *ever* be threshing it, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen." Yet amidst all this displeasure there is great long-suffering. "His days shall be a hundred and twenty years." God would wait that time ere he brought the flood upon them, 1 Pet. iii. 20. All this time God did *strive* or contend with them; but, that proving ineffectual, they were at last given up.

4. Observe the fruits of these unlawful mixtures; a sort of monstrous beings, whose figures were but emblems of their minds. They seem to have been fierce and cruel men. The word giants signifies *fellers*, or men who caused others to fall before them like trees before an axe. So far as respects character, this was the natural effect of such intermarriages: family

religion is subverted; and the fear of God has a greater connexion with a proper regard to man than many are willing to allow.

5. Observe the estimate which God makes of things. "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Such is the case when the church is gone and lost in the world. There were some hopeful appearances when the "sons of God began to call upon the name of the Lord;" but now, a very few excepted, they are all gone. What a picture is here given of what the world naturally is! It is *evil*; without mixture—*only* evil; without cessation—evil *continually*; from the very fountain-head of action—"the thoughts of the heart;" and all this is not the exaggerated language of creatures—"God saw it!"

6. Notice the amazing displeasure of God against sin. "It repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart!"—Was ever such language uttered! What words, besides them, could convey to us such an idea of the evil of sin? It is true we are not to understand them literally; but they convey to us an idea that the sin of man is so heinous, and so mischievous, as to mar all the works of God, and to render them worse than if there were none. So that, if God had not counteracted it, there had better have been no world! Any created being, on seeing all his works thus perverted, would repent, and wish he had never made them. Oh the exceedingly provoking nature of sin! What must be that grace which could give his only-begotten Son to die for it, and could find in his heart, for his sake, freely to forgive it! Be it our great concern, that, like Noah in the ark, we may be found in him.

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"I please all men in all things."—1 Cor. x. 33.

"If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."—Gal. i. 10.

THOUGH both these kinds of action are expressed by one term, to *please*, yet they are exceedingly diverse; no less so than a conduct which has the glory of God and the good of mankind for its object, and one that originates and terminates in self. The former of these passages should be read in connexion with what precedes and follows it: ver. 31—33, "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God; even as I please all men in all things; not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved." Hence it appears plain that the *things* in which the apostle pleased all men require to be restricted to such things as tend to their "profit, that they may be saved." Whereas the things in which, according to the latter passage, he could *not* please men, and "yet be the servant of Christ," were of a contrary tendency. Such were the objects pursued by the false teachers whom he opposed, and who desired to make a fair show in the flesh, lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ, chap. vi. 12.

The former is that sweet inoffensiveness of spirit which teaches us to lay aside all self-will and self-importance; that charity which "seeketh not her own," and "is not easily provoked;" it is that spirit, in short, which the same writer elsewhere recommends from the example of Christ himself; "We then, who are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.—Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification; for even Christ pleased not himself; but as it is written, 'The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.'"

But the latter spirit referred to is that sordid compliance with the corruptions of human nature of which flatterers and deceivers have always availed

themselves, not for the glory of God or the good of men, but for the promotion of their own selfish designs.

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“While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest shall not cease.”—Gen. viii. 22.

“There are five years in which there shall be neither earing nor harvest.”—Gen. xlv. 6.

THE former of these passages contains a general truth or rule, which, as is common with general rules, has its particular exceptions. And yet it hardly amounts to an exception; for there never was a year since the flood in which there was no harvest *throughout the world*. To understand the promise of God’s engaging never to afflict any particular nation, or number of nations, with famine, is to make it universal as to place, as well as uninterrupted in respect to time; and this would go to insure a harvest to the sluggard who refuses to sow.

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“Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him.”—Prov. xxvi. 4.

“Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.”—Prov. xxvi. 5.

A “FOOL,” in the sense of Scripture, means a wicked man, or one who acts contrary to the wisdom that is from above, and who is supposed to utter his foolishness in speech or writing. Doubtless, there are different descriptions of these characters; and some may require to be answered, while others are best treated with silence. But the cases here seem to be one; both have respect to the same character, and both require to be answered. The whole difference lies in the *manner* in which the answer should be given. The terms “according to his folly,” in the first instance, mean *in a foolish manner*, as is manifest from the reason given, “lest thou also be like unto him.” But in the second instance, they mean *in the manner which his folly requires*. This also is plain from the reason given, “lest he be wise in his own conceit.” A foolish speech is not a rule for our imitation; nevertheless our answer must be so framed by it as to meet and repel it.

Both these proverbs caution us against evils to which we are not a little addicted; the former, that of saying and doing to others *as they say and do to us*, rather than as *we would* they should say and do; the latter, that of suffering the cause of truth or justice to be decried, while we, from a love of ease, stand by as unconcerned spectators.

The former of these proverbs is exemplified in the answer of Moses to the rebellious Israelites; the latter in that of Job to his wife. It was a foolish speech which was addressed to the former: “Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord! And why have ye brought up the congregation of the Lord into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there?” Unhappily this provoked Moses to speak unadvisedly with his lips; saying, “Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?” This was answering folly in a *foolish manner*, which he should *not* have done; and by which the servant of God became but too much like them whom he opposed. It was also a foolish saying of Job’s wife, in the day of his distress, “Curse God, and die!” Job answered this speech, not in the *manner of it*, but in the *manner it required*. “What, shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?”—In all the answers of our Saviour to the scribes and Pharisees, we may perceive that he never lost the possession of his soul for a single moment; never answered *in the manner* of his opponents, so as to be “like unto them;” but neither did he decline to repel their folly, and so to abase their self-conceit.

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“By the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified.”—Gal. ii. 16.

“Was not Abraham, our father, justified by works.”—James ii. 21.

PAUL treats of the justification of the *ungodly*, or the way in which sinners are *accepted* of God, and made heirs of eternal life. James speaks of the justification of the *godly*, or in what way it becomes evident that a man is *approved* of God. The former is by the righteousness of Christ; the latter is by works. The former of these is that which justifies; the latter is that by which it appears that we are justified. The term justification, in the former of these passages, is taken in a primary sense; in the latter; it is taken in a secondary sense only, as in Matt. xi. 19, and in other places.

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“I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.”—Exod. xx. 5.

“The soul that sinneth, it shall die: the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son.”—Ezek. xviii. 20.

NEITHER of these passages appears to be applicable to men as the individual subjects of God’s moral government, and with respect to a future world, but merely as members of society in the present life. Nations, and other communities, as *such*, are considered in the Divine administration as persons. That which is done by them at one period, is visited upon them at another; as the history of the children of Israel and of all other nations evinces. The effects of the conduct of every generation not being confined to itself, but extending to their posterity, would, in proportion as they were possessed of natural affection, furnish a powerful motive to righteousness; and, to them who sinned, prove an aggravation of their punishment.

This part of Divine providence was objected to in the times of Ezekiel as unjust. “The fathers,” said they, “have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge: the ways of the Lord are not equal.” To this objection two things were suggested in reply:—

1. That though it was so that the sins from the times of Manasseh fell upon that generation, yet there was no injustice in it; but, on the contrary, much mercy; for what they bore was no more than what *their own sins* deserved; and its not having been inflicted before was owing to Divine forbearance. God might have punished *both their fathers and them*. Hence, “As I live, saith the Lord, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel.”—“The soul that sinneth, it shall die!” Which is as if he had said, I will no more forbear with you as I have done, but will punish *both father and son*, instead of the son only, Ezek. xviii. 1—4.

2. That if the sins of the fathers fell upon the children, it was not without the children having adopted and persisted in their fathers’ crimes. The visiting of the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation, is only *of them that hate him*; that is, where the fathers hate him, and the children tread in the fathers’ steps. If Judah in the times of Ezekiel had been righteous, they had not gone into captivity for what was done in the times of Manasseh.

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“Arise, walk through the land, for I will give it unto thee.”—Gen. xii. 17.

“And the field of Ephron, which was in Machpelah, the field and the cave which was therein, and all the trees which were in the field, that were in all the borders round about were made sure unto Abraham for a possession.”—Gen. xxiii. 17, 18.

“He gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him.”—Acts vii. 5.

THE first of these passages is the language of *promise*; the last intimates that the promise was not performed to Abraham, but reserved for his posterity. It is true that he purchased a burying-ground of the sons of

Heth, according to the second passage; but that could hardly be called ground *to set his foot on*, which expresses an idea different from that of a place to lay his bones in; and much less an *inheritance* of God's *giving* him to set his foot on. His having to *purchase* even a grave was rather a proof that he was considered as a stranger than of his being a native of the soil. An *inheritance given of God* he had not; that only was such which his posterity enjoyed without purchase, the inhabitants of the land being driven out before them.

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"I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."—Gen. xxxii. 30.

"Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me and live;"—Exod. xxxiii. 20.

THE difference here seems to arise from the phrase "face of God." In the one case it is expressive of *great familiarity*, compared with former visions and manifestations of the Divine glory; in the other, of a *fulness of knowledge of this glory*, which is incompatible with our mortal state, if not with our capacity as creatures. What Jacob said of himself, that he had seen God "face to face," is repeatedly spoken of Moses, and as that by which he stood distinguished from other prophets, Deut. xxxiv. 10. Even in the same chapter wherein it is said he *could not see his face and live*, it is said that Jehovah spake unto him face to face, Exod. xxxiii. 11, 20. He whom Jacob saw had at least the appearance of *a man*, who conversed and wrestled with him till day-break. Yet, before they parted, he was convinced that he was more than man, even God; who on that, as on other occasions, assumed a visible and tangible form to commune with his servants, as a prelude of his future incarnation. The *face* which was seen on this occasion was human, though belonging to one that was Divine.

Jacob said, "I have seen God face to face." Thus, also, that which was beheld by Moses is called "the similitude of Jehovah," (Numb. xii. 8,) or a glorious Divine appearance; of which, though we are unable to form an adequate idea, yet we may be certain that it came short of what he was afterwards told he "could not see and live." Though, in comparison of other dark speeches and visions, it was seeing him face to face; yet, when compared with a *perfect* knowledge of the glory of God, it was but seeing what among creatures would be called the shadow, or at most *the back parts* of a great personage.

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"The anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah."—2 Sam. xxiv. 1.

"And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel."—1 Chron. xxi. 1.

THE English translators consider the pronoun *he* in the former of these passages as relating not to Jehovah, but to Satan, referring in the margin to the latter passage as a proof of it. But this seems to be a forced meaning; for not only is the name Jehovah placed as the immediate and only antecedent to the pronoun, but also a reason why he did it.

1. It is certain that God did not so move David to sin as either to partake of it, or to become his tempter; for "he cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man." It was Satan that tempted David to sin, not Jehovah.

2. It is equally certain that the providence of God was concerned in this affair; and that, Israel having offended him, he determined in this way to punish them.

3. God is said to do that which is done upon the minds of men by the ordinary influence of second causes, which causes would not have been productive of such effects but for their depravity. The hardness of clay,

no less than the softness of wax, is ascribed to the sun; yet the sun's producing this effect is entirely owing to the qualities of the object on which he shines. God hardened the heart of Pharaoh by so ordering things by his providence, that considerations should present themselves to his mind, when placed under certain circumstances, which (he being righteously given up of God) would be certain to provoke his pride and resentment, and to determine him to run all risks, for the sake of having his will. In other words, God led him into temptation; and there, in just judgment, left him to its influence. With respect to David, it is probable his mind was previously lifted up with his great successes in war. It is after the relation of these that the story is introduced, both in Samuel and the Chronicles. The Lord therefore led him into temptation, and righteously left him in it; the certain issue of which was that which actually took place.

If it be observed that this is ascribing sin to God *indirectly*, though not directly, I answer, It is no otherwise ascribing it to God than as any man is willing to have it ascribed to himself. The conduct of a good father may, through the disaffection of a son, cause him to go on worse and worse. His threatenings may harden, and his kindest entreaties and promises excite nothing but contempt. What then? Is this to the father's dishonour? Certainly not. It were strange if God must cease from doing what is right, lest sinful men should be induced by it to become more sinful.

The best use for us to make of such a doctrine is, not curiously to pry into things too high for us, but when we pray, to say, "Our Father—lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil!"

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"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."—Matt. vii. 7, 8.

"Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."—Luke xiii. 24.

SOME have supposed a difference in the latter passage between *seeking* and *striving*; as though it were not enough to seek, without striving, even to an agony. But this does not reconcile the two passages; for *seeking* in the one is connected with finding, whereas in the other it is not.

The distinction appears to lie in the time and nature of seeking. Seeking, in Matthew, refers to the application for mercy through Jesus Christ, in the present life; but, in Luke, it denotes that anxiety which the workers of iniquity will discover to be admitted into heaven at the last day. The *strait gate* in this latter passage does not mean an introduction to the kingdom of grace, but of glory; and *striving*, or agonizing, to enter in at it, does not describe an exercise of mind which is necessary to conversion, but to final salvation. The striving here exhorted to is the life's work of a Christian, in order that he may enter into the kingdom of heaven at last. All this is manifest from the context, which determines it to refer to what shall take place at the great day, "when the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and sinners shall begin to stand without, to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto them, I know you not whence you are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity."

There is therefore no contradiction whatever in these passages. Every one that seeketh mercy in the name of Jesus, while the door is open, succeeds; but he that seeketh it not till the door is shut will not succeed. "Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me."

“Let another praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.”—Prov. xxvii. 2.

“I laboured more abundantly than they all.—In nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles.”—1 Cor. xv. 10; 2 Cor. xii. 11.

So near is the resemblance of good and evil, with respect to their outward expressions, that the one is very liable to be mistaken for the other. Vices pass for virtues, and virtues for vices. Thus indifference is taken for candour, bitterness for zeal, and carnal policy for prudence. The difference in these things may frequently lie, not in the expression or action, but merely in the  *motive* , which, being beyond human cognizance, occasions their being so often confounded.

It is thus that a just and necessary vindication of ourselves, when we have been unjustly accused, is liable to be construed into self-applause. That which was condemned by Solomon, and that which was practised by Paul, were far from being the same thing; yet they appear to be so with respect to the outward act or expression. A vain man speaks well of himself; and Paul speaks well of himself. Thus the branches intermingle. But trace them to their respective roots, and there you will find them distinct. The  *motive*  in the one case is the desire of applause; in the other, justice to an injured character, and to the gospel which suffered in his reproaches.

The apostle, in defending himself, was aware how near he approached to the  *language*  of a  *fool* , that is, a man desirous of vain-glory, and how liable what he had written was to be attributed to that motive. It is on this account that he obviates the charge which he knew his adversaries would allege. “Yes,” says he, “I speak as a fool . . . but ye have  *compelled*  me.” This was owning that, as to his  *words* , they might indeed be considered as vain-glorying, if the  *occasion*  were overlooked; but if that were justly considered, it would be found that they ought rather to be ashamed than he, for having reduced him to the disagreeable necessity of speaking in his own behalf.

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“Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”—Matt. v. 16.

“Take heed that ye do not your alms before men to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father who is in heaven.”—Matt. vi. 1.

THIS is another of those cases in which the difference lies in the  *motive* . It is right to do that which men may see, and must see; but not  *for the sake*  of being seen by them.

There are, indeed, some duties, and such are prayer and the relief of the needy, in which a truly modest mind will avoid being seen; but in the general deportment of life no man can be hid, nor ought he to desire it. Only let his end be pure, namely, “to glorify his Father who is in heaven,” and all will be right.

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“Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it.”—Matt. ix. 30.

“Jesus said unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them what great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.”—Mark v. 19.

THE foregoing remarks may be of some use here. Our Saviour did not wish his miracles to be utterly unknown; for then God would not have been glorified, nor the end of establishing the truth of his Messiahship answered; but neither did he wish to make an ostentatious display of them. First, Because he had no desire of vain-glory about him. Secondly, He did not wish to give any unnecessary provocation to his enemies, which

might have hindered him in the execution of his work. Thirdly, Where there was no danger from enemies, yet such was the eagerness of the people to see his miracles, that they flocked together from all parts of the country, thronging and hindering him in preaching the gospel. To the two former of these causes the injunction of secrecy seems to be attributed in Matt. xii. 13—20; and to the last in Mark i. 4, which is the case in question, as related by Mark. We are there informed that, owing to the leper having “blazed abroad the matter, Jesus could no more openly enter into the city; but was without in desert places,” which was a serious injury to that work which his miracles were intended to subserve.

But in the country of the Gadarenes the case was different. He was there in no danger of being hindered from his great work by the thronging of the people; on the contrary, they were afraid, and “prayed him to depart out of their coasts;” and he did depart. In such circumstances let not the story of the destruction of the swine be the only one in circulation; let the deliverance of the poor demoniac also be told; and let him be the person who should tell it. Let him leave these people who wanted to get rid of the Saviour, and go home to his friends, and tell how great things the Lord had done for him, and had had compassion upon him. Luke tells us that he published it throughout the whole city, chap. viii. 39.

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“This is Elias, who was to come.”—Matt. xi. 14.

“Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.”—John i. 21.

JOHN the Baptist was not literally the person of Elias; and it was proper for him to say he was not, in order to correct the gross notions of the Jews on that subject. Had he answered in the affirmative, and had they believed him, he would have confirmed them in a gross falsehood.

Yet John the Baptist was that Elias of whom the prophet Malachi spoke (chap. iv. 5); that is, as Luke expresses it, he came “in the spirit and power of Elias” (chap. i. 17); and so was, as it were, another Elias.

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“This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.”—Matt. xxi. 38.

“Which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”—1 Cor. ii. 8.

IT is difficult to decide whether the Jewish rulers acted directly against the light of their consciences in crucifying the Lord of glory, or whether they did it ignorantly and in unbelief, as Saul persecuted the church. Several passages seem to favour the former of these hypotheses. They who took counsel to put Lazarus to death, because that through him many believed in Jesus (John xii. 10, 11)—and they who replied to Judas, “What is that to us? see thou to it” (Matt. xxvii. 4)—do not seem to have acted ignorantly. The counsel of Caiaphas, to which the rest agreed, did not proceed upon the ground of Christ’s being an impostor, but merely that of expediency, John xi. 50. That is, *policy* required that he should be made a sacrifice; for the Jewish church was in danger. With this agrees the former of the above passages: “This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.” With this also agrees the intimation that some of them had committed the sin against the Holy Spirit, which should never be forgiven, by ascribing his casting out devils to Beelzebub, the prince of devils, when in their consciences they knew better, Matt. xii. 24—32. Finally, perhaps with this also agrees such language as the following:—“If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin; but

now they have no cloak for their sin.”—“He that hateth me, hateth my Father also.”—“If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father.”

On the other hand, there are several passages which seem to maintain the contrary. Among these, some have reckoned the latter of the above passages, namely, 1 Cor. ii. 8, “Had they known,” &c. But I apprehend the term “known,” in this passage, is put for that *spiritual* discernment which is peculiar to true Christians. The knowledge which the princes, or great ones, of this world had not, is said to be revealed to believers by the Holy Spirit, which proves it to be spiritual. Had the murderers of our Lord been possessed of this, they would not, they could not, have crucified him. But whatever light they had in their consciences, they were blind to the real glory of his character, and such is every unregenerate sinner.

But though this passage be easily reconciled with the foregoing hypothesis, yet there are others more difficult; particularly the words of Peter in Acts iii. 17, and of Paul in Acts xiii. 27: “And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.”—“For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of their prophets, which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him.”

I know of no way to reconcile these things but by supposing, what indeed is very probable, that there were some of each description; and that the former passages refer to the one, and the latter to the other.

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“He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”—Luke i. 33.

“Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power.”—1 Cor. xv. 24.

WHEN the kingdom of Christ is said to have “no end,” it may mean that it shall never be overturned or succeeded by any rival power, as all the kingdoms of this world have been, or shall be. Such is the interpretation given of the phrase in Dan. vii. 14, “His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which *shall not pass away*, and his kingdom that which *shall not be destroyed*.”

But this need not be alleged in order to account for the phraseology, which will be found to be literally true. The end of which Paul speaks does not mean the end of Christ’s kingdom, but of the world, and the things thereof. “The delivering up of the kingdom to the Father” will not put an *end* to it, but eternally establish it in a new and more glorious form. Christ shall not cease to reign, though the mode of his administration be different. As a Divine person, he will always be one with the Father; and though his mediatorial kingdom shall cease, yet the effects of it will remain for ever. There will never be a period in duration in which the Redeemer of sinners will be thrown into the shade, or become of less account than he now is, or in which honour, and glory, and blessing will cease to be ascribed to him, by the whole creation.

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“Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see.”—Luke x. 23

“Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”—John ix. 29.

THE former of these passages pronounces a blessing upon those who saw the fulfilment of what others have believed; the latter upon those who should believe the gospel upon the ground of their testimony, without

having witnessed the facts with their own eyes. There is no contradiction in these blessings; for there is a wide difference between *requiring sight as the ground of faith*, which Thomas did, and *obtaining it as a completion of faith*, which those who saw the coming and kingdom of the Messiah did. The one was a species of unbelief, the other was faith terminating in vision.

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“If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.”—John v. 31.

“Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true.”—John viii. 14.

OUR LORD, in one of these passages, expresses what was to be admitted as truth *in the account of men*; in the other, what his testimony was *in itself*. Admitting their laws or rules of evidence, his testimony would not have been credible; and therefore, in the verses following, he appeals to that of John the Baptist, and the works which he had wrought in his Father's name, which amounted to a testimony from the Father. But though he in a manner gave up his own testimony, yielding himself to be tried even by their forms of evidence, yet would he not so far concede as to dishonour his character. He was in fact, whatever they might judge of him, the Amen, the faithful and the true witness; and, as such, he taught many things, prefacing what he delivered with that peculiar and expressive phrase—“Verily, verily, I say unto you!”

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“Who through faith—obtained promises.”—Heb. xi. 33.

“And these all—received not the promise.”—Heb. xi. 39.

THE *promises* which were obtained by faith refer to those which were fulfilled during the Old Testament dispensation. It was promised to Abraham that he should have a son; to Israel, that they should possess the land of Canaan for an inheritance; to David, that they should return from the Babylonish captivity, &c.; and by faith each of them in due time obtained the promise.

But there was *one promise* which was of greater importance than all the rest; namely, the coming of the Messiah. In the faith of this the fathers lived and died; but they saw not its accomplishment. To see this was reserved for another generation. Hence the words of our Saviour to his disciples:—“Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.”

It is thus that God has wisely balanced the advantages of different ages. The fathers obtained much, but not all. In respect of the blessings of Messiah's kingdom, they sowed, and we reap; they laboured, and we enter into their labours. Thus it is ordered, that “they without us should not be made perfect.” The fulfilments of our times must come in to answer the faith and complete the hopes of those who have gone before us.

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“Jesus saith unto Mary, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father.”—John xx. 17.

“Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing.”—John xx. 27.

IT is manifest, from these and other passages, that the reason why Mary was forbidden to touch her risen Saviour was not because the thing itself was *impossible*. Indeed, if it had been so, the prohibition had been unnecessary; for we need not be forbidden to do that which cannot be done. There might, however, be an *impropriety* in her using the same freedoms

with him in his immortal state as she had been wont to do in his mortal state. It might be proper to touch him at his own invitation, and so to answer an important end, (see Luke xxiv. 39,) and yet improper to do so without it. By comparing the passage with Matt. xxviii. 9, 10, it appears that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary who was with her *did touch him*; for they are said to have "held him by the feet, and worshipped him." There is reason to think, therefore, that the words, "Touch me not," in John, were used merely to induce her to *desist* from what she was doing; and that on account of his having more important employment for her—"Go, tell my brethren!" This agrees with the reason given in John—"Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father," &c. This was as much as if he had said, You need not be so unwilling to let go my feet, as though you should see me no more: I am not yet ascended, nor shall I ascend at present. Yet do not imagine that I am raised to a mere mortal life, or am going to set up a temporal kingdom in this world . . . No. . . . "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and unto my God, and your God."

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"The Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law."—Rom. ii. 14.

"Among whom we all had our conversation in times past . . . and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."—Eph. ii. 3.

THE term "nature" in these two passages is of very different signification. In the former it stands opposed to the written law of God, or the light of revelation. In the latter it is opposed to custom, education, or any thing merely accidental. In the one case, it is expressive of their want of external means; in the other, of the inward disposition of their minds. The phrase "by nature," in the former, refers to the *rule* of action; but, in the latter, to the *cause* of it. All arguments, therefore, against the total depravity of human nature, or in favour of a natural disposition to virtue, drawn from the former of these passages, are entirely unfounded.

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"One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."—Rom. xiv. 5.

"Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain."—Gal. iv. 10, 11.

THE key to this apparent difficulty will be found in attending to the persons addressed. The Roman and Galatian churches were each composed of both Jews and Gentiles; but they are not addressed promiscuously; neither are they the same description of people who are addressed in both passages. Those who *regarded days* among the Romans were the *converted Jews*, who, having from their youth observed them as Divine appointments, were with difficulty brought to lay them aside. And as their attachment had its origin in a tender regard to Divine authority, they were considered as *keeping the day unto the Lord*; and great tenderness was enjoined upon the Gentile converts towards them in that matter.

Those, on the other hand, who among the Galatians "observed days, and months, and times," were *converted Gentiles*, as is manifest from the context, which describes them as having, in their unconverted state, done "service to them which by nature were no gods," ver. 8. These, being perverted by certain judaizing teachers, were, contrary to the apostolical decision, (Acts xv.,) circumcised, and subjected themselves to the yoke of Jewish ceremonies. Nor was this all: they were brought to consider these things as necessary to justification and salvation, which was subversive of the doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus Christ, Acts xv. 1; Gal. v. 4.



Considering these differences, the different language of the apostle is perfectly in character. Circumcision, and conformity to the laws of Moses, in *Jewish converts*, was held to be lawful. Even the apostle of the Gentiles himself to the Jews became a Jew, frequently, if not constantly, conforming to the Jewish laws; and writing to others he expresses himself on this wise: "Is any man called being circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? Let him not become circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but keeping of the commandments of God." But for *Gentiles*, who had no such things to be alleged in their favour, to go off from the liberty granted to them, (Acts xv.,) and entangle themselves under a yoke of bondage—and not only so, but to make it a term of justification—was sufficient to excite a fear lest the labour which he had bestowed upon them was in vain.

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"And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man."—Acts ix. 7.

"And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me."—Acts xxii. 9.

THE statement in these two passages contains a variety, but no contrariety, the former observing that the men "heard a voice;" the latter, that "they heard not the voice of him that spoke" to Saul. They heard a sound which terrified them; but did not understand the meaning, which Saul did. The one says that they "saw the light;" the other that they "saw no man." In all this there is no inconsistency.

The reason why they are said to have "seen no man" is not to distinguish them from Saul; for neither did he see the personage who spoke to him; but to account for their terror, or their being struck speechless. It must have been overwhelming to their minds to have heard a voice, and yet to see no person near from whom it should proceed.

The difference upon the whole, however, between the case of these men and Saul was great, and strongly marks the difference between mere convictions and true conversion. The voice of the Lord was heard by both; but to the one it was a mere general and indistinct sound; to the other it was a word that entered into his soul. They "saw the light, and were afraid;" but that was all: he saw, and heard, and understood, and felt, and inquired, "Who art thou, Lord?—Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Many *hear* the word in a general way, and *see* enough to make them tremble; but then it is truly effectual when it is addressed to us as the voice of one that speaks to us from heaven; when it disarms us of our enmity to Christ, excites in us the desire of knowing him, and makes us willing, without hesitation or delay, to obey his commandments.

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"God, who is faithful, will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able."—1 Cor. x. 13.

"We were pressed out of measure, above strength, inasmuch that we despaired even of life."—2 Cor. i. 8.

THE *ability* in the former of these passages, and the *strength* in the latter, are far from being the same. The one is expressive of that Divine support which the Lord has promised to give to his servants under all their trials; the other of the power which we possess naturally as creatures. We may be tried beyond this, as all the martyrs have been, and yet not beyond the other. The outward man may perish, while the inward man is renewed day by day.

“Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”—Gal. vi. 2.

“Every man shall bear his own burden.”—Gal. vi. 5.

The former is an exhortation to Christian sympathy under present afflictions; the latter is a declaration of the rule of future judgment, according to character. We may alleviate each other’s sorrows in this life, but cannot stand in each other’s place at the last day.

“The Lord is at hand.”—Phil. iv. 5.

“Be not soon shaken in mind, nor troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.”—2 Thess. ii. 2.

EVERY thing with respect to degrees is what it is by comparison. Taking into consideration the whole of time, the coming of Christ was “at hand.” There is reason to believe from this, and many other passages of the New Testament, that the sacred writers considered themselves as having passed the meridian of time, and entered into the afternoon of the world, as we may say. Such appears to be the import of the following, among other passages: “God hath in these *last days* spoken to us by his Son.” “Once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”—“Upon whom the ends of the world are come.”—“The coming of the Lord draweth nigh.”—“Surely I come quickly.”

But taking into consideration only a single generation, the day of Christ was *not at hand*. The Thessalonians, though a very amiable people, were by some means mistaken on this subject, so as to expect that the end of the world would take place in their lifetime, or within a very few years. To correct this error, which might have been productive of very serious evils, was a principal design of the Second Epistle to that people.

“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”—1 John i. 8.

“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”—1 John iii. 9.

It appears that the word *sin*, in these passages, is of different significations. In the former it is to be taken properly, for any transgression of the law of God. If any man say, in this sense, he has no sin, he only proves himself to be deceived, and that he has yet to learn what is true religion.

But in the latter, it seems, from the context, that the term is intended to denote the sin of *apostacy*. If we were to substitute the term apostacy for sin, from the sixth to the tenth verse, the meaning would be clear. Whoso abideth in him *apostatizeth* not: whosoever *apostatizeth* hath not seen him, neither known him.—He that is guilty of *apostacy* is of the devil; for the devil hath been an *apostate* from the beginning.—Whosoever is born of God doth not *apostatize*; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot *apostatize*, because he is born of God.

This sense of the latter passage perfectly agrees with what is said of the “sin unto death,” ver. 16—18. “There is a sin unto death . . . . . We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.” It also agrees with chap. ii. 19, “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would, no doubt, have continued with us. But they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.” Altogether, it affords what we might presume to call an incontestable proof of the certain perseverance of true believers.

“All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”—2 Tim. iii. 12.

“When a man’s ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.”—Prov. xvi. 7.

SOME consideration is required for the difference of *times*. It was the genius of the Old Testament, more than of the New, to connect obedience to God with temporal prosperity; and therefore that might be said under the one which would be less applicable under the other.

It is allowed, however, that this is not sufficient to solve the difficulty. There has always been the same radical enmity in general between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. He that was born after the flesh *then*, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit; and so it is *now*. And by how much more spiritual the church at any time has been, by so much higher has the enmity arisen against them. It is also true under the gospel, as well as under the law, that where a man perseveres in righteousness and godliness, though he may have many enemies, yet their enmity shall frequently be prevented from hurting him, and even turned away from him into other channels. The truth seems to be, that neither of the above passages is to be taken *universally*. The peace possessed by those who please God does not extend so far as to exempt them from having enemies; and though all godly men must in some form or other be persecuted, yet none are persecuted *at all times*. God has always given his people some seasons of rest. The former of these passages may, therefore, refer to the native enmity which true godliness is certain to excite, and the latter to the Divine control over it. The rod of the wicked must be expected to fall, but not to *rest* upon the lot of the righteous. Man’s wrath shall be let loose in a degree; but further than what is necessary for the praise of God it shall not go. It shall be suffered to shoot forth in measure; but God will debate with it. “He stayeth his rough wind in the day of his east wind.”

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“But meat commendeth us not to God,” &c.—1 Cor. viii. 8—13.

“The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils and not to God, and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table and of the table of devils.”—1 Cor. x. 20, 21.

In the former of these passages the apostle presses the discontinuance of eating meats offered to idols as merely *inconvenient*; in the latter as absolutely *unlawful*. To account for this, it may be proper to observe that eating part of the sacrifices of the city, which might be provided at the public expense, had been the custom in all former times; and it was probably thought a hardship to be forbidden it. Some of the members of the church at Corinth proceeded so far as to resume their old stations at these public feasts; and justified themselves on the ground that they were not so ignorant as not to be able to distinguish between idolatry and good eating and drinking; they did not *mean* by it to do any honour to the idol, but merely to partake of the repast. Yet by their example many weaker brethren, who still retained the prejudices of their heathen education, were actually drawn into a superstitious veneration of the idol.—The thing also was in itself wrong, as it was having fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.

To remedy this evil, the apostle first reasons with them *on their own principles*. Be it so, as if he had said, that there is no evil in it, and that you by your superior knowledge (thus satirizing their vain pretences) can walk over these coals without being burnt; yet that is more than your weaker brethren can do. You make them sin, though you be sinless yourselves.—In this view he allows their conduct, for argument sake, to be lawful, but

denies it to be *expedient*. But having thus proved the impropriety of their conduct, even upon their own principles, he proceeds to evince its utter *unlawfulness*; calling it "idolatry" chap. x. 14, and proving it to be so on this general principle—that he who voluntarily associates with others in any act is a partaker of that act. On this ground, says he, it is that in the Lord's supper we hold professed *communion* with Christ; that those who among the Jews ate of the sacrifices partook of the altar; and, upon this ground, you cannot eat and drink things offered to idols without having fellowship with demons.

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## LETTERS ON SYSTEMATIC DIVINITY.

### ADVERTISEMENT.

ABOUT the beginning of 1814, Mr. Fuller, in compliance with the request of Dr. Ryland, began a series of letters, intending to prepare one every month; till he had gone through a BODY OF DIVINITY. He was, however, prevented by ill health, and his many pressing engagements, from punctually fulfilling his design; and only the following NINE letters had been completed when he was called to his reward.

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## LETTER I.

### IMPORTANCE OF SYSTEMATIC DIVINITY.

MY DEAR BROTHER:—

RESPECTING your request of a monthly letter, I acknowledge I have wished for several years past to give, as far as I was able, a *connected view of the gospel*; but have hitherto wanted either sufficient leisure, or sufficient inducement, seriously to set about it. The difficulty of giving every part of Divine truth its due importance, and of placing it in the system where it will have the greatest effect, is such that I have no expectation of doing it to my own satisfaction; but I am willing to try. May the Holy Spirit of God preserve my heart and mind, that I may neither be misled, nor contribute to the misleading of others. Pray that this may be the case; and as you receive my letters, make free remarks upon them, and let me see them.

Before I enter upon particulars, I wish to obviate some objections to the study of *systematic* divinity, and to show its importance to a just and enlarged view of the gospel. For this purpose, I must beg leave to introduce part of a sermon, which I printed nearly eighteen years ago, "On the Importance of an intimate acquaintance with Divine Truth."\*

\* As the sermon referred to appears as the fifth in the volume now before the reader, it is considered unnecessary to quote the passage, which forms the fourth subdivision of the first part of the discourse.—B.

## LETTER II.

## IMPORTANCE OF A TRUE SYSTEM.

IN my last I endeavoured to show the importance of *system*: in this I shall attempt to show the importance of a *true* system; and to prove that truth itself, by being displaced from those connections which it occupies in the Scriptures, may be perverted, and prove injurious to those that hold it. No system can be supposed to be *wholly* erroneous; but if a considerable part of it be false, the whole will be vitiated, and that which is true will be divested of its salutary influence. "If ye be circumcised," said the apostle to the Galatians, "Christ shall profit you nothing." As one truth, thoroughly imbibed, will lead to a hundred more, so will one error. False doctrine will *eat as doth a gangrene*, which, though it may seem to be confined to one part of the body, infects the whole mass, and, if not extracted, must issue in death.

If one put on the profession of Christianity without cordially believing it, it will not sit easy upon him; his heart will not be in it; and if, at the same time, he live in the indulgence of secret vice, he will soon feel it necessary to new-model his religious opinions. It degrades him, even in his own esteem, to be a hypocrite, avowing one thing and practising another. In order to be *easy*, therefore, it becomes necessary for him to have a new creed, that he may answer the reproaches of his conscience, and it may be those of his acquaintance, by the assumption that *his ideas are changed*. He begins by doubting; and having by criminal indulgence effaced all sense of the holiness of God from his mind, he thinks of him only in respect of what he calls his goodness, which he hopes will induce him to connive at his frailties. With thoughts like these, of God and of sin, he will soon find himself in possession of a system. A new field of thought opens to his mind, in which he finds very little need of Christ, and becomes, in his own eyes, a being of consequence. Such, or nearly such, was the process of those who perished, "because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this cause God sent them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." But, passing these delusive systems, truth itself, if viewed out of its *Scriptural connexions*, is vitiated and injurious. The members of our bodies are no otherwise beneficial than as they occupy the places in which the Creator has fixed them. If the foot were in the place of the hand, or the ear of the eye, instead of being useful, they would each be injurious; and the same is true of a preposterous view of Scripture doctrines. The Jews, in the time of our Saviour, professed the same creed, in the main, as their forefathers; they reckoned themselves to believe Moses; but, holding with Moses to the exclusion of Christ, their faith was rendered void. "If ye believed Moses," said our Lord, "ye would believe me; for he wrote of me." Thus it is with us: if we hold the law of Moses to the exclusion of Christ, or any otherwise than as subservient to the gospel, or Christ and the gospel to the exclusion of the law of Moses, neither the one nor the other will profit us.

To illustrate and confirm these observations, I shall select, for examples, three of the leading doctrines of the gospel; namely, *election*, *the atonement*, and *the influence of the Holy Spirit*.

If the doctrine of *election* be viewed in those connexions in which it stands in the Scriptures, it will be of great importance in the Christian life. The

whole difference between the saved and the lost being ascribed to sovereign grace, the pride of man is abased: the believer is taught to feel and acknowledge that by the grace of God he is what he is; and the sinner to apply for mercy, not as being on terms with his Maker, but absolutely at his discretion. It is frequently the last point which a sinner yields to God. To relinquish every claim and ground of hope from his own good endeavours, and fall at the feet of sovereign mercy, requires that he be born of God. If we take our views of this great subject in its connexion with others, I need not say we shall not consider it as founded on any thing good *foreseen* in us, whether it be faith or good works; this were to exclude the idea of an *election of grace*; and to admit, if not to establish, boasting. Neither shall we look at the *end* in such a way as to lose sight of the *means*. We shall consider it as we do other Divine appointments, not as revealed to us to be a rule of conduct, but to teach us our entire dependence upon God. We are given to believe that, whatever good or evil befalls us, we are *thercunto appointed*, 1 Thess. iii. 3. The time of our continuance in the world is as much an object of Divine purpose as our eternal destiny: but we do not imagine, on this account, that we shall live though we neither eat nor drink; nor presume that though we leap headlong from a precipice no danger will befall us. Neither does it hinder us from exhorting or persuading others to pursue the way of safety, and to flee from danger. In these things we act the same as if there were no Divine appointments, or as if we believed nothing concerning them; but when we have done all that can be done, the sentiment of an all-disposing Providence recurs to mind, and teaches us that we are still in the hands of God. Such were the views of good men, as recorded in Scripture. They believed the days of man to be *appointed*, and that he could not *pass his bounds*; yet, in time of famine, the patriarch Jacob sent to Egypt to buy corn, "that they might live, and not die." Elisha knew of a certainty that Benhadad would die; yet, speaking of him in respect of his disease, he did not scruple to say, "He may recover." The Lord assured Paul, in his perilous voyage, that "there should be no loss of any man's life:" yet, when he saw the ship-men making their escape, he said to the centurion, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved."

A fleshly mind may ask, "How can these things be?" How can Divine predestination accord with human agency and accountableness? But a truly humble Christian, finding both in his Bible, will believe both, though he may be unable fully to understand their consistency; and he will find in the one a motive to depend entirely on God, and in the other a caution against slothfulness and presumptuous neglect of duty. And thus a Christian minister, if he view the doctrine in its proper connexions, will find nothing in it to hinder the free use of warnings, invitations, and persuasions, either to the converted or the unconverted. Yet he will not ground his hopes of success on the pliability of the human mind, but on the promised grace of God, who (while he prophesies to the dry bones, as he is commanded) is known to inspire them with the breath of life.

Thus it was that the apostle, while in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters of his Epistle to the Romans, he traces the sovereignty of God in calling some from among the Jews, and leaving others to perish in unbelief, never thought of excusing that unbelief, nor felt any scruples in exhorting and warning the subjects of it, nor in praying for their salvation. Even in his preaching to the Gentiles, he kept his eye on them, if by any means he might provoke to emulation those who were his flesh, and might save some of them.

But whatever this doctrine is in itself, yet if viewed out of its connexions,

or in connexions which do not belong to it, it will become another thing. God's election of the posterity of Abraham was of sovereign favour, and not on account of any excellence in them, natural or moral; in which view it was humbling, and no doubt had a good effect on the godly Israelites. But the Jews in our Saviour's time turned this their national election into another kind of doctrine, full of flattery towards themselves, and of the most intolerable contempt and malignity towards others. And thus the doctrine of eternal and personal election viewed in a similar light becomes a source of pride, bitterness, sloth, and presumption. Conceive of the love of God as capricious fondness—imagine, because it had no inducement from the goodness of the creature, that therefore it was without reason, only so it was and so it must be—view it, not as a means by which God would assert the sovereignty of his grace, but as an end to which every thing must become subservient—conceive of yourself as a darling of Heaven, a favourite of Providence, for whom Divine interpositions next to miracles are continually occurring—and, instead of being humbled before God as a poor sinner, you will feel like a person who in a dream or a reverie imagines himself a king, takes state to himself, and treats every one about him with distant contempt.

If the doctrine of *atonement* be viewed in the connexions in which it stands in the sacred Scriptures, it is the life-blood of the gospel system. Consider it as a method devised by the infinite wisdom of God, by which he might honour his own name by dispensing mercy to the unworthy in a way consistent with righteousness, and we shall be furnished with considerations at once the most humiliating and transporting that were ever presented to a creature's mind.

But there are ways of viewing this doctrine which will render it void, and even worse than void. If, for instance, instead of connecting it with the Divinity of Christ, we ascribe its efficacy to Divine *appointment*, the name may remain, but that will be all. On this principle it *was* possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should have taken away sin, and that the cup should have passed away from the Saviour without his drinking it. As there would on this principle be no necessity for the death of Christ, so neither could there be any great love displayed by it; and as to its constraining influence, we need not look for it.

Or if the atonement be considered as a *reparation to man* for the injury done him by his being connected with his first parents, it is rendered void. Whatever evil we derive from our first parents, while we ourselves choose it, we are no more injured than if we derived it from our immediate parents; and it will no more bear to be pleaded at the last judgment, than it will bear to be alleged by a thief, at an earthly tribunal, that his father had been a thief before him. To argue, therefore, as some have done, that if Christ had not come into the world and given us grace, so as to remove the inability for doing good under which we lay as the descendants of Adam, we should not have been blameworthy for not doing it, is to render grace no more grace, and the atonement a satisfaction to man rather than to God. If man would not have been blameworthy without the gift of Christ and a provision of grace, it would seem a pity that both had not been withheld, and that we had not been left to the justice of our Creator, who surely might be trusted not to punish for that in which we were not in fault.

Or if the doctrine of atonement lead us to entertain *degrading notions of the law of God*, or to plead an *exemption from its preceptive authority*, we may be sure it is not the Scripture doctrine of reconciliation. Atonement has respect to justice, and justice to the law, or the revealed will of the sovereign, which has been violated, and its very design is to repair its

honour. If the law which has been transgressed were unjust, instead of an atonement being required for the breach of it, it ought to have been repealed, and the lawgiver have taken upon himself the disgrace of having enacted it. Every instance of punishment among men is a sort of atonement to the justice of the country, the design of which is to restore the authority of good government, which transgression has impaired. But if the law itself is bad, or the penalty too severe, every sacrifice made to it must be an instance of cruelty. And should a prince of the blood royal, in compassion to the offenders, offer to suffer in their stead, for the purpose of atonement, whatever love it might discover on his part, it were still greater cruelty to accept the offer, even though he might survive his sufferings. The public voice would be, There is no need of any atonement; it will do no honour, but dishonour, to the legislature: and to call the liberation of the convicts an act of grace is to add insult to injury. The law ought not to have been enacted, and, now it is enacted, ought immediately to be repealed. It is easy to see from hence, that, in proportion as the law is depreciated, the gospel is undermined, and both grace and atonement rendered void. It is the law as *abused*, or as turned into a *way of life* in opposition to the gospel, (for which it was never given to a fallen creature,) that the sacred Scriptures depreciate it; and not as the revealed will of God, the immutable standard of right and wrong. In this view, the apostle delighted in it; and if we be Christians, we shall delight in it too, and shall not object to be under it as a rule of duty; for no man objects to be governed by laws which he loves.

Finally, If the doctrine of *Divine influence* be considered in its Scriptural connexions, it will be of essential importance in the Christian life; but if these be lost sight of, it will become injurious.

To say nothing of *extraordinary* influence, I conceive there is what may be termed an *indirect* influence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, having inspired the prophets and apostles, testified *in and by them*, and often without effect. "Many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them, by thy Spirit, in thy prophets, yet would they not give ear." The messages of the prophets being dictated by the Holy Spirit, resistance of them was resistance of him. It was in this way, I conceive, that the Spirit of God *strove* with the antediluvians, and that unbelievers are said *always to have resisted the Holy Spirit*. But the Divine influence to which I refer is that by which sinners are renewed and sanctified; concerning which two things require to be kept in view.

First, *It accords with the Scripture*. Is it the work of the Holy Spirit, for example, to illuminate the mind, or to guide us into truth? In order to try whether that which we account light be the effect of Divine teaching, or only a figment of our own imagination, we must bring it to the written word. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." The Holy Spirit teaches nothing but what is true, and what was true antecedently to his teaching it, and would have been true though we had never been taught it. Such are the glory of the Divine character, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, our own guilty and lost condition as sinners, and the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The test of Divine illumination, therefore, is whether that in which we conceive ourselves to be enlightened be a part of Divine truth as revealed in the Scriptures. Further, Is it the work of the Holy Spirit to lead us in the "paths of righteousness?" This also must be tried by the written word. The Holy Spirit leads us into nothing but what is *right* antecedently to our being led into it, and which would have been so though we had never been led into it. He that teacheth us to profit leadeth us



“by the way that we should go.” The paths in which he leads us for his name’s sake are *those of righteousness*. Such are those of repentance for sin, faith in Christ, love to God and one another, and every species of Christian obedience. One test, therefore, of our being led by the Spirit of God, in any way wherein we walk, is, whether it be a part of the will of God as revealed in the Scriptures. As the Holy Spirit teaches us nothing but what was previously true, so he leads us into nothing but what was previously duty.

Secondly, Divine influence not only accords with the sacred Scriptures, but requires to be *introduced in those connexions in which the Scriptures introduce it*. We have heard it described as if it were a *talent*, the use or abuse of which would either issue in our salvation or heighten our guilt. This is true of *opportunities* and *means of grace*, or of what is above described as the *indirect* influence of the Holy Spirit; but not of his *special* influence. The things done for the Lord’s vineyard, concerning which he asks, “What more could I have done?” include the former, and not the latter. The mighty works done in Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, relate, not to the *special* influences of the Spirit on their minds, but to the miracles wrought before their eyes, accompanied as they were by the heavenly doctrine. I do not remember an instance in the sacred Scriptures in which the *renewing* and *sanctifying* influences of the Spirit are thus represented. Divine influence has been introduced as an excuse for sin committed previously to our being the subject of it, as if, because it is necessary to any thing truly good being *done by* us, therefore it must be necessary to its being *required of* us. But if so, there would have been no complaints of Simon the Pharisee for his want of love to Christ; nor of unbelievers at the last judgment for the same thing; nor would Paul have carried with him so humbling a sense of his sin in having persecuted the church of God, while in unbelief, as to reckon himself the chief of sinners on account of it. The want of Divine influence has been introduced as an apology for negligence and slothfulness in the Christian life. What else do men mean when they speak of this and the other duty as “no further binding upon them than as the Lord shall enable them to discharge it?” If it be so, we have no sin to confess for “not doing that which we ought to have done;” for as far as the Lord enables us to discharge our obligations, we discharge them. The doctrine of Divine influence is introduced in the sacred Scriptures as a motive to activity: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.”

Finally, We have often heard this doctrine introduced in the pulpit in such a way as to weaken the force of what has been previously said on behalf of God and righteousness. When the sacred Scriptures speak of the *cause* of good, they ascribe every thing to God’s Holy Spirit. The writers seem to have no fear of going too far. And it is the same with them when they exhort, or warn, or expostulate; they discover no apprehension of going so far as to render void the grace of God. In all their writings, the one never seems to stand in the way of the other; each is allowed its full scope, without any apparent suspicion of inconsistency between them. But is it so with us? If one dares to exhort sinners in the words of Scripture, to “repent and believe the gospel,” he presently feels himself upon tender ground; and if he does not recede, yet he must qualify his words, or he will be suspected of disbelieving the work of the Spirit! To prevent this he must needs introduce it, though it be only to blunt the edge of his exhortation—“Repent and believe the gospel: I know, indeed, you cannot do this of yourselves; but you can pray for the Holy Spirit to enable you to do it.”

It is right to pray for the Holy Spirit, as well as for every thing else that we need, and to exhort others to do so; and it may be one of the first petitions of a mind returning to good, "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned:" but to introduce it *instead of repenting and believing*, and as something which a sinner *can* do, though he cannot do the other, is erroneous and dangerous.

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### LETTER III.

#### PLAN PROPOSED TO BE PURSUED.

I WISH, in this letter, to state the principle and general outlines of what I shall attempt. In observing different systematic writers, I perceive they have taken different methods of arrangement. The greatest number proceed on the analytical plan, beginning with the being and attributes of God, the creation of the world, moral government, the fall of angels and man, and so proceed to redemption by Jesus Christ, and the benefits and obligations resulting from it. One eminent divine, you know, has treated the subject historically, tracing the gradual development of Divine truth as it actually took place in the order of time.\* These different methods have each their advantages; but it has for some time appeared to me that the greater number of them have also their disadvantages; so much so as to render truth, in a systematic form, almost uninteresting.

I do not know how it may prove on trial, but I wish to begin with the centre of Christianity—the *doctrine of the cross*, and to work round it; or with what may be called the heart of Christianity, and to trace it through its principal veins or relations, both in doctrine and practice. If Christianity had not been comprehended in this doctrine, the apostle, who shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God, could not have determined to know nothing else in his ministry. The whole of the Christian system appears to be *presupposed by it, included in it, or to arise from it*: if, therefore, I write any thing, it will be on this principle. In its favour, the following things may be alleged:—

First, It accords with *truth*. All things are said to have been created not only by Christ, but for him. All things in creation, therefore, are rendered subservient to his glory as Redeemer; and, being thus connected, they require to be viewed so, in order to be seen with advantage.

Secondly, By viewing all Divine truths and duties as related to one great object, as so many lines meeting in a centre, a character of *unity* is imparted to the subject which it would not otherwise possess, and which seems properly to belong to the idea of a system. A system, if I understand it, is a *whole*, composed of a number of parts, so combined and arranged as to show their proper connexions and dependencies, and to exhibit every truth and every duty to the best advantage. The unity of a number in one great object, and so forming a whole, gives an interest to the subject which it would not otherwise possess. It is interesting, no doubt, to view the works of nature as revolving round the sun as their centre; but to view nature and providence as centering in the glory of the Redeemer, is much more interesting.

Thirdly, The object in which all the parts of the system are united being CHRIST, must tend to shed a sweet savour on the whole. We have often

\* President Edwards's History of Redemption.

heard the epithet *dry* applied to the doctrines of the gospel, especially when systematically treated; but this must have arisen from the faults or defects of the system, or from the uninteresting manner of treating it, or from a defect in the hearer or reader. The doctrine of the gospel, if imparted in its genuine simplicity, and received in faith and love, "drops as the rain, and distils as the dew upon the tender herb." I may not be able thus to impart it: but, whether I do or not, it may be done; and so far as I or any other may fail, let the fault be imputed to us, and not to the doctrine of God our Saviour.

Fourthly, There is a singular advantage attending the study of other truths through this medium. We might know something of God and of ourselves through the medium of the Divine law; and it is necessary for some purposes to understand this subject as distinct from the gospel. But a sense of the holiness and justice of God, contrasted with our depravity and guilt, might be more than we could bear. To view these great subjects, on the other hand, through the cross of Christ, is to view the malady through the medium of the remedy, and so never to want an antidote for despair.

With the idea of all Divine truth bearing an intimate relation to Christ agrees that notable phrase in Eph. iv. 21, "The truth as it is in Jesus." To believe the truth concerning Jesus is to believe the whole doctrine of the Scriptures. Hence it is that in all the brief summaries of Christian doctrine the person and work of Christ are prominent. Such are the following: "Brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also you have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you, among the first principles, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.—Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.—This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.—This is the record, that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.—He that believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.—Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" Fully aware that this golden link would draw along with it the whole chain of evangelical truth, the sacred writers seem careful for nothing in comparison of it. It is on this ground that faith in Christ is represented as essential to spiritual life: see John vi. 53—56, "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." We may be Christians by education, may be well versed in Christianity as a science, may be able to converse, and preach, and write, in defence of it; but if Christ crucified be not that to us which food is to the hungry, and drink to the thirsty, we are dead while we live. It is on this ground that error concerning the person and work of Christ is of such importance as frequently to become death to the party. We may err on other subjects and survive, though it be in a maimed state; but to err in this is to contract a disease in the vitals, the ordinary effect of which is death. When Peter confessed him to be the Son of the living God, Jesus answered, "Upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Upon this prin-

ciple, as a foundation, Christianity rests; and it is remarkable that, to this day, deviation concerning the person and work of Christ is followed by a dereliction of almost every other evangelical doctrine, and of the spirit of Christianity. How should it be otherwise? If the foundation be removed, the building must fall.

What is it that is denominated *the great mystery of godliness*? Is it not that "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory?" It is this that the apostle John introduces at the beginning of his gospel under the name of "the Word:" "The Word was with God, and was God; by whom all things were made, and who was made flesh, and dwelt among us."\* It is this upon which he dwells in the introduction of his First Epistle: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Christ is here described, 1. As to what he was in his pre-incarnate state; namely, as that which was from the beginning, the word of life, and that eternal life which was with the Father. 2. As to what he became by his incarnation: he was so manifested that his disciples could see him, and look on him, and handle him; and thus be qualified to bear witness of him, and to show unto others that eternal life that was with the Father. 3. As having opened a way in which those who believed in him were admitted to fellowship with God, and with him, and were commissioned to invite others to partake with them. I have long considered this passage as a decisive proof of the Divinity of Christ, and as a summary of the gospel.

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## LETTER IV.

### THE BEING OF GOD.

HAVING in the foregoing letters endeavoured to show the importance of system, and of that system being the true one, and proposed the plan of what I may communicate, I shall now proceed to execute it as well as I am able. In the last letter it was stated, concerning the doctrine of the cross, that every thing pertaining to Christianity was *presupposed by it, included in it, or arose out of it*. This threefold distribution will form the three parts into which what I write will be divided. Under the first, namely, *principles presupposed by the doctrine of the cross*, I begin with *the being of God*, to which fundamental principle this letter will be devoted. God is the first cause and last end of all things. "Of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to him be glory for ever. Amen." To undertake to prove his existence seems to be almost as unnecessary as to go about to prove our own. The Scriptures at their outset take it for granted; and he that calls it in question

\* Whether we read *God*, or the *Son of God*, or the *Lord*, or the *Word*, the idea is the same. There is no meaning in saying of any one who was not God, that he was manifest in the flesh, or that he was made flesh, &c.

is not so much to be reasoned with as to be reprov'd. His error belongs to the heart rather than to the understanding. His doubts are either affected, or arise from a wish to free himself from the idea of accountability. The things that are seen in the visible creation contain so clear a manifestation of the things that are not seen, even of his eternal power and Godhead, as to leave athiests and idolators "without excuse," Rom. i. 20.

All reasoning must proceed upon some acknowledged principles; and what can deserve to be so considered more than our own existence, and that of the great First Cause? There are truths among men which it is indecorous to attempt to prove. To discuss the question whether a parent ought to be acknowledged and obeyed by his children, whatever proof might be alleged for it, would tend to agitate a subject which ought to be at rest. I question whether argumentation in favour of the existence of God has not made more sceptics than believers. An Orissa pundit, not being able to see God, required of a missionary a proof of his existence. He was asked, in answer, whether he could see his own soul; and whether he had any doubts of his possessing one. "Certainly not," said the pundit. "Such," said the missionary, "is the living God; he is invisible to us, but he is every where present."

In the early ages of the world there appears to have been a much stronger persuasion of Divine interposition in human affairs than generally prevails in our times. Even heathens, whose gods were vanity, put their trust in them. In all their wars, they not only took counsel with their wise men; but consulted their oracles. Rollin, from Xenophon, holds it up as one of the great virtues of Cyrus that he respected the gods. "In the sight of all his army," says he, "he makes mention of the gods, offers sacrifices and libations to them, addresses himself to them by prayer and invocation, and implores their succour and protection. What a shame, then, and a reproach, would it be to a Christian officer or general, if, on a day of battle, he should blush to appear as religious and devout as a pagan prince; and if the Lord of hosts and God of armies, whom he acknowledges as such, should make a less impression on his mind than a respect for the false deities of paganism did upon the mind of Cyrus!" Yet this is the fact. Now and then, on an occasion of great success, God is acknowledged; but in general he is disregarded. How is this to be accounted for? Cyrus's gods were *according to his mind*; but, with the true God, *the dispositions of the greater part of mankind are at perfect variance*. Real Christians still acknowledge him in all their ways, and he directs their paths; but merely nominal Christians, having a *God who is not according to their minds*, think but little of him, feel ashamed to own him, and thus sink into practical atheism. To know that there is a God is necessary, indeed, to true religion; but if we stop there, it will be of no use. What is the *Supreme Being* of modern unbelievers? and of what account is their knowledge of him? As the author of the machinery of the universe, he is admired, and magnified in such a way as to render it beneath him to interfere with the affairs of mortals, or to call them to account.

The true knowledge of God is less speculative than practical. It is remarkable with what deep reverence the inspired writers speak of God. Moses, when relating his appearance at the bush, did not attempt to explain his name, but communicated it in the words which he heard. "And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you, and they will say unto me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, *I am that I am*: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, *I am* hath sent me unto you." This sublime

language suggests not only his self-existence, but his incomprehensibility. It is beyond the powers of a creature even to be taught what he is.

“As to the being of God,” says Dr. Owen, “we are so far from a knowledge of it, so as to be able to instruct one another therein by words and expressions of it, as that to frame any conceptions in our own mind, with such species of impressions of things as we receive the knowledge of all other things by, is to make an idol to ourselves, and so to worship a god of our own making, and not the God that made us. We may as well and as lawfully hew him out of wood and stone, as form him a being in our minds suited to our apprehensions. The utmost of the best of our thoughts of the being of God is, that we can have no thoughts of it. Our knowledge of a being is but low when it mounts no higher but only to know that we know it not.—There be some things of God which he himself hath taught us to speak of, and to regulate our expressions of them; but when we have so done, we see not the things themselves, we know them not; to believe and to admire is all that we can attain to. We profess, as we are taught, that God is infinite, omnipotent, eternal; and we know what disputes and notions there are about omnipresence, immensity, infinity, and eternity. We have, I say, words and notions about these things; but as to the things themselves, what do we know? what do we comprehend of them? Can the mind of man do any thing more but swallow itself up in an infinite abyss, which is as nothing? give itself up to what it cannot conceive, much less express? Is not our understanding brutish in the contemplation of such things? and is as if it were not? Yea, the perfection of our understanding is, not to understand, and to rest there: they are the back parts of eternity and infinity that we have a glimpse of. What shall I say of the Trinity, or the subsistence of distinct persons in the same individual essence; a mystery by many denied, because by none understood; a mystery whose very letter is mysterious.—How little a portion is heard of him?”

In the Epistles of Paul there are various instances in which, having mentioned the name of God, he stops to pay him adoration. Thus when describing the dishonour put upon him by worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator, he pauses, and adds, “Who is blessed for ever. Amen!” Thus also, speaking of Christ as having “given himself to deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of *God and our Father*,” he adds, “To *Him* be glory for ever and ever. Amen!” And thus, when having spoken of the exceeding abundant grace shown to himself as the chief of sinners, he adds, “Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen!”

It is the name of God that gives authority, importance, and glory to every person or thing with which it stands connected. The glory of man, above the rest of the creatures, consisted in this: “God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him.” This, and not merely the well-being of man, is the reason given why murder should be punished with death. “He that sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: *for in the image of God made he man.*” This is the great sanction to the precepts and threatenings of the law: “That thou mayest fear that fearful name, *the Lord thy God.*” Herein consists the great evil of sin; and of that sin especially which is committed immediately against God. “Know thou therefore, and see, that it is an evil thing, and bitter, that thou hast forsaken *the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord of hosts.* If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sin against the *Lord*, who shall entreat for him?” The sin of the men of Sodom, though it had reached to heaven, yet was not completed till

they persevered in it, when smitten of God with blindness. Pharaoh and the Egyptians had grievously oppressed Israel; but it was by persevering in their sins notwithstanding the judgments of God, and presuming to follow his people into the sea, that they brought upon themselves destruction. Of this nature was the disobedience of Saul, the boasting of Sennacherib and Rabshakeh, the pride of Nebuchadnezzar, the profanation of the sacred vessels by Belshazzar, and the shutting up of John in prison by Herod. Each of these men had done much evil before; but, by setting themselves directly against God, they sealed their doom. It is on this principle that idolatry and blasphemy were punished with death under the theocracy, and that, under the gospel, unbelief and apostasy are threatened with damnation.

God manifested himself in creation, in giving laws to his creatures, in the providential government of the world, and in other ways; but all these exhibited him only in part: it is in the gospel of salvation, through his dear Son, that his whole character appears; so that, from invisible, he in a sense becomes visible. "No one had seen God at any time; but the only begotten Son, who dwelleth in the bosom of the Father, he declared him." What is it that believers see in the gospel when their minds are spiritually enlightened? It is "the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." Whatever is visible in an object is called its *face*. Thus we speak of the face of the heavens, of the earth, and of the sea; and in each of these the glory of God is to be seen; but in the face of Jesus Christ, that is, in that which has been manifested to us by his incarnation, life, preaching, miracles, sufferings, resurrection, and ascension, the glory of God is seen in a degree that it has never been seen in before. The apostle, when speaking of God in relation to the gospel, uses the epithet "blessed" with singular propriety: "According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God." The gospel is the grand emanation from the fountain of blessedness, an overflow of the Divine goodness. It is the infinitely happy God, pouring forth his happiness upon miserable sinners, through Jesus Christ. The result is, that, as God is the Great Supreme, he must in all things occupy the supreme place. Thus we are required, by his law, to love him first, and then to love our neighbour as ourselves; and thus the coming of Christ is celebrated, first as giving "glory to God in the highest," and then "peace on earth and good-will to men."

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## LETTER V.

### THE NECESSITY OF A DIVINE REVELATION.

It would be improper, I conceive, to rest the being of God on Scripture testimony; seeing the whole weight of that testimony must depend upon the supposition that he is, and that the sacred Scriptures were written by holy men inspired by him. Hence the Scriptures, at their outset, take this principle for granted; yet in the way that the works of nature imply a Divine First Cause, so does the work of revelation. Men were as morally unable to write such a book as they were naturally unable to create the heavens and the earth. In this way the sacred Scriptures prove the being of a God.

I wish to offer a few remarks on the necessity of a Divine revelation—on the evidence of the Bible being written by inspiration of God, so as to answer this necessity—and on its uniform bearing on the doctrine of salvation through the cross of Christ; but as this is more than can be comprehended in a single letter, I must divide it into two or three.

First, I shall offer a few remarks on *the necessity of a revelation from God*. In establishing this principle, let it be observed, we are not required to depreciate the light of nature. The word of God is not to be exalted at the expense of his works. The evidence which is afforded of the being and perfections of God by the creation which surrounds us, and of which we ourselves are a part, is no more superseded by revelation than the law is rendered void by faith. All things which proceed from God are in harmony with each other. If all the evidence which the heathen have of the being and perfections of God consist of traditional accounts, derived originally from revelation, there must be great uncertainty in it, as in every thing else that comes through such an uncertain medium; and if so, though they should disbelieve it, how are they *without excuse*? and how are we to understand the reasonings of the apostle on the subject? He appears to represent the wrath of God as revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, "because that which may be known is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him, that is, his eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen from the creation of the world, being understood by the things that are made; so that they are *without excuse*." This is equal to saying, God is invisible, but his works are visible: his eternal power and Godhead are manifest from the things which he has created. All things which have a beginning must originate in a cause without beginning; so that they are without excuse. Whether the heathen in any instance have, or have not, *actually perceived* the eternal power and Godhead of the Creator, merely from the works of his hands, is a question that I shall not undertake to answer. If such a case never occurred, it is sufficient for my argument that it has not been for want of objective light, but of a state of mind to receive it. In pleading for the necessity of Divine revelation, as the means of enlightening and saving sinners, we should beware of imitating those who, in arguing for the necessity of Divine grace to renew and sanctify them, represent them as physically unable to do good without it, and so excuse them in their sins. "Every mouth will be stopped, and all the world," whatever advantages or disadvantages they may have possessed in these respects, "will be found guilty before God." It is true that the guilt of those who have lived in sin without the light of revelation will be much less than theirs who have continued in their sins under it; but all are without excuse before God. Divine revelation is necessary to a *competent* knowledge of God, and of his will concerning us. This principle will be evident by a review of two others; namely, the insufficiency of human reason for these important purposes, and the connexion between revelation and faith.

1. *Let us review the insufficiency of human reason to obtain from the mere light of nature a competent knowledge of God, and of his will concerning us.* The light of nature furnishes us with little or no knowledge of the moral character and government of God. While man was in a state of innocence, indeed, he might, by reflecting on his own mind, understand something of the character of that Divine original after whose image he was created; but, having sinned, this image is effaced. It is also true that the judgments of God against sinners are manifest in all the earth; and every man's conscience bears witness that what is wrong in another towards him must be wrong in him towards another; and that, having felt and acted contrary to this equitable principle, in innumerable instances, he is a sinner; but as to the evil nature of sin as committed against God, and his own lost condition, conscience itself can yield him little or no information. And as to an hereafter, whether there be any, and, if there be, what it will prove; whether we shall have to give account of the deeds done in the body; whether there will be any hope of forgiveness; and what we must do to be saved—all is dark-



ness. The light of nature, though sufficient to bear witness for God, and so to leave sinners without excuse, was never designed in any state to furnish man with all he needed. Even in innocence man was governed by a revealed law. It does not appear that he was left to find out the character or will of his Creator by his reason, though reason, being under the influence of rectitude, would lead him, as he understood the mind of God, to love and obey it. But if revelation was necessary in innocence, much more now man's foolish heart is darkened by sin.

The state of the heathen, who are without Divine revelation, furnishes awful proof of its necessity. The grossness of their thoughts of God, and of an hereafter, is such, that those who have received the light of revelation can scarcely think it possible for rational beings to entertain them. To say nothing of the uncivilized heathen, even the polished sons of Greece and Rome, thou prodigies in science, yet, in relation to these things, were the subjects of the most sottish stupidity. Well is it said, "The world by wisdom knew not God." That small portion of real light which on these subjects appears in the writings of our modern deists, is borrowed from those very writings which they mean to depreciate. They live in the neighbourhood of revelation, and, whether they will own it or not, are enlightened by it. The speculations of those who have had only the light of nature to guide them are, in respect of God and religion, absurd in the extreme.

Man is said to be *wiser than the beasts of the field*; but is principally by means of *instruction*. We are born, it is true, with an immortal mind; but, uninformed, what is it? Knowledge chiefly enters in at the door of the senses. To what do we owe the gift of speech? It seems to be natural to us; but if we look at one who is born deaf, we shall find him dumb also; and if to this be added blindness, there will be but little difference between him and the beasts of the field. But if we need human instruction for the attainment of knowledge in things of this life, is it surprising that we should need a Divine instructor for things heavenly and Divine? It is true that God instructs us, as has been said, by his works; but they contain only a few of the rudiments of Divine knowledge; like the parables of our Saviour, they were not designed to furnish perfect information on the subject, but merely a general intimation, tending to excite humble inquiry for further instruction; which, when asked, was readily granted, but, when set at nought, it was "seeing and not perceiving, hearing and not understanding; lest they should be converted and healed." The apostle, in his address to the Athenians, represents it as the design of God, in his works of creation and providence, to lead men to *seek him*; but though he was not far from every one, seeing all live, and move, and have their being in him, yet the light of nature could only enable them "to feel after him, if haply they might find him." Though "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork;" though "day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge," and though their voice is heard in every language and in every clime, even to the end of the world; yet it is not by them, but by the word of Jehovah, that souls are converted, and the simple made wise. Some of the wisest among the old heathens felt and acknowledged the need there was of a revelation from heaven; and heathens of the present day acknowledge the same thing. A Hindoo fakeer, who was a brahmin goroo, being lately asked by one of his disciples, who had heard a missionary at Balasore, whether he could make known to him the living and only God, answered, "We know there is one living God, besides Kreshnoo, Seeb, and Ram; but we do not know his way." The disciple replied, "Come to the Sahib Fakeer; he will tell you of the God of heaven, whose way he knows."

2. *The necessity of Divine revelation will further appear, if we consider its relation to faith.*

Supposing mankind to be in a guilty and perishing condition, and that "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," a revelation from heaven was necessary as the ground of faith. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God:" without revelation, therefore, there would be no faith, and so no salvation.

Both revelation and faith may, however, exist in widely different *degrees*. Revelation was first given in obscure intimations, afterwards in types and shadows, in promises and in prophecies; and under each it was the office of faith to keep pace with it. The faith of Abel and that of Paul, though as to their nature and object the same, yet, as to degree, must have been widely different, on account of the difference of the degrees of Divine revelation which each possessed. Revelation, like the shining light, shone "more and more unto the perfect day," and such was the "path of the just," which corresponded with it.

From these remarks, we may see the force of such passages as the following: "He showeth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation; and as to his judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the Lord."—"What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there in circumcision? Much every way; chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God."—"At that time ye were without Christ, (being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise,) having no hope, and without God in the world; but now, in Christ Jesus, ye who some time ago were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

We may also learn, from these remarks, to make allowance for the small degrees of faith where the light of revelation has been but little known. It is not for us to say how small a portion of Divine truth may irradiate the mind, nor by what means the Holy Spirit may impart it. According to the ordinary way of the Divine proceeding under the gospel, it may be asked, "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?" But this has not been the uniform method of the Divine proceeding from the beginning. Previously to the time of Moses, there was no *written* revelation, and till the coming of Christ no ordinance for *preaching* the word. No missionaries till then were sent among the heathen. Good men under the Old Testament stood on much lower ground than those under the New Testament. Cornelius, the Roman centurion, being stationed in Judea, learned enough of the God of Israel to be *just and devout, giving much alms to the people, and praying to God alway*; and, before he had heard of Jesus being the Messiah, his prayers and his alms were approved of God. Yet the words spoken to him by Peter were those by which he *was saved*: a proof this, not of there being another way of acceptance with God than that which the gospel reveals, nor of its being possible without faith to please God; but that faith may exist while as yet there is no explicit revelation of the Saviour. Finally, It is not for us to say what may be effected in an extraordinary way upon the minds of men. A ray of Divine revelation shot athwart the darkness of paganism into the minds of the Eastern magi, and led them to worship the new-born Saviour.

## LETTER VI.

## THE INSPIRATION OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

In my last, I endeavoured to show the necessity of a Divine revelation. In this, I shall *offer evidence of the Bible being written by inspiration of God, so as to answer to this necessity.* It is certain that those who wrote the books which compose the Old and New Testaments profess to have been Divinely inspired. "The Spirit of God spake by me, and his word was in my tongue: the God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me.—The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, &c.—Thus saith the Lord.—All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.—Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.—The things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." We must, therefore, either admit these writings to be the word of God, or consider them as mere imposture. To pretend to "venerate them as authentic records of the dispensation of God," and yet deny their inspiration, is absurd; it is believing the writers in what they say of other subjects, and disbelieving them in what they say of themselves. If their writings be not what they profess them to be, they are imposture, and deserve to be rejected. There is no consistent medium between faith and unbelief.

But though all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, it does not follow that it is so in the *same sense and degree.* It required one degree of inspiration to foretell future events, and another to narrate facts which fell under the writer's knowledge. The one required less exercise of his own judgment, the other more. Inspiration, in the latter case, might be little more than a Divine superintendence, preserving him from error, and from other defects and faults, to which ordinary historians are subject. Divine inspiration, of whatever kind or degree, must have *carried in it its own evidence to the party*, or he could not with propriety have declared, "Thus saith the Lord"—and, "The things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." And it appears, in some cases, to have been *equally evident to those who were present.* Thus, when the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel, and he foretold the overthrow of the Moabites and Ammonites, Jehoshaphat and the people appear to have been as certain that it was by inspiration of God as he himself was; and therefore fell before the Lord, and worshipped, 2 Chron. xx.

The only question is, whether that which was evident to them *can be so to us, at this distance of time and place; if not in the same degree, yet with sufficient certainty to warrant our unreserved dependence upon it.* Some of the principal grounds on which the affirmative may be maintained, I conceive to be the following: the truth of the things contained in the sacred writings, their consistency, their perfection, their pungency, and their utility. Let us review these particulars.

1. The *truth* of the things contained in the sacred writings. It requires that a book professing to be a revelation from God should contain truth, and nothing but truth: such particularly must be its history, its prophecies, its miracles, and its doctrines. Now, as the Scriptures abound with these, if they be untrue, it can be no difficult undertaking to prove them so. The facts being stated, with the evidence accompanying them, it lies upon those who disbelieve them to show cause. It certainly has not been for want of adversaries, nor of adversaries of talent, that this work has never been accomplished. How is it that, out of all those who have written against the

Bible, not an individual has soberly and modestly undertaken to answer the evidence which has been adduced for the veracity of its history, the fulfilment of its prophecies, the reality of its miracles, and the purity and consistency of its doctrines? Instead of this, many of them have meanly pretended to believe the Bible, while yet they have been deceitfully undermining it; and those who have avowed their hostility have commonly dealt in ridicule, rather than in reason. Verily, it is to the honour of the Bible to have such men for its adversaries.

2. *Their consistency.* A book written by more than thirty men, of different talents and stations in life, living in different ages, the greater part of whom, therefore, could have no communication with each other, must, had it not been written under the inspiration of God, have been full of contradictions. Let any other production be named which has preserved a consistency under such circumstances. To suppose a succession of writings, the work of designing impostors, or at least of weak-headed fanatics, capable of maintaining that harmony which is apparent in the sacred Scriptures, is no less absurd than the notion of Epicurus, that the world was formed by a fortuitous concourse of atoms, without a designing cause. Great as are the differences between Jews and Christians, there is none between their sacred writings. The Old and New Testaments are dictated by one and the same Spirit. Paul was hated by his unbelieving countrymen, and treated as an apostate from the religion of his ancestors; but he was not an apostate. "I thank God," says he to Timothy, "whom I serve *from my forefathers.*" He speaks also of the *same faith* which was in Timothy as having dwelt first in his grandmother Lois, and then in his mother Eunice; the former of whom lived and died under the former dispensation. The same God who, "at sundry times and in divers manners, spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets," in the "last days spoke unto us by his Son." Consistency, it is true, may not in every instance be a test of truth; since error and falsehood may, in some particulars, be made to agree: but, in a subject whose bearings are multifarious and minute, they cannot escape detection; nothing but truth in such cases will be found consistent throughout.

3. *Their perfection.* If the Bible be of God, perfection must be one of its properties; for "He is a Rock, and his work is perfect." This property, however, belongs to it, not as having been begun and ended at once. This the work of creation was not; each day had its proper work; which, on review, was pronounced very good, and all together, when finished, formed a glorious whole. Such was the work of inspiration: the sacred Scriptures were upwards of fifteen hundred years from their commencement to their completion; but, being completed, they form a whole, and every part of them is very good. There is this peculiar property belonging to the sacred Scriptures, that if you are in possession of only a single book, you may generally learn from it the leading principles which run through all the rest. The strong language of David concerning the sacred Scriptures, such as their being "more to be desired than thousands of gold and silver, sweeter than honey and the honey-comb," and the like, could have reference to little more than the Pentateuch of Moses. Even a leaf from the sacred oracles would, in innumerable instances, teach him that should find it, and read it with a humble mind, the way to everlasting life; and this not as possessing any thing like a charm, but as containing principles which, if understood and followed, will lead the inquirer to God.

4. *Their pungency.* There is nothing in the sacred Scriptures to gratify an idle curiosity; but much that commends itself to the conscience, and that interests the heart. They are a mirror, into which he that seriously looks

must, in a greater or less degree, see his own likeness, and discover what kind of character he is. That which was said of Jesus by the Samaritan woman, might be said of them, in thousands of instances: "He told me all that ever I did." They are "the words of the wise, which are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies." They not only prick the sinner in his heart, but stick so fast that he is incapable of extracting them. It has been remarked, that they who heard the preaching of the apostles were generally moved by it, either to repent and be converted, or to oppose the truth with bitter resentment. Their doctrine was a savour of life unto life in them that believed, and of death unto death in them that resisted. Surely, if we preached more in the spirit and power of the apostles, the effects of our ministry would more resemble theirs, and our hearers would not be able to sit year after year easy in their sins. "The word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword; piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." If our preaching be but little adapted to produce these effects, surely it contains but little of the word of God.

5. Their *utility*. There is much in the sacred Scriptures that is entertaining and pleasing to the ingenious, and more to console the sorrowful: it was not, however, to please, nor merely to comfort, but to *profit* us that they were written. That which is given by inspiration of God is "*profitable* for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Unbelievers may declaim against the Bible; but universal experience proves that, in respect of the present life only, they who believe it, and form their lives on its principles are, beyond all comparison, the best members of society; while they who disbelieve and traduce it are the worst. And if to this be added the life to come, it is no longer a subject of comparison, but of contrast; for the former ordinarily die in peace and hope, the latter either blinded by insensibility, or, if awakened to reflection, in fearful forebodings of the wrath to come.

I shall conclude this letter with a few remarks on the *properties* and *tendencies* ascribed to the sacred Scriptures in the nineteenth Psalm. Having declared the glory of God, as manifested by his works, the writer proceeds to exhibit another medium of the Divine glory, less magnificent, but more suited to the cases of sinful men, namely, his word. The *law*, the *testimony*, the *statutes*, the *commandments*, the *fear*, and the *judgments* of the Lord, are but different names given to the Scriptures.

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul."—The book of nature declares the "eternal power and Godhead" of the Creator; but that of Scripture represents his whole character; not only as the Creator, but as the moral Governor and Saviour of men. Hence it is "able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

"The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple."—The opinions of the greatest men, formed merely from the works of nature, are full of uncertainty, and but ill adapted to instruct the illiterate part of mankind in their best interests; but the sacred Scriptures contain the true sayings of God, which may be safely depended upon.

"The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart."—The principles inculcated in the sacred Scriptures accord with the nature and fitness of things. That which they require approves itself to the conscience; and that which they teach, though foolishness in the account of unbelievers, is, to those who understand and believe it, the wisdom of God. This property

gives joy to every upright mind; for the friends of righteousness must needs rejoice in that which is right.

“The commandments of the Lord are pure, enlightening the eyes.”—Their freedom from every mixture of corruption renders them fit to illuminate the mind and cheer the heart. Wearied with the discordant opinions of men, we turn to the Scriptures, and, like Jonathan on tasting the honey, our eyes are enlightened.

“The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever.”—The worship of God, as taught in the sacred Scriptures, is chaste and uncorrupt; and therefore shall continue when idolatry, and every abomination which has passed under the name of religion, shall be no more.

“The judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.”—The sacred Scriptures contain the decisions of the Judge of all, both as to things and characters, from which there is no appeal: nor is it fit there should be; seeing they are not only formed in wisdom, but perfectly accord with truth and equity.

“More to be desired are they than gold; yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey, and the honeycomb.”—There is a rich, a valuable, I might say an invaluable, quality in these writings, which is not to be found in any other; and which so interests the heart that the things most valued in the world lose all their attractions in comparison of it.

“Moreover, by them is thy servant warned; and in keeping of them there is great reward.”—They are adapted at the same time to preserve us from evil, and to lead us in the good and the right way; and, as we follow it, yield inexpressible satisfaction. If in reading these holy oracles we make the proper use of them, we shall, according to the remaining verses in the Psalm, perceive that our errors are innumerable; shall feel the need of keeping grace to preserve us even from the worst of crimes; and shall aspire to a conformity in our words and thoughts to the will of God.

May the blessing of God attend the various attempts to translate and circulate the sacred Scriptures. A few years ago, a certain infidel braggadocio pretended to have gone through the wood and cut down the trees, which the priests, he said, might stick in again, but they would not grow! And have the sacred Scriptures been less in request since that time than they were before? Rather have they not been much more so? Infidelity, by overacting its part, has given itself a wound; and its abettors, like Herod, have been eaten of worms, and have died. But the word of the Lord has grown and been multiplied.

## LETTER VII.

### THE UNIFORM BEARING OF THE SCRIPTURES ON THE PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST.

In the two preceding letters I have endeavoured to show the necessity of Divine revelation, and to give evidence of the Bible's being written by inspiration of God, so as to answer to that necessity; in this I shall add a few thoughts on its *uniform bearing on the person and work of Christ*.

We need not follow those who drag in Christ on all occasions. To suppose, for instance, that *all* the Psalms of David refer to him, is to establish the gospel on the ruins of common sense. Still less need we see him pre-

figured by every thing in which a heated imagination may trace a resemblance. This were to go into a kind of spiritual Quixotism, finding a castle where others would only find a windmill. Nevertheless, the sacred Scriptures are full of Christ, and uniformly lead to him. The holy book begins with an account of the *creation* of the world: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." But they elsewhere inform us that, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." Yea more, that all things were made not only *by him*, as the first cause, but *for him*, as the last end. The creation seems to have been designed as a theatre on which he should display his glory, particularly in the work of redemption. Surely it was in this view that he "rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men."

The *history* contained in the sacred Scriptures is that of the church or people of God: other nations are introduced only in an incidental manner, as being connected with them: and this people were formed for Christ. Him God appointed to be "heir of all things." All that was done by the patriarchs and prophets, under the Old Testament, was preparatory to his kingdom. It was in his field that they laboured, and therefore his apostles "entered into their labours." God's calling Abraham, and blessing and increasing him, had all along a reference to the kingdom of his Son. He was the principal Seed in whom all the kindreds of the earth were to be blessed. Why did Melchizedek, on meeting Abraham, when he returned from the slaughter of the kings, bless him with so much heart? Was it not as knowing that he *had the promises*, especially that of the Messiah? Why is Esau's despising his birthright reckoned *profaneness*, but on account of its referring to something *sacred*? The promises made to Abraham's posterity chiefly related to things at a great distance; but Esau longed for something nearer at hand, and therefore sold his birthright for a present enjoyment. Why is the reproach which Moses preferred to the treasures of Egypt called "the reproach of Christ," but that Israel being in possession of the promise of Him, and Moses believing it, cast in his lot with them, though in a state of slavery? Were not these the "good things" to which he referred, in persuading Hobab to go with them? All that was done for Israel from their going down into Egypt to their settlement in Canaan, and from thence to the coming of Christ, was in reference to him. The conquest of the seven nations was authorized, and even commanded by JeHoVaH, for the purpose of re-establishing his government in his own world, from which he had in a manner been driven by idolatry. It was setting up his standard with the design of ultimately subduing the world to the obedience of faith. What but the promise of Christ, as including the covenant that God made with David, rendered it *all his salvation and all his desire*? It was owing to the bearing which the Old Testament history had on the person and work of Christ that Stephen and Paul, when preaching him to the Jews, made use of it to introduce their subject, Acts vii., xiii.

The body of the Jewish *institutions* was but a shadow of good things to come, of which Christ was the substance. Their priests, and prophets, and kings were typical of him. Their sacrifices pointed to him who "gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." The manna on which they fed in the wilderness referred to him, as the "bread of God that should come down from heaven." The rock, from whence the water flowed that followed them in their journeys, is said to be *Christ*, as being typical of him. Their cities of refuge represent him, "as the hope set before us." The whole dispensation served as a

foil, to set off the superior glory of his kingdom. The temple was but as the scaffolding to that which he would build, and the glory of which he would bear. The moral law exhibited right things, and the ceremonial law a shadow of good things; but "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." The Christian dispensation is to that of the Old Testament as the jubilee to a state of captivity. It might be in reference to such things as these that the psalmist prayed, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wonderful things out of thy law!"

Of the *prophecies* with which the Scriptures abound, the person and work of Christ form the principal theme. "To him gave all the *prophets witness*," either in what they wrote or spoke. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." From the first mention of the woman's Seed, to his appearance in the flesh, the language of prophecy concerning him became more explicit and distinct. The blessing on *JeHoVaH the God of Shem* seems to intimate designs of mercy towards his descendants. The promise to Abraham and his seed is more express. Abraham, understanding it as including the Messiah, believed, and it was counted to him for righteousness. He earnestly desired to see his day; he saw it, and rejoiced. Jacob's prophecy is still more explicit and distinct. He foretells his being of the tribe of Judah, and that under his reign the Gentiles should be gathered. After this, the house of David is specified, as that from which the Messiah should spring. The Psalms abound in predictions concerning him. Isaiah tells of his being miraculously born of a virgin—of his humble and gentle character, "not breaking the bruised reed, nor quenching the smoking flax"—of his sufferings, death, and everlasting kingdom, which implied his resurrection, Acts xiii. 34. Micah named the town of Bethlehem as the place where he should be born. Zechariah mentioned the beasts on which he should make his public entry into Jerusalem. The Spirit of inspiration in the prophets is called "the Spirit of Christ," because it "testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." But if the Old Testament had a uniform bearing on the person of Christ, much more the New. This is properly entitled, "The New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." The one abounds with prophecies; the other relates to their accomplishment. The ordinances of the former were prefigurative; those of the latter are commemorative. But both point to the same object. Every Divine truth bears a relation to him: hence the doctrine of the gospel is called "the truth as it is *in Jesus*." In the face of Jesus Christ we see the glory of the Divine character in such a manner as we see it no where else. The evil nature of sin is manifested in his cross, and the lost condition of sinners in the price at which our redemption was obtained. Grace, mercy, and peace are in him. The resurrection to eternal life is through his death. In him every precept finds its most powerful motive, and every promise its most perfect fulfilment. The Jews possessed the sacred Scriptures of the Old Testament, and *searched them*,\* thinking that in them they had eternal life; but they *would not come to him that they might have it*. What a picture does this present to us of multitudes in our own times! We possess both the Old and the New Testament; and it is pleasing to see the zeal manifested of late in giving them circulation. All orders and degrees of men will unite in applauding them. But they overlook Christ, to whom they uniformly bear testimony; and, while thinking to obtain eternal life, will not come to him that they might have it.

\* See Dr. Campbell's translation of John v. 39, 40.



## LETTER VIII.

## THE PERFECTIONS OF GOD.

I NEED not say to you that just views of the Divine character lie at the foundation of all true religion. Without them, it is impossible, in the nature of things, to love God, or to perceive the fitness of our being required to love him, or the evil of not loving him, or the necessity of such a Saviour and such a salvation as the gospel reveals. We may be terrified by the fear of the wrath to come, and delighted with the hope of escaping it through Christ; but if this terror and this hope have no respect to the character of God, as holy, just, and good, there can be no hatred of sin *as sin*, nor love to God *as God*, and consequently no true religion. "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent." God is a Spirit, and cannot be known by sense, nor by any means but those in which he has been pleased to manifest himself. These are his works and his word. Every thing that meets our eyes, or accosts our ears, in heaven or in earth, is full of his glory. "The invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that were there no other revelation of himself, this were sufficient to leave sinners *without excuse*. But besides this silent mode of manifesting himself, God has displayed himself by his *word*. Even in a state of innocence, man was governed by the revealed will of his Creator; and the revelation of God, from first to last, manifests the glory of his perfections.

The perfections of God require to be distinguished into *natural* and *moral*: the former respect his greatness, the latter his goodness; or, more particularly, the one refers to his infinite understanding, his almighty power, his eternity, immensity, omnipresence, immutability, &c.; the other, to his purity, justice, faithfulness, goodness, or, in one word, to his holiness. The former are necessary to render him an object of respect, the latter of love, and both together of holy fear. The natural perfections of God are principally manifested in the creation and providential government of the world; his moral perfections in the creation, moral government, and salvation of intelligent beings. The former are glorious as connected with the latter, but the latter are glorious in themselves. Power and knowledge, and every other attribute belonging to the greatness of God, could they be separated from righteousness and goodness, would render him an object of dread, and not of love; but righteousness and goodness, whether connected with greatness or not, are lovely.

Correspondent with this is what we are taught of the "image of God" in the soul of man; it is partly natural and partly moral. The moral image of God, consisting in "righteousness and true holiness," was effaced by sin; but the natural image of God, consisting in his rational and immortal nature, was not. In this respect, man, though fallen, still retains his Creator's image, and therefore cannot be murdered or cursed without incurring his high displeasure, Gen. ix. 6; James iii. 9.

The same distinction is perceivable in the humiliation and exaltation of Christ. He *emptied* or *disrobed* himself; he laid aside his glory for a season; yet not his goodness, but his greatness: not his purity, justice, faithfulness, or holiness; but the display of his eternity, supremacy, immensity, wisdom, power, omniscience, and omnipresence: becoming a mortal man, subject to his parents, supported by the ordinary aliments of life, and ascribing his

doctrine and miracles to the Father. It was thus that, "being rich, he *became poor*, that through his poverty we might be made rich." And this it is that accounts for the ascriptions given him after his exaltation: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." Each of these terms has respect to that glory of which he had disrobed himself, and with which he was therefore worthy now to be doubly invested.

As if it is not talent, but morality, that constitutes character among men, so it is not the natural, but the moral perfections of God, which properly constitute his character. Holiness is the glory of the Divine nature. Thus, when he would show Moses his glory, he said, "I will make all my *goodness* pass before thee." Yet, as greatness illustrates goodness among men, so does the greatness of God illustrate his goodness. His being "the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity," illustrates the holiness of his name, and the unexampled condescension of his nature towards the poor and contrite. It is by the union of these Divine excellences that he stands opposed to all the deities of the heathen. His greatest enemies have often confessed him to be the "Most High" and "Most Holy." Hence Moses could say, "Their rock is not as our Rock, our adversaries themselves being judges."

The precepts, prohibitions, and promises of the Divine law, are a mirror in which we may perceive the moral perfections of the Lawgiver. They each express his heart; or what he loves, and what he hates. They moreover show his goodness to his creatures, granting them every thing that would do them good, and withholding nothing but that which would prove their ruin. The sum of all his requirements was love to God and one another. And as his promises to the obedient would express his love of righteousness, so his threatenings against transgressors show his great abhorrence of sin. On no other principle can we account for such tremendous curses being denounced, by a Being full of goodness, against the work of his hands. Moreover, to show that these are not mere words given out to deter mankind, without any design of carrying them into execution, but that, in all his threatenings of future punishment to the ungodly, he means what he says, he inflicts numerous and sore judgments upon his enemies, even in this world. In one instance, he destroyed, with the exception of a single family, the whole race of man which he had created. In many others, by war, by famine, by pestilence, and other means, his displeasure against sin has been expressed in almost every age. Yet has he never failed to maintain his character, as "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and in truth." Often has he pardoned those who have sought his mercy; and even when the parties have not sought it, he has wrought for his great name's sake. These are a few of the expressions of the Divine mind; but, as Job says, they are "but a part of his ways," and exhibit only a part of his character. The only display of the Divine perfections which can be denominated perfect is in the salvation of sinners, through the obedience and death of his beloved Son. After all the preceding manifestations of his glory, it may be said, "No one hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." In his undertaking, every Divine perfection meets and harmonizes. There were, in former ages, various displays of truth and righteousness on the one hand, and of mercy and peace on the other; but there does not appear to have been a point in which they could meet and be united. If one prevailed, the other receded, or gave place. It was thus at the flood, and at the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; truth and righteousness prevailed; but mercy and peace retired, leaving the transgressors to suffer. And thus, when Israel was pardoned at

the intercession of Moses, mercy and peace prevailed; but justice was suspended. It was reserved for the only begotten of the Father to unite them in the same instance. In him "mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

When the appointed time was come, justice awoke and smote the Shepherd, that mercy might turn its hand towards the little ones. It is thus that every perfection in the Divine nature, natural and moral, is declared; wisdom, and power, and faithfulness, and justice, and love, and mercy all meet and blend their rays. God is "just, and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus." A greater honour is conferred on the Divine law, both as to its precept and penalty, than is sufficient to counterbalance the utmost disgrace upon it, by man's rebellion; and a greater display afforded of the Divine displeasure against sin than if the whole world had suffered the reward of their deeds. And now love to sinners, which wrought unsolicited in the gift of Christ, flows without any impediment towards all who come unto God by him.

The struggles of justice and mercy, and the triumphs of the latter, are very affectingly represented in Jer. iii. 19, &c.; Hos. xi. 8: "But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land?"—"How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? shall I set thee as Zeboim? My heart is turned within me, and my repentings are kindled together." In the former of these passages, it is intimated, that though God was disposed to show mercy, yet their conduct put his very perfections to the proof. In the latter, we must conceive an offended father as having hold of his son with one hand, and holding up a rod in the other, making alternate appeals, first to his own compassion, then to the conscience of the offender. Justice requires him to be delivered over to punishment, to be made as Admah, and set for an example as Zeboim. But mercy pleads in arrest of judgment, and overcomes. To such a case as this the Divine conduct towards Israel might be compared; but all this mercy, and all that followed, and all that shall yet follow, is through the atonement of Christ. His sacrifice has furnished the answers to these hard questions.

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## LETTER IX.

### THE TRINITY.

A SUBJECT so great and so much above our comprehension as this is requires to be treated with trembling. Every thing that we can think or say, concerning the ever blessed God, requires the greatest modesty, fear, and reverence. Were I to hear two persons engaged in a warm contest upon the subject, I should fear for them both. One might in the main be in the right, and the other in the wrong; but if many words were used, they might both be expected to incur the reproof of the Almighty: "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?"

The people of Israel were forbidden to break through the bounds which were set for them, and to gaze on the visible glory of Jehovah. The Bethshemites, for looking into the ark, were smitten with death. Such judgments may not befall us in these days; but we may expect others, more to be dreaded. As the gospel is a spiritual dispensation, its judgments, as well as its blessings, are chiefly spiritual. Where men have employed

themselves in curiously prying into things too high for them, they have ordinarily been smitten with a blast upon their minds and upon their ministry.

There is a greater importance in the doctrine of the Trinity than commonly appears on a superficial inspection of it; chiefly, perhaps, on account of its affecting our views of the doctrine of the person and work of Christ; which doctrine, being the foundation on which the church is built, cannot be removed without the utmost danger to the building.

It is a subject of pure revelation. If the doctrine be not taught in the oracles of God, we have nothing to do with it; but if it be, whether we can comprehend it or not, we are required humbly to believe it, and to endeavour to understand so much as God has revealed concerning it. We are not required to understand *how* three are one; for this is not revealed. If we do not consider the Father, Son, and Spirit as being both three and one *in the same sense*, which certainly we do not, then we do not believe a contradiction. We may leave speculating minds to lose themselves and others in a labyrinth of conceits, while we learn what is revealed, and rest contented with it.

In believing three Divine persons in one essence, I do not mean that the distinction between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is the same as that between three human persons: but neither is there any other term that answers to the Scriptural idea; and since Christ is said to be "the express image of his Father's person," I see nothing objectionable in using this.

The doctrine was certainly less explicitly revealed in the Old Testament than it is in the New. When the Messiah came, it was expected that he would tell us all things. If the degree in which the doctrine was made known in the Old Testament bears a proportion to that of other important truths, it is sufficient. From the beginning of the creation the name of God is represented under a plural form; with which agrees the moving of the Spirit of God upon the face of the waters; and all things being made by the Word, and without him nothing made that was made. The angel of the Lord which appeared to Abraham, Lot, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, &c., in the form of man, was considered and treated by them as God, and received Divine worship at their hands. In reference to this, I conceive, it is said in the New Testament, that, "being in the form of God, he thought it no usurpation to be as God."

In the New Testament the doctrine is more explicitly revealed; particularly in Christ's commission to his apostles to baptize in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. In the Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, he invokes the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit to be with them. And John, in his First Epistle, introduces the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, as bearing witness to the gospel; or that God had given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. If, in the first of these passages, the Son and Holy Spirit be considered as Divine persons, and as one with the Father, both in nature and in the economy of redemption, there is a fitness in our being baptized into this individual name; but to be baptized into the name of God, a creature, and an energy, must be the height of incongruity. The next passage shows the importance of the doctrine to the existence and progress of vital godliness. It is not a subject of mere speculation, but one on which depends all the communications of grace and peace to sinful men; and it is remarkable that they who reject it are seldom known to acknowledge any spiritual communion with God, but treat it as fanaticism. The last of these passages has been strongly opposed as an *interpolation*. It is

not for me to decide this question by a reference to ancient versions of the New Testament; but there are two or three considerations which, after all that I have seen on the other side, weigh with me in its favour. First, From the seventh verse being wanting in some copies and found in others, all that can be fairly inferred is, that there must have been either an interpolation by some copyist, or an omission by some other. The question is, Which is the most probable? If it is an omission in the copies where it is wanting, it might not have been from *design*, but from mere oversight, especially as the eighth verse begins so much like the seventh; whereas, if it be an interpolation, no oversight can account for it, but it must have arisen from wicked, wilful imposture. To which of these suppositions will candour give its vote? Secondly, Supposing the omission or interpolation, whichever it was, to have arisen from *design*; which is the most probable, and the least likely to have escaped detection—that the antitrinitarians should omit what was unfavourable to them, or that the trinitarians should introduce what was favourable? An omission would escape detection seven times where an interpolation would escape it once. Thirdly, the connexion of the passage is altogether in its favour. The phraseology is that of the apostle John; so that if the words are not his, it must have been the most successful imitation of him that can be imagined. As it stands in our translation, there is evidently a gradation of ideas, forming a kind of climax of witnesses; namely, that of the Three in heaven, of the three on earth, and the testimony which a believer has within himself. To leave out the first were to weaken the passage and destroy its beauty. Besides, it is not the omission of the seventh verse only that is necessary, to make any thing like sense of the passage. The words *on earth*, in the eighth verse, must also be left out, if not the whole of the ninth verse, in which the *witness of God* is supposed to have been introduced; but which, if the seventh verse be left out, had not been introduced. Those who are now for new-modelling the passage leave out *some* of these, but not all; nor can they prove that those words which they do leave out were uniformly left out of even those copies in which the seventh verse is omitted. As the Father is allowed on all hands to be a Divine person, whatever proves the Divinity and personality of the Son proves a plurality of Divine persons in the Godhead. I need not adduce the evidences of this truth; the sacred Scriptures are full of them. Divine perfections are ordinarily ascribed to him, and Divine worship is paid to him, both by angels and men. If Jesus Christ is not God, equal with the Father, Christianity must have tended to establish a system of idolatry, more dangerous, as being more plausible, than that which it came to destroy. The union of the Divine and human natures, in the person of Christ, is a subject on which the sacred writers delight to dwell; and so should we, for herein is the glory of the gospel. “Unto us a *child is born*; and his name shall be called—*the mighty God*.” He was *born* in Bethlehem; yet his “goings forth were *from of old*, from everlasting.” He was made “of the seed of David *according to the flesh*,” and “declared to be *the Son of God with power*.” “Of whom *as concerning the flesh* Christ came, who is *over all, God blessed for ever*. Amen.” In his original nature, he is described as incapable of death, and as taking flesh and blood upon him to qualify himself for enduring it, Heb. ii. 14. He was the “*Son of God*,” yet “*touched with a feeling of our infirmities*;”—“the *root* and the *offspring* of David.” The sacred Scriptures lay great stress on what Christ was antecedently to his assumption of human nature, and of the official character of a Mediator and Saviour. “The Word *was* with God, and the Word *was* God.—He who *was rich* for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich.—Who *being* the brightness of his glory, and the express image

of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, &c.—Who, *being* in the form of God, thought it not robbery,” or *usurpation*, “to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.” If Divine personality be not essential to Deity, distinct from all office capacity, and antecedent to it, what meaning is there in this language? An economical trinity, or that which would not have been but for the economy of redemption, is not the trinity of the Scriptures. It is not a trinity of Divine persons, but merely of offices personified; whereas Christ is distinguished from the Father as the express image or character of his person, while yet in his pre-incarnate state.

The sacred Scriptures lay great stress on the character of Christ as “the Son of God.” It was this that formed the first link in the Christian profession, and was reckoned to draw after it the whole chain of evangelical truth. “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” From this rises the great love of God in the gift of him: “God so loved the world as to give his *only begotten Son*”—the condescension of his obedience: “Though he was a son yet learned he obedience”—the efficacy of his blood: “The blood of Jesus Christ *his Son* cleanseth us from all sin”—the dignity of his priesthood: “We have a *great High Priest*, Jesus the *Son of God*”—the greatness of the sin of unbelief: “He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of *the only begotten Son of God*”—the greatness of the sin of apostacy: “Who have trodden under foot *the Son of God*.” The incarnation, resurrection, and exaltation of Christ declared, but did not *constitute*, him the Son of God; nor did any of his offices, to all which his Sonship was antecedent. God *sent* his Son into the world. This implies that he was his Son antecedently to his being sent, as much as Christ’s sending his disciples implies that they were his disciples before he sent them. The same may be said of the *Son of God being made of a woman, made under the law*. These terms no more express that which rendered him a Son, than his being *made flesh* expresses that which rendered him the Word. The Son of God was *manifested* to destroy the works of the devil; he must therefore have been the Son of God antecedently to his being manifested in the flesh. I have heard it asserted that “Eternal generation is eternal nonsense.” But whence does this appear? Does it follow that, because a son among men is inferior and posterior to his father, therefore it must be so with the Son of God? If so, why should his saying that God was his own Father be considered as making himself *equal* with God? Of the only begotten Son it is not said he was, or will be, but he *is* in the bosom of the Father; denoting the eternity and immutability of his character. There never was a point in duration in which God was without his Son: he *rejoiced always before him*. Bold assertions are not to be placed in opposition to revealed truth. In Christ’s being called the Son of God, there may be, for the assistance of our low conceptions, some reference to sonship among men; but not sufficient to warrant us to reason from the one to the other. The sacred Scriptures often ascribe the miracles of Christ, his sustaining the load of his sufferings, and his resurrection from the dead, to the power of the Father, or of the Holy Spirit, rather than to his own Divinity. I have read in human writings, “But the Divinity within supported him to bear.” But I never met with such an idea in the sacred Scriptures. They represent the Father as *upholding* his servant, his elect in whom his soul delighted; and as sending his angel to *strengthen* him in the conflict. While acting as the Father’s servant, there was a fitness in his being supported by him, as well as his being in all things obedient to his will. But when the value, virtue,

or efficacy of what he did and suffered are touched upon, they are never ascribed either to the Father or the Holy Spirit, but to himself. Such is the idea suggested by those forequoted passages. "Who *being* the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had *by himself* purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."—"Ye are not redeemed by corruptible things, but by *the precious blood of Christ*."—"The blood of *Jesus Christ, his Son*, cleanseth us from all sin." Much less is said in the sacred Scriptures on the Divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit, than on those of the Son. The Holy Spirit not having become incarnate, it might be less necessary to guard his honours, and to warn men against thinking meanly of him. All judgment was committed to the Son, *because he was the Son of man*. Yet there is enough said against *grieving* the Spirit, *blasphemy* against him, *lying* against him, *doing despite* to him, and *defiling his temple*, to make us tremble. In the economy of redemption it is the office of the Holy Spirit, not to exhibit himself, but to "take of the things of Christ, and show them to us." He is the great spring-head of all the good that is in the world; but, in producing it, he himself appears not. We are no otherwise conscious of his influences than by their effects. He is a wind which bloweth where it listeth: we hear the sound, and feel its effects; but know nothing more of it.

The Holy Spirit is not the grand object of ministerial exhibition; but Christ, in his person, work, and offices. When Philip went down to Samaria, it was not to preach *God the Holy Spirit* unto them, but to preach *Christ* unto them. While this was done, the Holy Spirit gave testimony to the word of his grace, and rendered it effectual. The more sensible we are, both as ministers and Christians, of our entire dependence on the Holy Spirit's influences, the better; but if we make them the grand theme of our ministry, we shall do that which he himself avoids, and so shall counteract his operations. The attempts to reduce the Holy Spirit to a mere property, or *energy*, of the Deity, arise from much the same source as the attempts to prove the inferiority and posteriority of Christ as the Son of God; namely, reasoning from things human to things Divine. The Spirit of God is compared to the spirit of man; and as the latter is not a person distinguishable from man, so, it has been said, the former cannot be a person distinguishable from God the Father. But the design of the apostle, in 1 Cor. ii. 11, was not to represent the Spirit of God as resembling the spirit of man *in respect of his subsistence*, but of his *knowledge*; and it is presumptuous to reason from it on a subject that we cannot understand.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you, and your affectionate brother—A. F.

THOUGHTS ON PREACHING,  
IN LETTERS TO A YOUNG MINISTER.

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LETTER I.

EXPOUNDING THE SCRIPTURES.

MY DEAR BROTHER:—

As you have expressed a wish for a few of my thoughts on your principal work as a Christian minister, I will endeavour to comply with your request, persuaded that what I write will be read with candour and seriousness.

The work in which you are engaged is of great importance. To declare the whole counsel of God in such a way as to save yourself and them that hear you—or, if they are not saved, to be pure from their blood—is no small matter. The character of the preaching in an age contributes, more than most other things, to give a character to the Christians of that age. A great and solemn trust, therefore, is reposed in us, of which we must shortly give an account.

The work of a Christian minister, as it respects the pulpit, may be distinguished into two general branches; namely, expounding the Scriptures, and discoursing on Divine subjects. In this letter I shall offer a few remarks on the former.

I have found it not a little useful, both to myself and to the people, to appropriate one part of every Lord's day to the *exposition* of a chapter, or part of a chapter, in the sacred writings. In this way, during the last eighteen years, I have gone over the greater part of the Old Testament, and some books in the New. It is advantageous to a minister to feel himself necessitated, as it were, to understand every part of Scripture, in order to explain it to the people. It is also advantageous to a people that what they hear should come directly from the word of God, and that they should be led to see the scope and connexion of the sacred writers. For want of this, a great number of Scripture passages are misunderstood and misapplied. In going over a book, I have frequently been struck with surprise in meeting with texts which, as they had always occurred to me, I had understood in a sense utterly foreign from what manifestly appeared to be their meaning when viewed *in connexion with the context*.

The great thing necessary for expounding the Scriptures is to *enter into their true meaning*. We may read them, and talk about them, again and again, without imparting any light concerning them. If the hearer, when you have done, understand no more of that part of Scripture than he did before, your labour is lost. Yet this is commonly the case with those attempts at expounding which consist of little else than comparing parallel passages, or, by the help of a Concordance, tracing the use of the same word in other places, going from text to text till both the preacher and the people are wearied and lost. This is troubling the Scriptures rather than expounding them. If I were to open a chest of oranges among my friends, and, in order to ascertain their quality, were to hold up one, and lay it down; then hold up another, and say, This is like the last; then a third, a fourth, a fifth, and so on, till I came to the bottom of the chest, saying of each, It is like the other; of what account would it be? The



company would doubtless be weary, and had much rather have tasted two or three of them.

The scope of the sacred writers is of greater importance in understanding the Scriptures than the most critical examination of terms, or the most laborious comparison of the use of them in different places. For want of attending to this, not only particular passages, but whole chapters, are frequently misunderstood. The reasonings of both Christ and his apostles frequently proceed, not upon what is true in fact, but merely in the estimation of the parties addressed; that is to say, they reason with them *on their own principles*. It was not true that Simon the Pharisee was a *little sinner*, nor a *forgiven sinner*, nor that he *loved Christ a little*; but he thought thus of himself, and upon these principles Christ reasoned with him. It was not true that the Pharisees were just men, and needed no repentance; but such were their thoughts of themselves, and Christ suggested that therefore they had no need of him; for that he came "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Finally, It was not true that the Pharisees who murmured at Christ's receiving publicans and sinners had never, like the ninety-nine sheep in the wilderness, gone astray; nor that, like the elder son, they had served God, and never at any time transgressed his commandment; nor that all which God had was theirs: but such were their own views, and Christ reasons with them accordingly. It is as if he had said, Be it so that you are righteous and happy; yet why should you murmur at the return of these poor sinners? Now, to mistake the *principle* on which such reasonings proceed, is to lose all the benefit of them, and to fall into many errors.

Moreover, to enter into the true meaning of the Scriptures, it is absolutely necessary that we *drink into the spirit* of the writers. This is the greatest of all accomplishments. I do not mean that you are to expect a spirit of extraordinary inspiration; but that of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. It is impossible to enter into the sentiments of any great writer without a kindred mind. Who but a Pope, or a Cowper, could have translated Homer? and who can explain the oracles of God, but he who, in a measure, drinks into the same spirit? Every Christian knows by experience that, in a spiritual frame of mind, he can understand more of the Scriptures in an hour than he can at other times, with the utmost application, in a week. It is by an *unction from the Holy One* that we know all things.

I may add, there are some things which, when known, wonderfully facilitate the knowledge of other things. It is thus that a view of the glory of the Divine character and government opens the door to the whole mystery of redemption. It is thus also that a lively faith in the sufferings of Christ, and the glory arising out of them, is a key which unlocks a large part of the sacred oracles. While the disciples remained ignorant of his death, they knew but little of the Scriptures; but, having learned the design of this great event, a flood of light poured in upon them, and the Old Testament became plain and deeply interesting.

A humble sense of our own ignorance, and of our entire dependence upon God, has also a great influence on our coming at the true meaning of his word. There are few things which tend more to blind the mind than a conceit of our own powers. Hence we perceive the justness of such language as the following:—"Proud, knowing nothing."—"He that thinketh he knoweth any thing, knoweth nothing as he ought to know."—"If any man will be wise, let him first become a fool, that he may be wise."

To understand the Scriptures in such a manner as profitably to expound them, it is necessary to be conversant with them in private; and to mix, not

only faith, but the prayer of faith, with what we read. There is a great difference between reading the Scriptures *as a student*, in order to find something to say to the people, and reading them *as a Christian*, with a view to get good from them to one's own soul. That which is gained in the latter of these ways is, beyond all comparison, of the greatest use, both to ourselves and others. That which we communicate will freeze upon our lips, unless we have first applied it to ourselves; or, to use the language of Scripture, "tasted, felt, and handled the word of life."

When I have read a psalm or chapter, which I mean to expound, and have endeavoured to understand it, I have commonly thought it right to consult the best expositors I could obtain, trying and comparing my ideas with theirs. Hereby I have generally obtained some interesting thought which had not occurred to me, and sometimes have seen reason to retract what before appeared to me to be the meaning. But to go first to expositors is to preclude the exercise of your own judgment; and, after all, that which is furnished by the labours of another, though equally good in itself, will be far less interesting to us than that which is the result of our own application.

I will only add, that I have found it not a little useful to keep a book in which I write down all my expository notes, which, though illegible to others, yet answer two purposes to myself: first, by looking them over before I go into the pulpit, I have a clear understanding of every sentence; and, secondly, I can have recourse to them on future occasions.

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## LETTER II.

### SERMONS—SUBJECT-MATTER OF THEM.

THOUGH expounding the Scriptures be an important part of the public work of a minister, yet it is not the whole of it. There is a great variety of *subjects*, both in doctrinal and practical religion, which require to be illustrated, established, and improved; which cannot be done in an exposition. Discourses of this kind are properly called *sermons*.

You request me to give you my thoughts on this part of your work somewhat more particularly. I will endeavour to do so, by considering what must be the *matter* and the *manner* of preaching, if we wish to do good to the souls of men.

Unless the subject-matter of your preaching be truly evangelical, you had better be any thing than a minister. When the apostle speaks of a necessity being laid upon him to preach the gospel, he might mean that he was not at liberty to relinquish his work in favour of ease, or honour, or any other worldly object; but he was not bound to preach merely, but to preach that doctrine which had been delivered unto him. The same may be said of us; woe unto us if we preach not the gospel!

It may seem to be a very easy thing, with the Bible in our hands, to learn the truth, clear of all impure mixtures, and to make it the subject of our ministry. But it is not so. We talk much of thinking and judging for ourselves; but who can justly pretend to be free from the influences which surround him, especially in early life? We are insensibly, and almost irresistibly, assimilated by the books we read, and the company with which we associate; and the principles current in our age and connexions will ordinarily influence our minds. Nor is the danger solely from with-

out: we are "slow of heart" to believe in a doctrine so holy and divine, and prone to deviate at every point. If, therefore, we were wholly to think for ourselves, that were no security for our keeping to the mind of Christ.

I mention these things, not to deter you from either reading or thinking for yourself; but rather to inculcate the necessity of prayer for Divine guidance, and a close adherence to the Scriptures. Though we must think for ourselves, we must not depend upon ourselves, but, as little children, learn at the feet of our Saviour.

If you look over the New Testament, you will find the subject-matter of your preaching briefly yet fully expressed in such language as the following: "Preach *the word*.—Preach *the gospel*.—Preach the gospel to every creature.—Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that *repentance and remission of sins* should be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.—I declare unto you *the gospel* which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you, first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures.—We preach *Christ crucified*.—I am determined to know nothing among you but Jesus Christ and him crucified.—This is the record, that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.—We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech men by us, we pray them in Christ's stead, saying, Be ye reconciled unto God.—For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.—I have kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, *repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*."

Such, my brother, is the concurrent language of the New Testament. Every one of the foregoing passages contains an epitome of the gospel ministry. You will not expect me to expatiate upon their various connexions: I may, however, notice three or four particulars, which follow from them.

First, *In every sermon we should have an errand; and one of such importance that if it be received or complied with it will issue in eternal salvation*.—I say nothing of those preachers who profess to go into the pulpit without an errand, and to depend upon the Holy Spirit to furnish them with one at the time. I write not for them, but for such as make a point of thinking before they attempt to preach. Even of these I have heard some who, in studying their texts, have appeared to me to have no other object in view than to find something to say, in order to fill up the time. This, however, is not preaching, but merely talking about good things. Such ministers, though they think of something beforehand, yet appear to me to resemble Ahimaaz, who ran without tidings. I have also heard many an ingenious discourse, in which I could not but admire the talents of the preacher; but his only object appeared to be to correct the grosser vices, and to form the manners of his audience, so as to render them useful members of civil society. Such ministers have an errand; but not of such importance as to *save* those who receive it, which sufficiently proves that it is not *the gospel*.

In preparing for the pulpit, it would be well to reflect in some such manner as this:—I am expected to preach, it may be to some hundreds of people, some of whom may come several miles to hear; and what have I to say to them? Is it for me to sit here studying a text merely to find some-

thing to say to fill up the hour? I may do this without imparting any useful instruction, without commending myself to any man's conscience, and without winning, or even aiming to win, one soul to Christ. It is possible there may be in the audience a poor miserable creature, labouring under the load of a guilty conscience. If he depart without being told how to obtain rest for his soul, what may be the consequence? Or, it may be, some stranger may be there who has never heard the way of salvation in his life. If he should depart without hearing it now, and should die before another opportunity occurs, how shall I meet him at the bar of God? Possibly some one of my constant hearers may die in the following week; and is there nothing I should wish to say to him before his departure? It may be that I myself may die before another Lord's day: this may be the last time that I shall ascend the pulpit; and have I no important testimony to leave with the people of my care?

Secondly, *Every sermon should contain a portion of the doctrine of salvation by the death of Christ.*—If there be any meaning in the foregoing passages, this is emphatically called THE GOSPEL. A sermon, therefore, in which this doctrine has not a place, and I might add, a prominent place, cannot be a *gospel sermon*. It may be ingenious, it may be eloquent; but a want of the doctrine of the cross is a defect which no pulpit excellence can supply.

Far be it from me to encourage that fastidious humour manifested by some hearers, who object to a sermon unless the cross of Christ be the *immediate and direct* topic of discourse. There is a rich variety in the sacred writings, and so there ought to be in our ministrations. There are various important truths *supposed* by this great doctrine, and these require to be illustrated and established. There are various *branches* pertaining to it, which require to be distinctly considered; various *consequences* arising from it, which require to be pointed out; various *duties* corresponding with it, which require to be inculcated; and various *evils* inimical to it, which may require to be exposed. All I mean to say is, that as there is a *relation* between these subjects and the doctrine of the cross, if we would introduce them in a truly evangelical manner, it requires to be *in that relation*. I may establish the moral character and government of God; the holiness, justice, goodness, and perpetual obligation of the law; the evil of sin; and the exposedness of the sinner to endless punishment; but if I have any other end in view than, by convincing him of his lost condition, to make him feel the need of a Saviour, I cannot be said to have preached the *gospel*; nor is my reasoning, however forcible, likely to produce any good effect. I may be very pointed in pressing the practical parts of religion, and in reproving the sins of the times; but if I enforce the one, or inveigh against the other, on any other than evangelical principles, I, in so doing, preach not the gospel. All Scriptural preaching is practical; but when practice is enforced in opposition to doctrine, or even to the neglect of it, it becomes antiscritptural. The apostolic precept runs thus: "Preach the word; be instant in season, and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering *and doctrine.*"

Thirdly, *In preaching the gospel, we must not imitate the ORATOR, whose attention is taken up with his performance, but rather the HERALD, whose object is to publish, or proclaim, good tidings.*—There is in the one an earnestness, a fulness of heart, a mind so interested in the subject as to be inattentive to other things, which is not in the other. "We believe, and therefore speak." The emphatical meaning of the terms κηρυσσω, εὐαγγελίζω, *to preach*, and *preach the gospel*, is noticeable in the account given of the ministry of John the Baptist. "The law and the prophets were until John; since that time the kingdom of God is *preached*, and every man presseth

into it." Moses and the prophets spoke of things *at a distance*; but John did more than prophesy: his was "the voice of one that *cried*;" he announced the fulfilment of what had been foretold, proclaiming the Messiah as being *among* them, and his kingdom as *at hand*. He opened the door of salvation, and great numbers pressed in!

Fourthly, *Though the doctrine of reconciliation by the blood of Christ forms the ground-work of the gospel embassy, yet it belongs to the work of the ministry, not merely to declare that truth, but to accompany it with earnest calls, and pressing invitations, to sinners to receive it, together with the most solemn warnings and threatenings to unbelievers who shall continue to reject it.*—The preaching of both John and Christ is, indeed, distinguished from the calls to repentance and faith which they addressed to their hearers, as being the ground on which they rested; but the latter were no less essential to their work than the former. John came "*preaching* in the wilderness of Judea, *and saying*, Repent ye," &c. After John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, "*preaching* the gospel of the kingdom of God, *and saying*, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand—repent ye, and believe the gospel." And thus the apostle explains the ministry of reconciliation as comprehending not only a declaration of the doctrine, but the persuading of men, "beseeking" them to be "reconciled to God," 2 Cor. v. 18—20.

There is nothing in all this which clashes with the most entire dependence on the influence of the Holy Spirit to give success to our ministry. Though we invite men, yet it is not on their pliability that we must rest our hopes, but on the power and promise of God. These are a part of the weapons of our warfare; but it is through God that they become mighty to the pulling down of strong holds.

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### LETTER III.

#### THE COMPOSITION OF A SERMON.

You have requested my thoughts on the composition of a sermon. There are several publications on this subject well worthy of your notice. If what I may offer have any peculiar claim to your attention, it will be on account of its familiarity.

The form or manner in which a sermon is composed and delivered is of some importance, inasmuch as it influences the attention, and renders the matter delivered more or less easy of being comprehended and retained.

In general, I do not think a minister of Jesus Christ should aim at fine composition for the pulpit. We ought to use sound speech, and good sense; but if we aspire after great elegance of expression, or become very exact in the formation of our periods, though we may amuse and please the ears of a few, we shall not profit the many, and consequently shall not answer the great end of our ministry. Illiterate hearers may be very poor *judges* of preaching; yet the effect which it produces upon them is the best criterion of its real excellence.

A considerable part of the ministerial gift consists in fruitfulness of invention; but that which greatly aids in the composition and delivery of a sermon is spirituality of mind. Without this we shall get no good ourselves, and be likely to do but little good to others. The first thing, therefore,

before we sit down to study, should be to draw near to God in prayer. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned.

When a passage of Scripture is fixed on as the ground of a sermon, it is necessary to read it in connexion with the context, and endeavour by your own judgment to gain a clear idea of its genuine meaning. Having formed your own judgment, I would then advise you to consult expositors, who may throw additional light upon it, or give a different sense to it; and if the sense which they give appear to have evidence in its favour, you must relinquish your own. Be satisfied, at all events, that you have the mind of the Holy Spirit before you proceed.\*

In the next place, having determined on the meaning of the text, it is necessary to examine the force of each word or term of importance in it. This may be done by examining the use of the same terms in other places of Scripture by the help of a concordance; but here a good judgment of your own is required, that you may select a few out of the many parallel texts which really illustrate that on which you have fixed. Some of the worst sermons are made out of a concordance, being a mere collection of similar sounds, which, instead of throwing light upon the subject, only throw it into confusion.

The force of words or terms of importance may also be examined to great advantage by a judicious use of *contrast*. Place all the important terms of your text, one at a time, in contrast with other things, or examine to what ideas they stand opposed. For example, let your text be Psal. cxlv. 16, "Thou openest thy hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." Begin with the term OPENEST. "Thou *openest* thy hand." What an idea does this convey of the *paternal goodness* of the great Father of his creation! How opposite to the conduct of many of his creatures one to another, whose hands and hearts are *shut*! What an idea also does it convey of the *ease* with which the wants of the whole creation are supplied? Let me pause a moment and think of their wants. What a quantity of vegetable and animal food is daily consumed in one town! what a quantity in a large city like London! what a quantity in a nation; in the whole world! But *men* do not compose a hundredth part of "every living thing!" Oh what innumerable wants throughout all animate nature; in the earth, in the air, in the waters! Whence comes their supply? "Thou openest thy hand," and all are satisfied. And can all these wants be supplied by only the *opening of his hand*? What then must sin be, and salvation from it? That is a work of wonderful expense. God openeth his hand, and satisfieth all creation, but he must purchase the church *with his blood*! God is all-sufficient as to power in the one case as well as in the other; but there are things relative to his moral conduct which he cannot do: he cannot deny himself. Here lies the great difficulty of salvation. In what a *variety of ways* are our wants supplied! The earth is fruitful, the air is full of life, the clouds empty themselves upon the earth, the sun pours forth its genial rays; but the operation of all these

\* Perhaps this may not be an improper place in which to introduce an anecdote, printed soon after Mr. Fuller's death in the New Evangelical Magazine, illustrative both of the statement he here makes as to the importance of a proper understanding of the sacred text, and of the manner in which he could reprove conceit. No man was more ready to encourage modesty in young ministers, but miserable indeed must the conceited have felt in his society.

A young minister calling on him on a Saturday, and announcing rather consequentially, that he was going to preach on the morrow at a little distance, Mr. Fuller asked him for his text. He readily answered, that he was going to preach from "One thing is needful." "And what is that one thing?" asked Mr. F. "Christ, certainly," replied the tyro. "Why then," rejoined Mr. F., "you are worse than the Socinians. They do allow Jesus Christ to be a man; but you are going to reduce him to a mere *thing*." This unfortunate remark spoiled the young man's sermon, and he had not courage to bring forward what he had provided with great study.—B.

second causes is only *the opening of his hand!* Nay, further: look we to *instruments* as well as means? Parents feed us in our childhood, and supply our youthful wants; ways are opened for our future subsistence; connexions are formed, which prove sources of comfort; friends are kind in seasons of extremity; supplies are presented from quarters that we never expected. What are all these but *the opening of his hand?* If his hand were shut, what a world would this be! The heavens brass, the earth iron; famine, pestilence, and death must follow.—See Psal. civ. 27—29.

Next take up the pronoun *THOU*. You will infer from this, If *thou* openest thy hand, should I shut mine against my poor brother? This important sentiment will properly occupy the place of improvement towards the close of the discourse.

Consider next the term *HAND*. There is a difference between the *hand* and the *heart*. God opens his hand, in the way of providence, towards his worst enemies. He gave Nebuchadnezzar all the kingdoms of the earth. But he opens his *heart* in the gospel of his Son. This is the better portion of the two. While we are thankful for the one, let us not rest satisfied in it: it is merely a *hand* portion. Rather let us pray with Jabez to be blessed *indeed*; and that we might have a Joseph's portion; not only the precious things of the earth and the fulness thereof, but "the good-will of Him that dwelt in the bush!"

Proceed: "*Thou satisfiest the desire,*" &c. God, I see, does not give grudgingly. It seems to be a characteristic of the Divine nature, both in the natural and moral world, to raise desires, not with a view to disappoint, but to satisfy them. Oh what a consoling thought is this! If there be any desires in us which are not satisfied, it is through their being self-created ones, which is our own fault; or through artificial scarcity arising from men's luxury, which is the fault of our species. God raises no desires as our Creator but he gives us enough to satisfy them; and none as our Redeemer and Sanctifier but what shall be actually satisfied. Oh the wonderful munificence of GOD! "How great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty!"

Now, having examined the force of every term of importance, by contrasting it with the opposite idea or ideas, you will find yourself in possession of a number of interesting thoughts, which you may consider as so many recruits, and, having noted them down as they occurred, your next business is to *arrange* them in order, or to give each thought that place in your discourse which it will occupy to the greatest advantage. Many sermons are a *mob* of ideas; they contain very good sentiments, but they have no object in view; so that the hearer is continually answering the preacher, Very true, very true; but what then? What is it you are aiming at? What is this to the purpose? A preacher, then, if he would interest a judicious hearer, must have an object at which he aims, and must never lose sight of it throughout his discourse. This is what writers on these subjects call *a unity of design*; and this is a matter of far greater importance than studying well-turned periods, or forming pretty expressions. It is this that nails the attention of an audience. *One thing at once* is a maxim in common life, by which the greatest men have made the greatest proficiency. Shun, therefore, a multitude of divisions and subdivisions. He who aims to say every thing in a single discourse, in effect says nothing. Avoid making a head or particular of every thought. Unity of design may be preserved consistently with various methods of division; but the thing itself is indispensable to good preaching.

The following reasons have induced me to hold this opinion: 1. The human mind is so formed as to delight in unity. To divide the attention is to weaken, if not destroy it. PRESIDENT EDWARDS'S sermons, though in

some respects not proper for imitation, yet, in this, are worthy of notice. They all hold up some one great leading truth; and that truth is the spirit of his text, and serves for the title of his sermon. Look over the table of contents to his *Thirty-three Sermons*, and you will find the title of each sermon throw an amazing light upon the text. The sentiment expressed in the title he calls the *doctrine* of the text; and all he says is to *illustrate, establish, or improve* it. It might be of use, if, in the composition of sermons, we were to oblige ourselves to give titles to them. Many of what are called sermons would be found to require three or four titles to answer to their contents; which at once proves that, properly speaking, they are not sermons.

2. It has been said, and I think justly, that *evidence* should constitute the body or substance of every doctrinal discourse. Evidence may be drawn from various sources; as Scripture testimony, example, the reason of things, &c.; but evidence always implies a leading truth to be proved. Where this is not the case, the preacher gives himself no opportunity of advancing evidence; consequently his sermon, if it may be so called, will be without body, without substance, and will contain nothing that shall leave any strong impression upon a thinking mind. In opening a battery against a wall, you would not throw your balls at random, first at one place and then at another, but direct your whole force against a particular spot. In the one case your labour would be thrown away; in the other you are likely to make an effectual impression.

3. It is greatly assisting to *memory*, both with respect to the preacher and the hearer. Memory is exercised by the *relation* of one thing to another. Were you to attempt to remember seven different objects which bore no manner of relation to each other, such as *water, time, wisdom, fruit, contentment, fowls, and revenues*, you would find it almost impossible; but take seven objects which, though different in nature, yet possess some point of unity, which associates them in the mind, and the work is easy. Thus, *sun, moon, stars, earth, air, fire, and water*, are readily remembered, being so many principal parts of the *one creation*.

4. I cannot so well satisfy my *conscience* unless I have some interesting truth to communicate, or some important duty to enforce. When I have been thinking of the approach of the Lord's day, the questions have occurred to my mind, What message have I to deliver to the people of my charge? What important doctrine to establish? What sin to expose? What duty to inculcate? What case to meet? What acknowledged truth to improve? The method frequently used seems to afford an answer to none of these questions; but it is rather saying, None at all, only I have a text of Scripture, on the different parts of which I may say something that will fill up the time.

Divisions are either *topical, textual, or compound*. The first, or *topical* method, is to collect all your remarks upon a text, and reduce them to a point, like so many rays of light in a focus. In other words, ask yourself, *What important truth is it that the text contains, and which I feel impressed upon my own mind, and wish to impress upon that of the congregation?* And make this the topic of discourse.

After going over the passage before mentioned, as above, you could be at no loss to determine that the leading sentiment would be—*The bounty of Providence*. This is what the old divines called the *doctrine* of the text; and when they printed their discourses, this was the title of them.

But, you may ask, what am I to do with this doctrine when I have found it? Am I to make no divisions, or subdivisions? Of what is my discourse to be composed? Yes, there must be divisions, and perhaps subdivisions;



but let them not be so many distinct subjects, which have no relation to each other, but *so many parts of a whole*. When I have a subject before me, I sometimes ask myself three questions: What is it? On what evidence does it rest? And what does it concern me, or any of the people, if it be true? The division of many subjects will therefore be, I. Explain the doctrine. II. Establish it. III. Improve it.

Let us try the above subject on this plan, and see whether we cannot find a place, under one or other of these heads, for all the foregoing thoughts, which occurred spontaneously on looking over the terms; and perhaps, as we go along, others no less interesting may occur.

INTRODUCTION.—However men have been in the dark respecting God, it has not been for want of evidence. He is not far from every one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being. Creation is full of God.

There is something in this passage wonderfully sublime. It expresses a great truth in the most simple language. It represents the great Creator as the Father of his creation, encompassed round by an innumerable family, whose eyes all wait on him for daily food; while he, with paternal goodness, opens his bounteous hand, and satisfies their various wants.

The subject which invites our attention is—*The bounty of Providence*. In discoursing on it, I shall offer some remarks by way of explanation—notice the evidence on which it rests—and then improve the subject.

I. Offer some remarks upon the subject by way of EXPLANATION. There is much discontent among men. Many objections may arise in the mind to this doctrine, and but few feel themselves duly impressed with its reality. In order to obviate such objections, I would observe,

1. The desires which God satisfies are to be *restricted to those of his own creating*.—Men have a number of artificial, self-created, and sinful desires. . . . These he does not engage to satisfy; but merely those which are purely natural.

2. Though God satisfies the desire of every living thing, yet not all *in the same way*, but of every creature according to its nature and circumstances. Many of the creatures, like the lily, neither toil nor spin, but receive the bounties of Providence ready prepared to their hand; but this is not the case with all. It is not thus with man; for though we are forbidden to be inordinately careful, yet we must commonly labour for what we have. It is a part of the load laid upon us, that by the sweat of the brow we shall eat bread. Nor do I know whether there be more of judgment than of mercy in this sentence. Idleness is certainly a soil on which sin grows to its greatest perfection. Considering what man is, it is a mercy that we have employment. It is among the rich who have nothing to do, and the very poor who will do but little, that wickedness is most prevalent.

3. The text expresses what God does *ordinarily*, not *universally*, or in all cases.—There are cases of famine; seasons in which God as it were shuts his hand, on account of the sins of men; and if he shuts his hand, the heavens become brass, and the earth iron, and millions perish for want of bread. There are also cases more common than famine; great numbers of mankind labour under the hardships of poverty, pine away, and are stricken through, for want of the fruits of the field. But this is one of those evils under which the world groans, owing to the sin of man. If there were no waste or intemperance among one part of mankind, there would be a sufficiency, and more than a sufficiency, for all.

II. We proceed to notice a few of the EVIDENCES by which this important truth is supported.

There are some subjects which are difficult to prove, not from a scarcity, but from a profusion of evidence. Where this is the case, the difficulty lies

in selection: I shall content myself with offering three things to your consideration.

1. The supplies we constantly receive cannot be ascribed to *our own labour as their first cause*.—The whole of human labour is but a kind of manufactory of the materials with which God is pleased to furnish us. We make nothing; we only change the forms of different productions, to suit our convenience. We are as really, though not as sensibly, dependent on God as Israel in the wilderness, who were fed with manna from heaven. To this may be added, when we have laboured to the utmost, it amounts to nothing without a Divine blessing upon it. All, therefore, that we possess proceeds from the opening of his hand.

2. A consideration of the *number and magnitude of the wants of creatures* will convince us that nothing short of the all-sufficiency of God can supply them.—What a quantity of vegetable and animal food is required by a single town, for only one day! more for a city; more for a nation; more still for a world; and that for a succession of ages! And what are men, when compared with the whole animate creation? All nature teems with life. The earth, the air, the sea, each swarms with being. Whence can all these be continually supplied, but by him that made them? “Thou openest thy hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.”

3. If we consider the *various ways and means* by which our supplies reach us, we shall be convinced of the truth in question. God does not satisfy our desires immediately, so much as through the medium of second causes; and though we may be too insensible of that hand which puts all in motion, yet it is no less engaged than if we were supplied by miracle. A concatenation, or chain of causes, is apparent in the works of God. Our food is prepared by a complicate but beautiful machinery. The heavens are made to hear the earth, the earth to hear the corn, the wine, and the oil, and the corn, the wine, and the oil to hear the people. What is that tendency of various parts of the creation to satisfy the desires of other parts, but the operation of his hand, who is concerned to uphold and render happy the creatures that he hath made? The earth abounds in fertility, and the air with salubrity; the clouds pour forth their waters on the earth, and the sun its genial rays. Fire and hail, snow, and winds, and seas contribute to our welfare. We inhale life with every breath we breathe. The elements are employed for our sustenance and happiness.

Look we to instruments as well as means? Tender parents have supplied us during our childhood and youth; ways have been opened for our future subsistence; endearing connexions have been formed, which have proved a source of much enjoyment: in seasons of difficulty friends have kindly aided us; supplies have arisen from quarters that we never expected: what are these but the openings of his hand?

III. IMPROVE the subject. There is no Divine truth but is of some account, and this will be found not a little fruitful.

1. If such be the bounty of Divine Providence, *under what obligations do we lie!* yet what actual returns have we made for all this goodness? All the return that God requires is a grateful heart: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.” But, alas! are there not many of you who are this day his enemies? The idea is shocking, that such a God should have an enemy; yet so it is. The worst thing that was said of one of the worst of men was, “He hath eaten at my table, and hath lifted up his heel against me!” God has been feeding a generation of vipers; which, under the frost of childhood or adversity, seemed to claim his pity: but which, under the sunshine of maturer years and prosperous circumstances, do not fail to hiss and spit there venom in his face! These things must all come into

account. All God's goodness, and all our abuses of it, will be brought to light at the last day.

2. From this view of the Divine beneficence, *what encouragement is there to trust in the Lord* under all our wants and difficulties! With what *ease* can he supply our wants! In how many ways, unknown to us, and unexpected by us, can he give a favourable turn to our affairs! "Trust in the Lord, and do good: so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed."—"Young lions do lack, and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."

3. If such be the bounty of providence, *what is that of grace?* If this be the opening of his hand, that is the opening of his heart. If he satisfies natural desires, much more those that are spiritual.—See ver. 19. That which is only done generally in the one case is done universally in the other. Not one soul shall perish through famine, or any kind of want, whose desires terminate on Christ.

While therefore we cherish gratitude for temporal mercies, let us not rest satisfied in them. God gave Nebuchadnezzar all the kingdoms of the earth. See how light he makes of worldly good, to bestow it on the basest of men; to throw it away, as it were, on his worst enemies. Do not be content with Nebuchadnezzar's portion; but rather covet, with Jabez, to be blessed *indeed*. Worldly good, though a blessing in itself, is capable of being turned by sin into a curse. Covet the crowning point of Joseph's portion; not only the precious things of the earth, and the fulness thereof; but "the good-will of him that dwelt in the bush!"

4. If God be thus good, *what must sin be*, that can induce him to load this world with such a degree of misery!

5. If God can with such *ease* supply all creation, *what a blessing must redemption be!* For the one he has only to open his hand, and the work is done; the other must be accomplished by the purchase of his blood! God was sufficient for the latter, as well as for the former, as to power; but there are things relative to his moral conduct which he cannot do—He cannot deny himself. Here lies the great difficulty of salvation.

6. What a motive is here to *to be kind to the poor and needy!* If we be children of God, we must imitate him: "Thou shalt open thy hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy in thy land."

This may serve as an example of the topical method of preaching; and where it can be accomplished, it is very interesting. But there are some texts which cannot be easily reduced to a single topic; and indeed it is better not to be confined to one method, but to indulge variety. Whatever method may be pursued consistent with a *unity of design* is very allowable. This object may be attained in what is called the *textual* method of division, on which I shall next proceed to offer a few observations.

[N. B. Mr. Fuller appears not to have fulfilled his intention of proceeding with the subject, the foregoing letters being all that can be found of the series. The letter which follows was addressed to another of Mr. Fuller's friends.]

## LETTER IV.

## THE COMPOSITION OF A SERMON.

ENDEAVOUR to understand a subject before you speak of it. Do not overload your memory with words. Write down a few leading things for the sake of arrangement and assistance of memory; but not a great deal. Memory must not be overburdened. Never carry what you write into the pulpit. Avoid vulgar expressions: do not affect finical ones, nor words out of common use. As to division and arrangement, it barely respects the assortment of your materials. You must endeavour to understand and feel your subject, or the manner in which you divide it will signify but little. But if both these may be taken for granted, then I should say much depends, as to your being heard with pleasure and profit, on a proper discussion and management of the subject. At all events avoid a multiplying of *heads* and particulars. A few well-chosen thoughts, matured, proved, and improved, are abundantly more acceptable than when the whole is chopped, as it were, into mince-meat. It is very common to divide in a textual way, i. e. to propose to discourse first upon one part or branch of it; secondly, upon another, &c. As, for example,—

“In thy light we shall see light,” Psal. xxxvi. 9.

First, inquire what is meant by that light which is ascribed to God, “Thy light;” secondly, what is that light which we see in God’s light; thirdly, what is included in seeing this light. I cannot say I approve of this method. It is not, properly speaking, a sermon. A sermon is a discourse on some Divine subject, or a train of interesting thoughts on some sacred theme. The above process, I think, should be brought into the introduction and explication of the text, and should be done in about five minutes. Then, having made the text plain by explaining the difficult parts of it, I should state the leading truth taught in the text as the subject or theme of the discourse. For example:

“In thy light we shall see light,” Psal. xxxvi. 9.

There is a great boast of light in the world, and there is some ground for it in natural things; but, as of old the world by wisdom knew not God, so of late. If ever we know God, it must be through the medium of his word. This I take to be the meaning of the passage I have read. The term light in the last clause means the true knowledge of God; and, in the first, the true medium of attaining it, viz. Divine revelation. The sum seems to amount to this: the word of God is the grand medium by which we can attain a true and saving knowledge of God. What the sun and stars are to the regions of matter, that revelation is to the mental region, Gen. i. 13, 17.

I. Let us try to ILLUSTRATE THIS IMPORTANT TRUTH BY A FEW OBSERVATIONS.

1. The knowledge of God was objectively manifested by the light of nature, but through man’s depravity rendered inoperative. See Rom. i. 28. It is the revelation of the law of the Lord that converteth the soul, Psal. xix. 1—11.

2. The true knowledge of God was obtained under the patriarchal or Mosaic dispensation by great numbers, but it was through the medium of revelation. As revelation increased, the knowledge of God increased with it; prophecies, promises, and precepts; types, and shadows. In this light they saw light, though not so clearly as in after-days.

3. The true knowledge of God has obtained still more ground under the

gospel dispensation; but it is still through the medium of revelation. Whenever the latter has gone among the Gentiles, the former has gone along with it; and as revelation is more perfect, God has the more honoured it.

4. The light of the gospel dispensation is not yet perfect, Isa. xxx. 26; but whatever degree of brilliancy arises, it will be through this medium. We must not think we have exhausted Scripture knowledge: we know but little of it yet. A thousand promises and prophecies will appear in a glory, of which we have now but faint ideas. Let us now—

## II. ENDEAVOUR TO IMPROVE THIS SUBJECT.

1. Be thankful for the light of revelation. Regard not the ignis fatuus which wanders about under the name of reason in modern productions, 2 Pet. i. 19.

2. Walk in it particularly in finding your way to eternal life; for settling disputed principles, and regulating your lives.

3. There are many things of which you may entertain no doubt, concerning which there may be no manner of dispute; yet make a point of seeing them in God's light. Many content themselves with seeing them in the light in which great and good men have placed them; but, though angels, they are not the true light: they all view things partially. If what they say be true, yet, if we receive it merely on their representation, our faith will stand in the wisdom of men, and not in the power of God, 1 Cor. ii. 9. That knowledge or faith which has not God's word for its ground will not stand the day of trial.

4 Endeavour to spread it in your connexions and in the world at large, &c.

I do not pretend to say that sermons should be formed after this or any other mode. Every subject, in some degree, requires a mode of discussion for itself. There are, however, some general observations, that will ordinarily apply to most subjects. In doctrinal subjects, in which some great truth is taught, your business is to find out that truth, and state it in the introduction: if clearly stated, search for the evidences, and make it one head of the discourse to establish it. If it be a truth to be illustrated, set it before the hearers in various points of light; and as no Divine truth is merely speculative, but some way or other concerns the hearers, the latter part of the subject should consist in improvement. I. To explain—II. To establish—III. To improve it.

But in all cases the division must be governed by the materials you have to divide. It would be absurd to explain a subject that was already as plain as you could make it, or in which there appeared no difficulties or liability to misunderstand. There are three questions I have often put to myself in thinking on a subject—*What? Why? What then?* In other words—What am I going to teach? Why? or on what ground do I advance it as a truth? And what does it concern any or all of my hearers if it be true?

On practical subjects there is seldom much room for you to prove and improve. Not the former, since there is no truth to be established; not the latter, because the whole sermon is an address upon those things of which no improvement is made. I have generally found that exhortations include matter for a twofold division, and have very commonly proposed, first, to inquire into the meaning and extent of the exhortation; secondly, to enforce it. Under the former there is room to expatiate upon every idea or branch of the duty. In the latter, to introduce any motive that serves either for that or other texts.

If a text be partly doctrinal and partly practical, the practical part may often be introduced first: I think the doctrinal part will come as a motive to enforce it.

[The subject of the following paper, which originally appeared in the Evangelical Magazine, will, it is presumed, sufficiently justify its insertion in this place.]

THE ABUSE OF ALLEGORY IN PREACHING.

AFTER what several able writers have produced of late years upon this practice, particularly the late Dr. Stennett on the Parable of the Sower, it might have been expected that this evil would at least have been considerably diminished. But the misfortune is, those who are most addicted to this way of preaching seem in general to have very little inclination to read. Whether they deem it unlawful, as involving them in the sin charged upon the prophets, of stealing every one from his neighbour—or whether they be so enamoured of their own thoughts as to set all others at defiance—I cannot decide; but certain it is, that many preach as if they had never read or thought upon the subject.

Very little observation will convince us that the preachers with whom this practice mostly prevails are of the lower sort with respect to seriousness and good sense, however high they may affect to soar in their notions. Of such characters I have but little hope. But as some godly men are, I believe, too much infected with this disease, if the editor will indulge me with two or three pages in the Magazine, I will expostulate with one of them on the *causes* and *consequences* of his conduct.

Let me entreat you then, my friend, to consider, in the first place, whether, when you turn plain historical facts into allegory, you treat the word of God with becoming reverence. Can you seriously think the Scriptures to be a book of riddles and conundrums, and that a Christian minister is properly employed in giving scope to his fancy, in order to discover their solution? I have been asked the meaning of certain passages of Scripture; and when I have answered according to what appeared to be the scope of the sacred writer, it has been said, “Yes, that may be the *literal* meaning; but what is the *spiritual* meaning of it?” as though every part of Scripture had a spiritual, that is, a hidden or allegorical meaning, besides its obvious one. That some parts of Scripture are allegorical—that some prophecies have a double reference—and that the principle suggested by many a passage may be applied to other things besides what is immediately intended—there is no doubt; but this is very different from the practice to which I allude. All Scripture is profitable in some way; some for doctrine, some for reproof, some for correction, and some for instruction in righteousness; but all is not to be turned into allegory. If we must play, let it be with things of less consequence than the word of the eternal God!

Secondly, Consider whether the motive that stimulates you to such a manner of treating the sacred oracles be any other than *vanity*. If you preached to a people possessed of any thing like good sense, they would consider it as perverting the whole word of God, and whipping it into froth. Instead of applauding you, they would be unable to endure it. But if your people be ignorant, such things will please them; and they may gaze, and admire, and smile, and say one to another, it may be in your hearing too, Well, what a man! Who would have thought that he would have found so much gospel in that text? Ah, very true: who indeed? But what would the apostle Paul say? “Are ye not carnal?” Is it for a man of God to “court a grin when he should woo a soul?” For shame! desist from such folly, or lay aside the Christian ministry! You are commanded to “feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood;” but it is not every thing pleasing to a people that feeds them in the sense of the

apostle. He did not mean to direct the Ephesian elders to feed men's fancies, and still less their prejudices; but their spiritual desires: and this is accomplished only by administering to them the words of truth and soberness. If your preaching be such as God approves, and if you study to show yourself approved of him, it will lead the people to admire your Saviour rather than you, and render him the topic of their conversation.

Thirdly, Consider whether both you and your people be not in danger of mistaking this spiritualizing passion for spirituality of mind and a being led into "the deep things of God." There are few objects at a greater distance than the effervescence of a vain imagination and that holy and humble spirit by which spiritual things are discerned; yet the one is often mistaken for the other. The preacher dreams of deep discoveries; and the people wonder to hear them: but what saith the Scriptures? "The prophet that hath only a dream must tell his dream, but he that hath God's word, let him speak it faithfully: for what is the chaff to the wheat."

Finally, Consider the consequences which must follow from this practice. If an unbeliever come into your assembly, and find you arraying Christianity in this fancy dress, is it likely he should be convinced of all—and, the secrets of his heart being made manifest, fall down and worship God, and report that God is among you, and that of a truth? If he hear you treat of the historical parts of Scripture as meaning something very different from what they appear to mean, will he not say you are mad, and be furnished with a handle for representing religion itself as void of truth and good sense? Or if he hear you interpret the miracles, which Christ wrought in proof of his Messiahship, of that change which is now wrought in the minds of sinners by the Spirit of God, will he not say that you yourselves appear to consider the whole as a string of fables, and are employed in finding out the morals of them?

But perhaps you are seldom attended by men of this description. Be it so; what, think you, must be the effect of such preaching on professing Christians, either nominal or real? The former will either fall asleep under it, as something which does not concern them; or, if they attend to you, and understand your interpretations, they will think they are quite in the secret, and set themselves down for deep Christians; when, in truth, they know nothing yet as they ought to know. And as to real Christians, their souls will either pine under your ministry, or, by contracting a false taste, will thirst after the froth of human fancy, to the neglect of the sincere milk of the word; and instead of growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, will make no progress in either.

It is an easy thing for a man of a luxuriant imagination, unencumbered by judgment, to make any thing he pleases of the Scriptures, as well as any other book; but in so doing he must destroy their simplicity, and of course their efficacy; which in fact is reducing them to nothing. If they be not applied to their appropriate uses, they are perverted; and a perverted good proves the greatest of evils. Thus it is that characters abound who are full of Scripture language, while yet they are awfully destitute of Scripture knowledge, or Scriptural religion.



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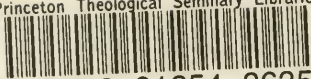
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