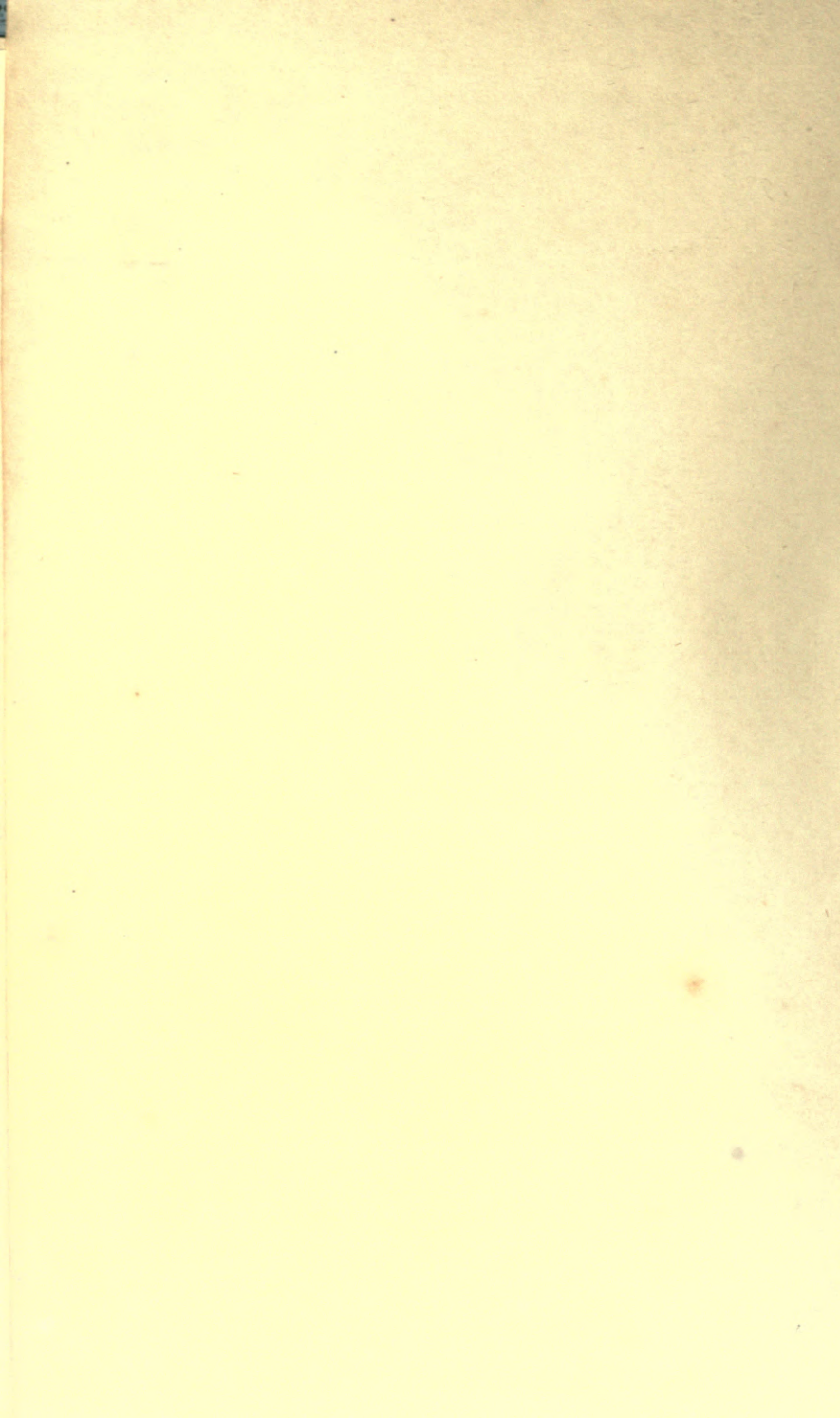


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SERMONS

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

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S E R M O N S,

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

BY THE REV.

JAMES S. M. ANDERSON, M.A.

CHAPLAIN IN ORDINARY TO THE QUEEN,

CHAPLAIN TO THE QUEEN DOWAGER,

AND PERPETUAL CURATE OF ST. GEORGE'S CHAPEL, BRIGHTON.

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TO
LAURENCE PEEL, Esq.,
THIS VOLUME
IS INSCRIBED BY ITS AUTHOR,
IN GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT
OF THE BLESSING OF HIS FRIENDSHIP ;
AND WITH THE EARNEST PRAYER,
THAT, BEING PARTAKERS OF ONE FAITH, ONE BAPTISM,
THEY MAY, WITH EVERY OTHER MEMBER OF THE
CHURCH OF CHRIST,
STAND FAST IN ONE SPIRIT,
WITH ONE MIND STRIVING TOGETHER FOR THE FAITH
OF THE GOSPEL.



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SERMON I.

ON CONSCIENCE.

Acts xxiv. 16.

And herein I do exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.

THE deliberate assertion which the Apostle here makes of his laborious and constant efforts, "to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men," derives great additional interest from the consideration of the dangerous and perplexing circumstances in which he was now placed. He was standing at Cæsarea, in the presence of Felix, the Roman governor, and of the High Priest and elders, to answer the accusations which had been urged against him, at the instance of the Jewish nation, by the orator Tertullus, and was declaring before them all the nature of that hope which he had toward God.

He had already addressed to the council at Jerusalem, under circumstances scarcely less for-

midable, a vindication of himself, in terms similar to the present; and, as he earnestly looked upon that assembly, had said, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." For this saying, we are told that "the High Priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth¹;" but, notwithstanding that act of violence and insult, upon the very next occasion which summons the Apostle to speak in his own defence, and in the presence of the same Ananias who had thus commanded him to be smitten, he not only repeats in substance the same assertion, but declares that the maintenance of "a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men," was the duty in which he always exercised himself.

Thus likewise, in the Epistles written by St. Paul, whether his object be to address whole churches, or individual members; whether to illustrate doctrines, or enforce duties, or warn against dangers; we continually meet with appeals made by him to the authority of conscience in his own breast, to the respect which should be paid to it in the breasts of others. In the Epistle to the Romans, for example, where he is speaking, in one place, of the sorrow which he felt for his brethren, his "kinsmen according to the flesh," his words are, "I say the truth

¹ Acts xxiii. 1, 2.

in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost ¹; and in another, where he is pointing out the duty of obedience to lawful governors, he urges its observance “not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake ².” In like manner, the many cautions and directions which he gives, in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, with respect to things lawful and things expedient, are regulated by the regard which ought to be paid to the same high and holy principle of conscience in other men; and he scruples not to tell the Corinthians that, when they “sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak consciences,” they “sin against Christ ³.” Again, in the beginning of his Second Epistle to the same, he affirms the ground of his rejoicing to be “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 ⁴.” And afterwards, in describing the duties of those men who, with himself, had received the ministry, he declares that they handled “not the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth,” commended themselves “to every man’s conscience in the sight of God ⁵.” To Timothy, likewise, in his First Epistle, he affirms

¹ Rom. ix. 1.

² Ib. xiii. 5.

³ 1 Cor. viii. 12.

⁴ 2 Cor. i. 12.

⁵ 2 Cor. iv. 2.

“the end of the commandment” to be “charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned¹ ;” he charges him to “war a good warfare, holding faith, and a good conscience² ;” and, in setting forth the qualities and duties of Deacons, he bids them hold “the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience³ .” Thus too, in his Second Epistle to the same, he thanks God, whom he served from his “forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing” he had remembrance of his beloved Son in his “prayers night and day⁴ .” And upon the very same ground, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, he entreats the help of their intercession, saying, “pray for us : for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly⁵ .”

These and other passages of similar import, which occur in the Epistles of St. Paul, are sufficient to prove the stress which that Apostle laid upon the authority of conscience, the obedience which he paid to its dictates, the care with which he sought to protect its privileges ; and the recollection of them, as I have already remarked, may well serve to illustrate the earnest anxiety wherewith he appeals, in the text, to the fact of his exercising himself “to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men,” albeit that persecu-

¹ 1 Tim. i. 5.

² Ibid. 19.

³ Ibid. iii. 9.

⁴ 2 Tim. i. 3.

⁵ Heb. xiii. 18.

tion the most oppressive, and dangers the most appalling, were then his portion.

Need I now lay before you the evidence which is furnished by other faithful servants of the Lord, to show their sense of the precious gift which St. Paul was so anxious to preserve? Need I repeat the testimony of St. Peter, telling you that “this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully¹ ;” and that the saving power of baptism is felt, not “in the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God²?” Or need I pass on to the assurance of the Beloved Disciple teaching us that, “if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God³?” Truly it were superfluous to multiply these, and testimonies like these, to the fact of the supremacy which conscience holds in man’s nature; for it is a fact which men generally admit. It is one of the many precious convictions of human belief which force themselves upon the mind, without hesitation or doubt; a truth rather to be recognised by experience, than deduced by argument. Like the sun which shines in the firmament of heaven, we feel that it exists, by the light which it spreads around us. Be it, as some have thought, a certain modification of reason, founded upon an

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 19.

² Ibid. iii. 21.

³ 1 John iii. 21.

original instinct, called a moral sense¹; or as others have maintained, one of the original and uncompounded elements of our nature; be it derivative or inherent; be it designated by whatsoever title you will,—by that of the moral sense, or moral sentiment, or informing faculty, or reflection, or practical dictate of the understanding,—it is still that principle which, from its very nature, manifestly claims superiority over every other principle, and passion, and motive of action, inasmuch as it surveys the operation of all, and ‘without being consulted, without being advised with, magisterially exerts itself²,’ and approves the right, or condemns the wrong ‘Had it strength,’ (are the well known words of Bishop Butler, in his admirable Sermon on human nature,) ‘as it has right; had it power, as it has manifest authority; it would absolutely govern the world³.’

It is, in fact, that principle which made even the Gentiles “a law unto themselves;” for they, as the Apostle tells us, “shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another⁴.” And not only was this law in the heart, this witnessing conscience, this accusing

¹ See Adam Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, part iii. c. v. p. 186.

² Bishop Butler’s *Second Sermon upon Human Nature*, Vol. ii. p. 56.

³ *Ibid.* p. 60.

⁴ Rom. ii. 15.

or excusing thought, ascribed to the Gentiles by the enlightened teacher of Christian truth, but it was felt, and claimed, and professed by themselves, to be a glorious and mighty privilege. The manifestation of its power may be traced among them, under every possible variety of aspect. The researches of their moralists, the reflections of their historians, the visions of their poets, each and all of them are commentaries upon the existence of this belief, upon the universality of its dominion. It mattered not that the gloom of heathen ignorance darkened its surface, or that the intricacy of heathen superstition perplexed its character, its native energy was still felt, its undying voice was still heard. And that voice, observe still further, was lifted up on the side of truth and righteousness. 'If not forcibly stopped, it always went on naturally, and of course to anticipate a higher and more effectual sentence, which should hereafter second and affirm its own¹.' However appalling might be the anomalies which accompanied the acknowledgment of it, or however perverse or misapplied the devices which issued from it, there was still some form of good, some undoubted principle of morality which might be discerned in the progress of their development. The exception only proved the priority of the rule. The malady bore witness to the

¹ Bishop Butler's Second Sermon upon Human Nature, Vol. ii. p. 56.

reality and capacity of the functions that once were healthful. The aberration was a sign that there had been a path of rectitude, from which the deviation was made.

I stop not now to show in what manner the existence and operation of this faculty in man's nature, so acknowledging, so testifying the obligations of virtue, afford an evidence of the moral attributes of the Creator: since, however distinctly the record of its dictates may be perceived to be the impress of His hand who gave them being, or however clearly the acknowledgment of this truth may involve the still further and blessed conclusion, that 'duty and interest are perfectly coincident ¹;' and that 'conscience can add the warmth of an affection to the inflexibility of principle and habit ²;'—such an enquiry, together with the precious inferences resulting from it, has been carried on by others in works of easy access, in works already familiar to the public mind ³. A closer consideration, therefore,

¹ See Bishop Butler's Third Sermon on Human Nature, ad fin.

² See Sir James Mackintosh's Dissertation on the progress of Ethical Philosophy, p. 384.

³ I need scarcely remind the reader that I refer particularly in this place, to a well known work of one of the brightest ornaments of the Church of Scotland, Dr. Chalmers. The First Chapter of his Bridgewater Treatise, is 'On the Supremacy of Conscience,' and his main object therein is to show the argument derived, from the phenomena of conscience, for the moral attributes of God. Bishop Butler, it will be seen, adverts to this

of this part of our subject at the present moment would not only be anticipated, but would lead us into too wide a field of discussion, and divert our thoughts from that immediate application of the subject to our own hearts which, by God's blessing, I am now anxious to make.

In offering the observations which I have done, I have been anxious only to advert, in general terms, to those evidences for the supremacy of conscience, which lie upon the very threshold of all enquiry into the subject. And this truth being fully and freely admitted, the question which I propose to consider is, the practical result of such an admission; to see whether we are truly mindful of the nature of that obligation, whose authority we acknowledge in the abstract; and whether we are

evidence in the passage which I have already quoted above; where he speaks of the voice of conscience, anticipating 'a higher and more effectual sentence, which shall hereafter second and affirm its own.' But he says, at the same time, that it was beyond his design explicitly to consider that part of the office of conscience. The consideration of it, however, came directly within the limits of Chalmers's design, in the work referred to, and is admirably wrought out. 'The felt presence,' (he maintains,) 'of a judge, within the breast, powerfully and immediately suggests the notion of a Supreme Judge and Sovereign, who placed it there. Upon this question, the mind does not stop short at mere abstraction; but, passing at once from the abstract to the concrete, from the law to the heart, it makes the rapid inference of a law-giver.'—Vol. i. p. 90.

alive to the dangers which neglect, or contempt, or wilful resistance against its dominion must produce. For, indeed, there are errors, great and serious errors, which sometimes accompany the reception of this truth; errors too, not merely of harmless speculation, but of direct and dangerous offence to God and men. It were impossible to think that conscience could be urged, as we know that it is so often, in defence of practices and opinions, directly and confessedly repugnant to each other, were there not some fallacy at work in the hearts of those who maintain the plea. They hold it to be the sole law which is to regulate their conduct; and herein is their first error. Conscience is not the sole law; it is not the highest law, which controls man. It may be his accuser, his witness, his judge; but the law, by which that accusation is preferred, that testimony recorded, that sentence pronounced, is the law, not independently ordained of conscience, but mediately of God. "The spirit of man," (saith Solomon,) "is the candle of the Lord¹." It is a light derived from Him in creation; it is a light sustained and increased by Him in revelation. To Him, therefore, must that which is called the law of conscience be referred; and by Him must its dictates be controlled.

It is not for man then to say that he has satisfied his conscience, when there is a superior tribunal,

¹ Prov. xx. 27.

whose claims have not been satisfied; nor to insist upon the authority of conscience as final, when it is only an authority delegated by, and subordinate to another. It may be, and we have already admitted that it is, the supreme faculty in the creature; for, as the Apostle asks elsewhere, "what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man which is in him¹?" but the Creator has made that spirit subject to Himself; and whatsoever be its supremacy, it is but the supremacy of a fallen being; a supremacy more of right than of power; against which our prejudices and passions, our hopes and fears are for ever struggling, and over which they oftentimes obtain the mastery. The senses, we know full well, strong and diversified as they are, cannot always discern the character of those objects about which they are conversant, nor determine their exact proportions. The reason, mighty and ennobling as it is, cannot always overcome the difficulties which lie within the immediate compass of its observation. The affections, warm and earnest as they are, cannot always secure the enjoyment to which they aspire. Everything within us and around us proves that we are "of the earth, earthy²." How then can conscience be expected to be the only faculty within us, whose high prerogatives shall remain undisturbed and unchanged, amid the evils that beset us? If the eye, when clouded, can

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 11.

² Ibid. xv. 47.

no longer see ; or the ear, when closed up, can no longer hear ; if the vitiated palate be unable to taste what we eat, or what we drink, and the paralyzed or disturbed limb fail to perform its proper function, think we that there are no difficulties which encumber the operation of conscience, or that, when so encumbered, its authority is not degraded, and its energy not enfeebled ? Surely it were impossible to think so. And yet the perfect complacency with which so many men rest upon the guidance of conscience as the sole and ultimate standard of what is right ; the calmness with which they confide in its commands, as if it were self-existent, infallible, impregnable,—would seem as if they did indeed regard it as the single faculty that was saved, in all its native majesty, from the wreck of man's happiness,—the sole portion of his frame that was exempted from the curse of sin, and misery, and death.

Not so thought the Apostle. The appeal which he made, in the presence of Felix, was not that he had “a conscience void of offence” towards itself, but “void of offence toward God and toward men.” He exercised himself, he saith, always to have this. The exercise was not limited to time, or place, or person, but *always*, at all times and under all circumstances, to be maintained. Neither was it a work which demanded only a formal and a lazy acquiescence in its necessity, a mere outward acknowledgment of its importance ; but he *exercised*

himself to have it. The word, in the original implies the strongest possible exertion which can be made by the watchful and self-denying spirit:—it is in fact, that from which our English word ascetic is derived¹. And, observe further, this moral exercise, this subjugation of the affections, this keeping under his body, as the Apostle expresses it elsewhere², was not carried on in his own strength or wisdom. It was not conscience appealing to conscience, the judge to the witness, or the witness to the judge; but “herein,” he saith, he exercised himself, *in this*, (as we find in the original)³, *i. e.* in the very hope which, in the preceding verse, he declared he had towards God; and by the strength of which, he confessed that, after the way which his enemies called heresy, so worshipped he the God of his fathers, “believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.” This hope was at once the ground and guide of the exercise which the Apostle laboured to carry on; and the end and object of this exercise was that he might have always “a conscience void of offence towards God

¹ αὐτὸς ἀσκῶ.

² 1 Cor. ix. 27.

³ ἐν τούτῳ. It certainly must be admitted that this expression is capable of being applied to some other object, and hence several expositors have interpreted it as signifying ἐν τούτῳ χρόνῳ, *in the meantime*, &c.; but it is no less certain that it may be understood with reference to the former verse, and that, viewed in this sense, its signification is much more emphatic.—See Grotius, Whitby, and Doddridge, in loc.

and towards men." It was no vague nor shifting standard, therefore, to which he appealed: no gentle nor easy task which he professed to take upon himself. It was nothing less than the observance of the very same duty, in his own case, which was urged by the ministers of Christ in the case of others; he tried "the spirits whether they were of God¹:" he examined his own heart, he proved "all things;" he held "fast that which was good²."

It would be therefore obviously an abuse of conscience, a misrepresentation of its sacred character both to ourselves and to others, if we were to attach the same importance, and to appeal with the same confidence, which the Apostle evinced, to its authority, unless we have the like grounds for so doing. "All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes, but the Lord weigheth the spirit³." It is even so. Interest, and passion, and custom may league together to deceive; and our hearts may love to be deceived, and say, "peace, when there is no peace⁴;" but there is a balance in the hands of the Lord which weigheth our thoughts, and in those unerring scales, shall their hollowness be exposed. "To the law and to the testimony⁵" therefore we must appeal. It is not among the dead, that we must expect to find the living; nor, amid the ruins of our fallen nature, the full perfections of eternal and unerring truth. We must repair,

¹ 1 John iv. 1. ² 1 Thess. v. 21. ³ Prov. xvi. 2.

⁴ Jer. vi. 14.

⁵ Isaiah viii. 20.

earnestly and constantly, to those Sacred Oracles which reveal the mind of God to the soul of man. To these must conscience submit the interpretation of every word, and deed, and thought; and so far only as conscience dictates or approves things which are in harmony with that divine teaching; so far as it commands nothing and forbids nothing, which these have not commanded nor forbidden first, is it to be regarded as an authorized messenger of good, and be felt "void of offence towards God and towards men."

Now, if these considerations prove the necessity of exercising great carefulness and caution in determining aright the character of our own conscience; they prove also the danger, which must inevitably ensue from insisting upon rash or false pleas of conscience. For, if to sin against conscience, to dethrone *i.e.* its sovereignty within the heart, and drown its warning voice amid the wild uproar of fierce and contending passions, be a transgression of fearful magnitude,—how much more perilous a provocation of Divine wrath must it be to produce the very authority of conscience, this monitor of God, this vicegerent (as it is so often called) of His Holy Majesty, as an excuse for sin? For this is to trample upon God's law at the very moment when we profess to venerate God's authority; and so to call down upon our heads a more emphatic condemnation. Yet, that "the mystery of iniquity"¹ may, by

¹ 2 Thess. ii. 7.

such a fearful process, carry on its work, we know from the history of man's heart. The pleas, for instance, which are so frequently brought forward to justify the indulgence of sin; and which attempt to show that, as men naturally follow various objects according to the varying influence of the interest or desire which may happen, at the time, most strongly to prevail, so every one may quietly submit to that impulse, in the assured conviction, that, by so doing, he is obeying only the law of his creation;—pleas, which have been justly designated, by one of the mightiest masters of human reasoning, as 'licentious talk¹,' and which he has refuted by showing that they rest upon a manifestly false assumption of the meaning of the word nature, and are directly opposed to the assertion of St. Paul, already referred to, that they which have not the revealed law "are a law unto themselves:"—these pleas, I say, are among the many forms which that dangerous principle of evil, to which I have adverted, may assume. And although to put these delusive pleas in their extreme and most revolting character, to apply them with quick and ready ingenuity to justify reasoning however weak, or actions however unjust, be a consummation of obduracy not to be attained, till after a long and painful course of outrages committed against conscience, of repeated transgressions, of stifled convictions, of resisted mercies: yet, the entertainment

¹ See Bishop Butler's Sermons, ut sup. p. 52.

of them, first of all, in matters which may be deemed of light importance,—the extension of them afterwards to others of more doubtful tendency,—the successful application of them to silence misgivings, and to remove, one after the other, each doubt and difficulty that obtrudes itself;—these, our experience tells us, are but the ordinary steps which all sinners take in the downward path of destruction. Whatsoever be the nature of the subject to which they relate; by whatsoever arguments the attempt may be made to defend them, or to whatsoever results they lead, they are still modifications of the same pernicious principle; they are departures from that vital, that absorbing duty, in which the Apostle, sustained by the purifying hope of Christ, exercised himself.

It is no valid argument, on the other hand, to say, that men are sometimes found to maintain and act upon confessedly false and destructive principles, without feeling any ‘compunctious visitings;’ and that, being satisfied with this peace of conscience, they may safely remain in that security. As well may we look upon the calmness which sometimes pervades the ocean, as a proof that the heavens shall not lower, and the winds not gather up their strength, to lash it into fury. It is possible, remember, for conscience to have been oppressed so long and stubbornly, as to have lost all power to rise from her abasement, and assert her rights. Like any other

faculty of our nature, its abuse must impair, and may finally destroy its use. Nay, the great Apostle of the Gentiles himself points to this dreadful issue, when he saith, that “unto them that are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled¹ ;” and again, yet more strongly, when he describes those who depart from the faith, as “having their conscience seared with a hot iron² .” The security, therefore, in which some persons would fain trust, is the tranquillity of the palace, in which the “strong man armed³” keepeth his goods in undisturbed possession; it is the infatuated pride of the destroyer, who hath made a solitude, and calls it peace⁴ ; it is the passiveness of the spirit which is “past feeling⁵ ;” it is the desperate composure of the adulterous woman, spoken of in the Book of Proverbs, who “eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness⁶ .”

Now, so far from such a state of mind authorizing those who trust in it to deem that they are safe, it should be viewed rather as the most portentous symptom of their danger; the most alarming proof that God has given them up to the

¹ Tit. i. 15.

² 1 Tim. iv. 2.

³ Luke xi. 21.

⁴ Auferre, trucidare, rapere falsis nominibus, imperium; atque ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant.—Tacitus, Agric. Vit. c. 30.

⁵ Eph. iv. 19.

⁶ Prov. xxx. 20.

workings of a reprobate mind, that He has left them to “eat of the fruit of their own way, and to be filled with their own devices¹.” For call to mind the names and the characters of those upon whom God’s heaviest indignation is revealed in Scripture. It is not they who are chastised with sorrow, whose bones are brought down with weakness, whose hearts are troubled, and ready to sink for very fear, with the sense of their own unworthiness:—for these trials of our nature, however sharp and painful, are evidences of a God of mercy still dealing with His wayward children, still forcing them from sin, still drawing them unto Himself:—but it is the men from whom He threatens to withdraw the sense of His presence. “Why should ye be stricken any more²?” is the fearful question which He puts by Isaiah to the people who were “laden with iniquity.” And again, “my jealousy shall depart from thee, and I will be quiet, and be no more angry³,” is the yet more fearful sentence which He pronounces by Ezekiel upon their rebellious descendants.

It is impossible to conceive a more frightful condition for man to be placed in, than that which these declarations of Scripture describe;—to add sin to sin, and yet to hear no voice of warning,—to treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and yet to

¹ Prov. i. 31.

² Isaiah i. 5.

³ Ezek. xvi. 42.

feel no hand plucking us back,—to transgress God's laws, to reject God's promises, to mock at God's threatenings, and to find that the jealousy of God hath departed from us, that He is "*quiet and no more angry*;"—this is indeed to have our house left unto us desolate; to be deprived of strength, of hope, of remedy. Better to endure the most piercing agony of remorse, than, like the churlish Nabal, to have the heart thus dead within us¹. Better to be humbled to the very dust before God's footstool, and to cry with bitter tears for pardon, than thus to walk on in the proud conceit that we need no pardon. Were not the sons of Israel nearer the reception of relief, when they confessed, in the anguish of their soul, that they had been "verily guilty concerning²" that brother whom they had stripped, and bound, and sold into the hand of strangers, than when they had gone with calm and unblushing front to deceive the father that loved him, and had looked unmoved upon his misery? What, again, would have been the hope of David, if the picture had never been held up to his soul, of the man who had "spared to take of his own flock, and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb which he had bought and nourished up," which had grown "up together with him, and

¹ 1 Sam. xxv. 37.

² Gen. xlii. 21.

with his children ;” which had eaten “of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his own bosom, and had been unto him as a daughter¹?” Where would have been his refuge, I ask, if the veil which concealed his iniquity and his danger, had never been torn away, or the voice of conscience had never answered the words of Nathan, and said, “I have sinned against the Lord?” I know indeed that such deep utterance of the conscience-stricken soul may sometimes make itself heard, and yet, that the sound of it shall die away. And I see, in this fact, another and a cogent reason why we, like the Apostle, should be always engaged in the exercise which employed his prayers and watchings. I know that Ahab may shrink from the presence of Elijah, that enemy, as his guilty conscience confessed, who found him in the vineyard of the murdered Naboth²; and yet that, afterwards, he may be found to fill up the measure of his guilt. I know that conscience could conjure up, to the mind of the adulterous Herod, the apparition of the stern and faithful preacher of righteousness, whose light he had been the first to quench³. I know that the same power could make Felix tremble on his judgment-seat, as the Christian captive, who stood before him, reasoned of the mighty truths against which his spirit had rebelled⁴. I know that all these

¹ 2 Sam. xii. 1—4.

² 1 Kings xxi. 20.

³ Matt. xiv. 2.

⁴ Acts xxiv. 25.

outbreaks of the oppressed authority of conscience, these efforts to shake off the usurpation of the tyrant sin, may be felt, and felt in vain; but surely none can look upon these unmoved: much less can any one dream, from the absence of such overwhelming condemnation in his own heart, that therefore it has nothing to condemn. ‘There is no other difference,’ says Bishop Taylor, ‘in those sins where the conscience affrights, and in those in which she affrights not;—there is no other difference, but that conscience is a clock, which, in one man, strikes aloud and gives warning; and in another, the hand points silently to the figures, but strikes not; but by this he may as surely see what the other hears, viz. that his hours pass away, and death hastens, and after death comes judgment¹.’

What then shall we say to these things, my brethren? If conscience can be so oppressed, so defiled, so hardened, by the passions of evil which compass it on every side; if the lamp of the Lord can be forced to burn thus dimly, and become well nigh, though not entirely, extinguished by the noxious damps and vapours which hang around it²; need I the word of exhortation to impress upon you

¹ See Jeremy Taylor’s *Ductor Dubitantium*, B. i. c. i. rule ii. sect. 24.

² ‘Potest obumbrari, quia non est Deus: extingui non potest, quia a Deo est.’ Tertullian, quoted by Jeremy Taylor, *ut supra*, rule i. sect. 5.

the fallacy of trusting to its strength alone, or the danger of neglecting those only means of grace by which it can be preserved “void of offence?” We know what Solomon hath said of him who “trusteth to his own heart¹,” and the review of our defeated purposes and abortive aspirations, proves that his words are true. And so likewise, with regard to those means of grace which save us from the power of evil, we know that familiarity with them, as with any other blessings, may produce indifference for the gift, and forgetfulness of the giver. Bear with me then, whilst, with all earnestness and sincerity of soul, I entreat you to search into your own consciences, with respect to this very point. Were I to tell you that man is a sinner, and needs those means of grace which guide and purify and sustain the conscience,—were I to tell you that God is merciful, and giveth them,—that Jesus Christ is the Redeemer, and hath purchased them,—that the Holy Spirit is the Sanctifier, and conveyeth them,—I should but repeat the truths with which all of you, I trust, are acquainted, and of which the lips of others have spoken better than my own. And yet, the bare knowledge of these truths, however clearly and comprehensively they may be embraced by the understanding, if it only abide there, and reach not, and control not, the energies and affec-

¹ Prov. xxviii. 26.

tions of the heart, can no more avail to the saving of the soul, than can the knowledge of medicine, apart from its application, avail to the healing of the body.

Nay, more ; if it avail not to our profit, it must avail to our hurt. The Word which came to save, remains to judge. The light which was sent to cheer, remains to make visible the darkness of impenitent hearts, and reveal the 'sights of woe' which shelter there. He who was "set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel"¹ hath ordained that the manifestation of His knowledge should be, to "them that are saved, the savour of life unto life;" and to "them that perish, the savour of death unto death"². The same fire which softens and melts the wax, hardens and dries the clay. The same adorable exhibition of Divine mercy which spreads out the richest treasures of hope and joy to him who loves to behold God's "presence in righteousness," and is "satisfied, when he awaketh, with his likeness"³, must cast, upon the soul of him who despises it, an heavier burden of reproach and misery. It is this consideration which annexes such awful responsibility to the privileges which we possess. It is this which has constrained men of sagacious discernment and ardent piety to declare and lament the fact that professors of Christian truth may become

¹ Luke ii. 34.

² 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16.

³ Psalm xvii. 16.

hardened, even whilst possessing outwardly the choicest means of grace. It is this which induced one among them to resolve, at an early period of this life, that he would never more go among a people that had been hardened in unprofitableness, under an awakening ministry; and even to reckon it an advantage, that his lot was afterwards cast among a people who had never enjoyed that which is ordinarily and justly accounted a precious privilege; 'for if (as he tells us) they had been hardened under a powerful ministry, and been sermon-proof, I should have expected less ¹.' I share not indeed, to their full extent, the sentiments of him who has recorded these words. I never can deem that an advantage to myself which so obviously involves the condemnation of others; neither can I admit the right of any minister of Christ to make the outward measure of his success or failure, the sole rule for determining the quarter in which he shall or shall not pursue his ministrations; but I do urge you who live in the broad light of the Gospel day, and in the full hearing of the Gospel message, to consider the awful danger of remaining impenitent and unchanged amid these blessings. Is not the bare possibility of falling into such danger as that to which I advert,—the danger of becoming hardened in the midst of mercies, of falling to ruin in the midst of succour,—enough to shake off

¹ See Baxter's Narrative of his own Life and Times: edited by Sylvester, pp. 26 and 86.

the heaviest slumber of the sluggish spirit, to alarm the formalist, to put to shame the hypocrite, and make the most careless professor of our holy faith arise, and call right humbly on his God? St. Paul, we have seen, in the hope which he had towards God through Christ, exercised himself “to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men;” and the perilous persecutions which beset him, by his own countrymen or by the heathen, in the city or in the wilderness¹, and which, in the court-house at Cæsarea, seemed to put forth their fiercest and most appalling rigour, led him only the more earnestly to lean upon this hope, the more actively to maintain this exercise. And think ye, my brethren, because similar persecutions assail not yourselves, that there are no enemies to encounter, that there is no struggling to endure? Was it only in the days of Apostolic Ministry, that the truth of Jesus was an offence to the wisdom of the world? Did it belong only to those champions of the faith to bear the contumely of the proud, the reproaches of the slanderer, the mockery of the scorner? Was it only for them to feel the distraction of the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh,—only for them to wrestle against the fierceness of temptation assailing them from within and from without, only for them to bear the agony of disappointed

¹ 2 Cor. xi. 26.

hope and fruitless labour? Your own experience will tell you what answer these questions must receive. Your own experience will prove how true is the declaration which hath said, that "offences must come¹;"—how, like the waves of the troubled sea, they pour on their restless tide from generation to generation, and swell and rage horribly around each one of you. The breath of heaven, indeed, changing with the changing seasons of existence, may change their form and aspect, but the roll of the deep waters ceaseth not. Upon them floats the vessel which bears you forward. On their surface does she pursue her course to the haven where you would be; yet, in them may she be swallowed up, and amid the deafening tumult of the storm, may all that was dear and precious in your eyes be lost for ever, unless you have fixed your hold upon that hope which is "an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus²." That hope sustained St. Paul, and made him more than conqueror. That hope now is with yourselves. The foundation, upon which it rests, is secure and permanent as ever;—the consolation as strong. You believe this. You profess this. Take it home then to the inmost recesses of your soul. Keep it there by the power of that faith which ever

¹ Mat. xviii. 7.

² Heb. vi. 19, 20.

waiteth upon God in prayer, and ever urgeth the prayer through the merits of His blessed Son. And may you feel, that, as the hope of the Apostle is your hope, so his security shall be your security ; that whether in strength or weakness, whether in tribulation or sorrow, whether in life or death, “the eternal God” shall be your “refuge, and underneath the everlasting arms ¹.”

¹ Deut. xxxiii. 27.

SERMON II.

ON THE GRACE OF GOD AND THE AGENCY OF MAN.

PHILIPP. ii. part of 12, 13.

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

THIS passage in the writings of St. Paul, is one which specially demands the attention of all who seek to learn "the whole counsel of God," inasmuch as it distinctly sets forth the compatibility of two doctrines which the disputer of this world would fain represent as inconsistent with each other, viz. the free agency of man, and the preventing and co-operating grace of God. The Apostle does not stop to determine the manner in which these truths are co-existent, neither does he bestow the most transient notice upon the metaphysical objections which might be started respecting them. Nay, so

far from attempting to reconcile these doctrines, he states each of them, broadly and unreservedly, as if their union admitted of no dispute. He places them, side by side, in immediate contact ; and even makes the one a direct and necessary consequence of the other.

But it is scarcely necessary to remind you that the pride of man has laboured to put asunder the truths which the great Apostle of the Gentiles has joined ; that almost every age of the Church has been doomed to witness the controversies of her children upon this point ; that system has been arrayed against system, and supported by their respective advocates, with an animosity which has too often tempted them to forget that they are the servants of Him, who hath made it the distinguishing mark of His disciples, that they should love one another ; that Scripture has been opposed to Scripture, wrested from its simple meaning, and been compelled to serve, in turn, the opposite purposes of contending parties ; and that hence the things which should have been for their everlasting peace, have proved oftentimes an occasion of falling. Thus, on the one hand, the question has been asked, if it be God, who works in us both to will and to do, why urge man to work out his own salvation ? And, on the other hand, if man be able so to work, why declare that his power both to will and to do, is of God's good pleasure ? These are among the questions which

have been asked, again and again, with unwearied pertinacity, and have led to endless controversies. And, in recurring to them now, it is not my purpose to weary your attention or harass my own feelings, by leading you through these perplexing mazes of disputation. I am desirous rather, by the Divine blessing, to enter into a practical consideration of the subject, and to enquire whether your own experience and Scripture do not concur in proving both these propositions to be true, which the Apostle has set forth in the text, viz. that man is free, and yet, that he is absolutely dependant upon God :—and whether the duties resulting from this acknowledgment be not those of watchfulness and prayer; duties which our blessed Lord Himself enjoined, and which embody in themselves the full realities of the Christian life.

You are commanded, in the text, “to work out your own salvation.” Now, the very existence of such a commandment necessarily implies an ability in yourselves to comply with it. If it be asked, what proof is there that you possess this liberty of action, I answer, in the well known words of Bishop Horsley, that it ‘is to every individual of the human race, the very same with the proof of his existence. I *feel* that I *exist*, and I *feel* that I am *free*; and I may with reason turn a deaf ear upon every argument that can be alleged in either case to disprove my feelings. I feel that I have power to flee the

danger that I dread, to pursue the happiness that I covet, to forego the most inviting pleasure, although it be actually within my grasp, if I apprehend that the present enjoyment may be the means of future mischief, to expose myself to present danger, to submit to present evils, to secure the possession of a future good; in a word, I act from my own hopes, my own fears, my own internal perceptions of moral fitnesses and dis-congruities. But whenever I act from other motives, I feel that I am misled by my own passions, my own appetites, my own mistaken views of things. A feeling always succeeds these unreasonable actions, that, had my mind exerted its natural power in considering the action I was about to do, the propriety of it in itself and its consequences, I might and I should have acted otherwise.—Having these feelings, I feel all that liberty which renders the morality of a man's actions properly his own, and makes him justly accountable for his conduct¹. See now, whether Scripture does not acknowledge the existence of these feelings, and speak a language in accordance with them. “If ye love me,” saith our blessed Lord, “keep my commandments².” “If ye know these things,” saith He in another place, “happy are ye if ye do them³.” Again, “that servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to

¹ See Bishop Horsley's Sermons, Vol. ii. S. xix. pp. 121, 22.

² John xiv. 15.

³ John xiii. 17.

his will, shall be beaten with many stripes¹." And again, "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 heaven²." St. Paul too bears testimony to the same fact, when he tells his disciples of Corinth to "run so that they might obtain³," and when he goes on to describe himself so running, "not as uncertainly," so fighting, "not as one that beateth the air," but keeping under his body, and bringing it into subjection, lest that "having preached to others," he himself "should be a castaway." To the Ephesians also, he speaks in the same strain, when he urges them not to "give place to the devil,"—to "let no corrupt communication proceed out of their mouth," to "put away all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking⁴," to "walk as children of light," proving what is "acceptable unto the Lord," to "walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil⁵,"—to do "the will of God from the heart, knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord whether he be bond or free⁶." And, what is particularly worthy of observation, he entreats them "to grieve not the Holy Spirit of God⁷;" a command which he repeats, in

¹ Luke xii. 47. ² Matt. vii. 21. ³ 1 Cor. ix. 24—26.

⁴ Ephes. iv. 27, 29, 30.

⁵ Ephes. v. 8—16.

⁶ Ibid. vi. 8.

⁷ Ephes. iv. 30.

nearly the same terms, to the Corinthians, when he beseeches them to “receive not the grace of God in vain ¹,” and to the Thessalonians, when he urges them to “quench not the Spirit ².” Now, these exhortations of our Saviour and His Apostles, together with numerous others of like import, which might be adduced from the New Testament, as well as those which were addressed to the Israelites under the Mosaic dispensation, would be utterly devoid of meaning, unless men had the power to obey them,—unless they were free and responsible agents, and, consequently, able to comply with the exhortation, contained in the first part of our text, “Work out your own salvation.”

But you are commanded to “work out your own salvation, with fear and trembling ; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.” Here, then, let the same course be pursued as before ; let it be seen whether experience and Scripture do not agree in this, as in the former instance, in establishing the truth of the fact which the Apostle has assumed. You have seen and felt, by the testimony of your own experience, that man is a free agent, and that, in accordance with that freedom, the Word of God addresses to him the language of encouragement, of rebuke, of warning. But do you not also, by the very same testimony, see

¹ 2 Cor. vi. 1.

² 1 Thes. v. 19.

and feel that man is a fallen being, that his intellect is limited, his will perverted, his passions clamorous, his resolutions weak? What is the picture of any man's life, my brethren, but a picture of sin? See what a miserable wreck is there, of vows that have been broken, of hopes that have been blighted, of affections that have been withered, of mercies that have been abused, of chastisements that have been disregarded. You know "that God hath made man upright¹," because He made him in His own image; but how is this beautiful image now mutilated and disfigured! What a dismal ruin of fallen greatness! You may indeed hear the voice of conscience reasoning within you "of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come²," telling you of guilty thoughts and guilty deeds, of talents that have been wasted in profligacy or buried in indolence, of prayer neglected, of God's Word forgotten. But what word of hope or guidance can that voice utter? It reproaches and condemns, but it cannot console. It wounds, but it cannot heal. It makes the heart throb with agony, and the tear of contrition flow, but it cannot say to the natural man, My wisdom has found the way to light, to life, to happiness; it cannot transform him in the spirit of his mind; it cannot encourage him with hope, or animate him with strength; it cannot lift up his heart

¹ Eccles. vii. 29.

² Acts xxiv. 25.

above the cares and pleasures of the world, and make him patient and stedfast in every good word and work.

Is it not, then, a faithful testimony which the Church puts forth in her Tenth Article, when she declares that ‘the condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works to faith and calling upon God. Wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that will¹.’ We may labour indeed to do this of ourselves, but our labour will be vain, unless the grace of God prepares and aids us. It will serve no other purpose than to show how weak is man’s strength, and how foolish is man’s wisdom. The watchman may put forth his utmost vigilance, but “except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.” The hand may exert its might to build up the fabric which the wisdom of the head has contrived, but “except the Lord build the city, their labour is but lost that build it².” Truly, therefore, and mercifully, does the Word of God respond to the aspirations of this our helpless state; yea, truly and mercifully hath our blessed Lord said, “Abide in me, and I in you. As

¹ See Art. X.

² Ps. cxxvii. 1, 2.

the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine ; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, and ye are the branches : he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit : for without me ye can do nothing ¹.” The Apostle also sets forth the same truth, and reveals the same hope, when he declares that we are not “ sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves ; but our sufficiency is of God ² ;” and, again, “ by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves : it is the gift of God ³.” But, “ do we then ” (as he asks in another place) “ make void the law through faith ? God forbid : yea, we establish the law ⁴.” We establish it upon a foundation the most firm, we support it by motives the most pure and permanent ; for there is a power mightier than ourselves at work, a power which enables us to walk in obedience to the sanctions of the Divine law, and to lean upon the promises of the Divine love ; a power which redeems us from the strength of sin, as well as from the guilt of sin ; which guides us, from earth to heaven, by a light which neither the glories of the world can outvie, nor the miseries of the world obscure. It is no longer temporal hope stimulating us on to good, or temporal fear keeping us back from evil, but “ the love of Christ,” constraining and teaching us thus

¹ John xv. 4, 5.

² 2 Cor. iii. 5.

³ Ephes. ii. 8.

⁴ Rom. iii. 31.

to “judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again¹.”

With this “prize,” then, “of our high calling, of God in Christ Jesus²” set before us; with these means of grace extended to the weakest and lowliest among us, may we not with good reason be exhorted to “work out our own salvation *with fear and trembling*?” For, assuredly, it is a principle natural and common to us all, that, whatsoever we love to possess, we dread to lose. And, if the peace and pardon of God in Christ Jesus, be that possession which, by sanctifying things present and realizing things future, be a possession above all price, then what fear and trembling can be too great on our parts, lest any of us “should seem to come short of it³?” It is an issue, the bare contemplation of which must brace the energies of the most feeble, and awaken the slumbers of the most careless. For, if we turn away from Him who hath the words of eternal life, to whom can we go for help? If we despise His prevailing intercession, who shall rise up to be our advocate? If we call “the blood of the covenant wherewith we are sanctified, an unholy thing,” and do “despite unto the Spirit of grace⁴,” of what sore punishment shall we be thought worthy? “There

¹ 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

² Phil. iii. 14.

³ Heb. iv. 1.

⁴ Heb. x. 29.

remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries¹." To-day then, while it is called to-day, receive ye the word of the Lord. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

In urging this subject upon your attention, it will be seen that I have studiously refrained from entering into the merits of that controversy which has so long distracted the polemical world, upon the question of man's free agency, and the influence of Divine grace. I have not attempted to solve the difficulties which encumber the abstract discussion of this question: because I am persuaded that had such a solution been needed for man's salvation, it would have been revealed in Scripture. The fact is such as the Apostle here states it to be: and the simple practical result from the statement of this fact, must be, as I have observed at the outset, to impart perseverance to our watchfulness, and fervour to our prayers. And these are the very duties which our Lord Himself has set forth as our defence against the temptations of evil. It is the faithful discharge of these which embodies the full realities of that holy life, which finds in Christ Jesus its most perfect example, its most unerring guide.

¹ Heb. x. 27, 28.

If further knowledge upon these points had been required for the happiness of man, it would, undoubtedly, have been vouchsafed by Him who knoweth our necessities. We have seen what testimony is supplied by experience and by Scripture, to assure us that these doctrines, assumed by the Apostle in the passage before us, are co-existent. Will it not then be the mere working of pride, and of presumptuous curiosity, to ask for more? What would it profit you to be able to determine, in the precise terms of human science, the limits of human exertion, and of Divine influence? Would your own duty be thereby rendered easier? Would you be absolved from any one obligation which now rests upon you? Would you have fewer enemies to encounter, or less formidable dangers to surmount? Would there be the less necessity for prayer, for humility, for watchfulness? Assuredly not. Why then perplex your own feelings, or offend the consciences of weaker brethren, by striving to bring down the counsels of the Most High God to the standard of man's weak wisdom? Say not, again, that reason requires you to withhold your assent from whatsoever is manifestly a paradox or contradiction; and, that, since the language of the Apostle, in the present passage, involves principles both paradoxical and contradictory, you must either forego the exercise of reason, or else demand the admission of further light to clear up these difficulties.

Say not this, I beseech you, for there is a wide difference, remember, between a paradox and a contradiction. 'Both indeed consist (and here let me refer once more to the words of the prelate whom I have before quoted) of two distinct propositions; and so far only are they alike. For, of the two parts of a contradiction, the one or other must be false: of a paradox, both are often true; and yet when proved to be true, may continue paradoxical. This is the necessary consequence of our partial views of things: an intellect, to which nothing should be paradoxical, would be infinite¹.'

Truly, my brethren, you cannot help admitting the correctness of the distinction which is here made, of the conclusion which is here drawn:—and, admitting this, how can it be regarded as an act derogatory to reason to acknowledge the compatibility of the doctrines upon which I am now insisting? Will not reason tell you, rather, that, if you are resolved to believe nothing but what you can palpably demonstrate to yourself, or accurately define to others, you must be content to live and die, still doubting, still despairing; that there is nothing which you can so entirely investigate or explain; that, neither for the fall of the fading leaf, nor for the germination of the bare grain which rises from the earth, producing fruit after its kind, can

¹ See Bishop Horsley's Sermon, ut supra. p. 124.

you assign the precise cause, or describe the exact process? I grant that you may trace out secondary causes; that you may speak of the laws of gravitation, of cohesion, of decomposition: and, that, from the knowledge of these laws, from these and other discoveries of human research, may be deduced many a valuable theory of sound philosophy; but still, the Great First Cause lies as far beyond your grasp as ever. You see Him in His works, and you are thankful. You do not refuse to eat the fruits of the earth, albeit, that your ignorance is unable to discern the actual mode in which the sunshine and the dews of heaven avail to bless the labours of the husbandman; why then refuse to receive that "bread of God" which "cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world¹," although the processes, by which it is made to nourish your souls with strength, may not all of them be brought within the palpable grasp of intellect or of sense?

A time will come, remember, when they who now "see through a glass darkly," shall see "face to face;" when they who "now know in part, shall know even as also²" they are known. Let this assurance comfort and sustain your souls; and, in the full conviction of this truth, suffer not the ignorance of partial knowledge to rob you of any por-

¹ John vi. 33.

² 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

tion of that blessing, the hope of which is now revealed to you in the Word of God, and the possession of which shall be yours, in all its fulness, "when that which is perfect is come¹." Do we not read, in the history of our blessed Lord, that, when "He took unto Him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished:"—when He spake to them of the cruel mockings, and scourgings, and death, and resurrection that awaited Him in the holy city, "they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken²?" And yet, they followed the Master who had told them of things which they neither knew nor understood. The darkness of the coming vision hindered them not from drawing near to the place, in which its mysteries were to be revealed. And those mysteries afterwards stood forth to them, in all their actual reality. The ignorance of the men, whose hearts were once blind to the knowledge needful for them, was chased away; their hope, which, as long as it hovered about the things of time and sense, was dim and wavering, was made stedfast; and the beams, which issued from the risen glory of the Redeemer, revealed to them at once the truth of that which had

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 10.

² Luke xviii. 31—31.

been, the certainty of that which should be. Their tribulation was turned into joy, their trembling into courage, their weakness into strength. Yes, the very things which, when first spoken unto them, they understood not, formed, in the end, the sole ground of support which upheld themselves, the sole substance of the glad tidings which they proclaimed to others. And even so do they continue unto us. By these and these alone, we believe that the ransom has been paid for man's transgression; by these, that the victory has been achieved for man's salvation.

Having, therefore, this foundation of faith and hope broadly and deeply laid beneath our feet, let us walk patiently and steadfastly thereon; not halting nor wavering in our course, not making those things an occasion of falling which were ordained for our everlasting peace; but bringing into subjection every high thought, every vain imagination, that exalteth itself against God. These high thoughts, these vain imaginations are the enemies which would betray us: against them let us watch and pray. They would tempt us to be wise beyond that which is written; let us be thankful for that which is written. They would excite the restless appetite, the rebellious will; let us seek after the "wisdom which cometh from above, which is first pure, and then peaceable¹." Let us turn away with trembling ear-

¹ James iii. 17.

nestness from the indulgence of that spirit which our immortal poet has so justly assigned to the fallen sons of light, who

Sat on a hill retir'd

In thoughts more elevate, and reason'd high
Of providence, fore-knowledge, will, and fate,
Fix'd fate, fore-will, fore-knowledge absolute,
And found no end, in wandering mazes lost¹.

And yet, let me not be mistaken. Let me not be thought as wishing to check the progress of fair enquiry, to put any restraint upon the just prerogative of reason. The truth, as it is in Jesus, is propounded to us all: and rightly to divide, and impartially to receive, the word of that truth, is the obligation laid upon us all. As long, therefore, as man is bound to give a reason for the hope that is in him, so long is he bound not only to try, with searching accuracy, the grounds of that hope, but also, "leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ," to "go on unto perfection²."

Never, therefore, should we cease to enquire what the will of the Lord is. And yet, it is a needful caution, the more needful, perhaps, in these our days, from the restless spirit of religious excitement which is abroad, to conduct those enquiries with humility, with reverence, with prayer to the Great Father of light, that He would lead us into all

¹ Milton's Paradise Lost, b. ii. l. 555—561.

² Heb. vi. 1.

truth. For this cause, I have endeavoured to press upon your attention the considerations which have been suggested to me by our present subject; and, for this cause, I am anxious to support them yet further, by the authority of one of the most solemn and affecting records in the whole compass of Ecclesiastical History.

The record to which I refer, is the answer which Luther made to one who had applied to him, in a spirit of inquisitive research, concerning the mysteries of the Divine will. ‘Many,’ saith he, ‘have perished in the indulgence of such curious inquiries: it is a temptation which leads men even to blasphemy. I myself, by giving way to it, have, more than once, been reduced to the last extremity. We, poor mortals, by faith can scarcely comprehend a few rays of the Divine promise, or receive in practice a few sparks of the Divine precepts; and yet, feeble and impure as we are, we rashly attempt to fathom the majesty of God in all its brightness. Do we not know that His ways are past finding out? Instead of using well the mild light of the promises which is adapted to our faculties, we rush with eyes of moles, to view at once the majestic splendour of the Deity. What wonder then if His glory should overwhelm us in the attempt to investigate it? We ought to know that there is such a thing as the secret will of God, but the danger is when we attempt to comprehend it. I am wont

to check myself with that answer of Christ to Peter, who had asked what was to become of John, 'What is that to thee? follow thou me.' But, suppose we could give an accurate account of the judgments of Almighty God in His secret determinations, what advantage would accrue to us from such knowledge, beyond what lies open to us from the promises and the precepts,—from the former addressed to our faith, from the latter addressed to our practice? Tell your friend, if he would have peace of mind, to abstain from such intricate speculations. The subject is incomprehensible, and the study of it may drive him to despair and blasphemy. Let him not give way to Satan, who would weary him out, by presenting impossibilities to his mind. Let him exercise faith in the promises, and obey the commandments; and when he has discharged these duties well, he will be able to judge whether he will have any time left for impossibilities. There is no other remedy than to neglect, and not to give way to such thoughts; though this is a difficult task, because Satan suggests the absolute necessity of attending to them. This battle, however, must be fought; and many persons fail in the contest, by not suspecting their thoughts to be the temptations of Satan; whereas these are the very fiery darts of that wicked one. He himself fell from heaven by aiming at a knowledge above his station. Thus,

also, he vanquished Adam, by teaching him to be dissatisfied with his ignorance concerning the will of God. Flight is the true wisdom here; there is no room for Christ to dwell in the heart, as long as reasonings of this kind are uppermost¹.

I know not what admonition can be more solemn or convincing than this which comes, in such a manner, from such a man. He, if any of the sons of men had been able to effect it, could have taken 'the gauge and dimensions' of God's counsels and man's philosophy. Yet has he left his undying testimony, to show the danger of attempting so impossible a task. God grant that this testimony may not have been made in vain, nor heard in vain, by ourselves this day! For what is our hope, either of present peace or future happiness, unless we shall lay aside the thoughts which are here spoken of as the instruments of most dangerous temptation to our souls, "and, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby²?" And what is this but, in other words, to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure?" The earliest nourishment which sustains the breath of our natural life, supplies the desire for more, and builds up, by

¹ Com. de Luth. II. xliii. 3—5. quoted in Milner's Church History, vol. v. p. 516.

² 1 Pet. ii. 2.

the accession of daily strength, the fragile infant form to the stature of manhood. Just so with our spiritual life. It is the power of the Divine Word which gives it; and, this life being once breathed into us, its yearnings lead us back again to the same Word for further nourishment, for more enlarged power. Thus, is each individual believer built up in the faith and fear of God; and thus, does the whole mystical body of believers "grow up into 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 love¹." It is the good pleasure of God, teaching them both "to will and to do." Of that good pleasure, my brethren, you have been made partakers. The prayers which you have offered up to God this day through Christ, the praises which you have repeated, the confessions which you have made, are all evidences of this truth. His Word, which hath revealed it, "is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, who shall go over the sea for us,

¹ Ephes. iv. 15, 16.

and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But it is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it¹." Seeing, therefore, that, in the contemplation of these mercies, you "all with open face behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord," pray that you may be "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord²."

¹ Deut. xxx. 11—15.

² 2 Cor. iii. 18.

THE CHRISTIAN PATRIOT.

A

SERMON

PREACHED ON TRINITY MONDAY, JUNE 3, 1833,

BEFORE THE

CORPORATION OF THE TRINITY HOUSE,

IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. NICHOLAS, DEPTFORD.

TO
HIS MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY
KING WILLIAM THE FOURTH;
TO THE MOST NOBLE
JOHN JEFFREYS, MARQUESS CAMDEN, K.G. MASTER;
TO
JOHN WOOLMORE, Esq. DEPUTY-MASTER;
AND TO THE OTHER
ELDER BRETHREN
OF
THE TRINITY-HOUSE;
THIS DISCOURSE
IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED
BY THEIR MOST DEVOTED AND VERY GRATEFUL SERVANT,
THE AUTHOR.

SERMON III.

THE CHRISTIAN PATRIOT.

PSALM cxxii. 6—9.

O pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and plenteousness within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will wish thee prosperity. Yea, because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek to do thee good.

THE Psalm from which these words are taken opens with the expression of David's joy in being permitted to go up with his brethren "into the house of the Lord." It sets forth, in the next place, the blessings which Jerusalem enjoyed in her release from thralldom, and the establishment of righteous laws. She was no longer distracted by the foreign power of the Jebusites, which, in spite of the united efforts of Benjamin and Judah, had been maintained throughout four centuries "in the stronghold of Zion¹;" but was now "built as a city that is at unity

¹ Compare Joshua xv. 63, and Judges i. 21, with 2 Sam. v. 7.

in itself." She possessed, likewise, the privileges of religious worship, and civil government, "for thither the tribes went up, even the tribes of the Lord, to testify unto Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord, and there was the seat of Judgment, even the seat of the house of David¹." The acknowledgment of these great mercies is immediately followed by the prayer of the text for their continuance, and for the peace and prosperity of the city which enjoyed them.

The motives, you observe, by which the Psalmist seeks to animate the hearts of others, as well as his own, to the performance of this duty, are threefold: 1st, Their own good,—“they shall prosper that love thee;” 2dly, The good of all their countrymen,—“for my brethren and companions’ sakes, I will wish thee prosperity;” and 3dly, The worship and glory of God,—“because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek to do thee good.”

Now, these motives are of perpetual obligation. They are acknowledged by the instinctive feelings of our own hearts; they are enforced by the sanctions of the Divine Word. The love which the sons of Judah felt for the walls and bulwarks of their favoured Zion, when she stood in the greatness of her strength, remained with them, in all its intensity of feeling, through her hour of adversity: yea, it led them to remember her when, “by the waters of Baby-

¹ Ver. 1, 2.

lon, they sat down and wept," and refused to obey the command of those who required of them then a song, and melody in their heaviness¹. And who does not perceive that these feelings are congenial to the hearts of all men in whom the social affections of our common nature have not been extinguished by passion or disappointment? Whatsoever clime or country may claim them for their own, they still find in that clime and country the dearest objects of memory, and love, and hope; and, though the busy cares and interests of life may make them absent in body, they still rejoice to be present in spirit with the scenes which witnessed their earliest joys, and pour out their prayers and aspirations for the welfare of their own,—their fathers' land².

If the universal prevalence, then, of such feelings attests their strength and urgency; if it be found to fill our hearts with a love for this land, wherein we dwell, as pure and ardent as that which the children of Abraham felt for the hills and valleys, the plains and cities, of Palestine; much more is it heightened and increased, when we call to mind the spiritual privileges which are our portion and inheritance. For, that which was temporal and typical unto Israel, is, to the Christian Church, accomplished and eternal; and the substance of those promises, which sustained

¹ Psalm cxxxvii. 1. 3.

² "Magnum est enim eadem habere monumenta majorum, iisdem uti sacris, sepulera habere communia."—Cic. de Off. i. 17.

the patriarchs of old, who saw them afar off, and enabled them to “die in faith¹,” is become to ourselves a sure and precious record of the past. The ties of companionship which bind us together, are more than those of kindred and of country; for they are the bands of that holy brotherhood, of which Christ is the head, “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 love².” And the sanctuary of Jehovah’s presence, for whose sake we are encouraged to do good to our Jerusalem, is no longer confined to the Holy City which the Lord once chose, out of the whole earth, “to place His name there³,” but, in the language of Isaiah, is “an house of prayer for all people⁴,”—for all those who, like ourselves, “have been brought out of darkness and error, into the clear light and true knowledge of God, and of His Son Jesus Christ⁵,” and to whom the blessed promise of the Redeemer has been extended, that, “where two or three are gathered together in His name, there will He be in the midst of them⁶.”

We then “who sometimes were far off,” but are

¹ Heb. xi. 13.

² Ephes. iv. 16.

³ Deut. xiv. 23.

⁴ Isa. lvi. 7.

⁵ Collect for Whitsunday in Communion Service.

⁶ Matt. xviii. 20.

now “made nigh by the blood of Christ¹ ;” we “which in times past were not a people,” but “are now the people of God²,” and feel that the promises, vouchsafed to Zion, have been fulfilled and given in all their perfection of mercy to ourselves, are, assuredly, furnished herein with motives the most powerful to pray for the peace of that land, upon which this “light is come,” and this “glory of the Lord hath arisen³.” “For our brethren and companions’ sakes” we must “wish her prosperity ; yea, because of the house of the Lord our God” we must “seek to do her good.”

And yet, it has been said that patriotism has no place in the catalogue of Christian virtues,—that it is “purely voluntary in a Christian,” and “no essential part of his charity⁴ ;”—that the universal love which the Gospel enjoins is inconsistent with the fixed and limited government of a State⁵,—something “too sociable, too strongly embracing the whole human race, to be of use to a legislature which must be exclusive, a religion rather inspiring *humanity* than *patriotism*, and tending rather to form *men* than *citizens*⁶.” These assertions

¹ Ephes. ii. 13.

² 1 Pet. ii. 10.

³ Isa. lx. 1.

⁴ Lord Shaftesbury’s *Characteristics*, vol. i. p. 99.

⁵ “La loi Chrétienne est au fond plus nuisible qu’ utile à la forte constitution de l’Etat.”—Rousseau, *Contract Social*, ch. viii.

⁶ “Je trouve le pur Evangile, en quelque sorte, trop sociable ; embrassant trop tout le genre humain pour une législation qui doit être exclusive ; inspirant l’humanité plutôt que le patriot-

have been advanced by writers who are enemies to Christianity; and it will be our business to show that such opinions have no foundation in truth. But, before we attempt this, we should observe that there are other writers, who have been justly esteemed among the true believers and able champions of the faith, but who yet have thought, that, because patriotism is not specifically enforced in the Gospel, therefore we have an internal evidence of the truth of that Holy Word; saying, that patriotism, however it may shine forth among the virtues of worldly men, 'not only falls short of, but directly counteracts the extensive benevolence of the Gospel;' that 'the Christian is of no country, but a citizen of the world, and his neighbours and countrymen are the inhabitants of the remotest regions, wherever their distresses demand his friendly assistance;' that 'Christianity commands us to love all mankind, but patriotism, to oppress all other countries to advance the imaginary prosperity of our own;' that 'it conceals self-interest under the mask of public spirit, and gives a licence to inflict wrongs not only with impunity, but with applause ¹.'

isme, et tendant à former des hommes plutôt que des citoyens." —Rousseau, *Lettres écrites de la Montagne*. These and many other similar passages are referred to, and their fallacy admirably exposed, by Bishop Warburton, in his "Alliance between Church and State," book ii.

¹ Soame Jenyns's 'View of the Internal Evidence of the

But this definition of patriotism is a definition of the abuse, and not of the virtue itself. It is the declaration of a false and delusive principle, which, however it may dazzle for a moment by the air of magnanimity which it assumes, is, nevertheless, the result of the worst selfishness; an instrument to destroy, and not preserve, the true interests of society, and alike disowned by sound reason and pure religion. True patriotism, we maintain, is that virtue which shall lead men to promote, by all lawful means, not the selfish interests of themselves, or of their party, but the general and substantial welfare of that community of which they are members, and under whose government they are protected; and the master-principle of this virtue, we contend further, is to be found only in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For, not only does that Gospel place before us, in the example and teaching of its Divine Author, the duty of

Christian Religion,' pp. 52, 53. Paley also, in Part II. ch. ii. of his 'Evidences,' notices, with his approval, the arguments of Soame Jenyns, with regard to courage, friendship, and patriotism: and, in fact, uses them to illustrate his own views of 'the Morality of the Gospel.' The defect of these statements has been forcibly pointed out in a Sermon entitled 'Christian Courage,' preached before the University of Cambridge, March 4, 1832, by the Rev. Dr. Batten, Principal of the East India College; and likewise, in the Funeral Sermon upon Dr. Ryland, of Bristol, by the Rev. Robert Hall, which contains an exposition, no less beautiful than true, of the nature and character of Christian friendship.

loving our neighbour as ourselves, and thus lay the foundation of the most pure and exalted benevolence, but it declares also the objects towards which that feeling is to be directed, and the way in which it is to be exercised. I grant that it does not multiply rule upon rule, and make provision for every possible contingency that may arise, (for that would be to imitate the prolixity and confusion of human laws, and, instead of assisting, would embarrass and perplex the mind¹), but it supplies us with motives and principles of action, which are of perpetual use, intelligible to all, capable of being applied, like the laws of the material universe, to the least as well as the greatest occasions; and while, by this simple grandeur, it bears proof incontrovertible of its Divine authority, it supplies us likewise with precepts, which, if duly regarded, would indeed make our Jerusalem “as a city that is at unity in itself.” Thus, if the love of country embraces all the subordinate attachments of parents and children, of masters and servants, of friends, and kindred, and fellow-citizens², you will find that the Gospel sheds its sanctifying

¹ See some excellent observations on this point in Wilberforce's ‘Practical View of Christianity,’ ch. vi. p. 250, and in Paley's Assize Sermon, preached at Durham, 1795.

² ‘Cari sunt parentes, cari liberi, propinqui, familiares; sed omnes omnium caritates patria una complexa est; pro quâ quis bonus dubitet mortem oppetere, si ci sit profuturus?’—Cic. de Off. i. 17.

power upon all these, and controls and rectifies them by its commandments. It enjoins the Christian parent to bring up his children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord ¹ ;” the Christian child “to honour his father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise ² ;” the Christian master to “give unto his servants that which is just and equal, knowing that he also hath a Master in heaven ³ ;” the Christian servant “to be obedient in singleness of heart as unto Christ ⁴ ;” the Christian friend to “rejoice with them that do rejoice, and to weep with them that weep ⁵ ;” “to be pitiful, to be courteous ⁶ ;” to “do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith ⁷ ;” “to warn them that are unruly, to comfort the feeble-minded ⁸ ,” and “be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ’s sake, hath forgiven you ⁹ .”

If, again, patriotism involves obligations yet higher than all these, and, passing on from the duties and sympathies of private life, gives strength and stability to the operations of civil government; even here, likewise, the word of God supplies us with the safest guide to attain that object. For it declares

¹ Ephes. vi. 4.

² Ibid. ver. 2.

³ Col. iv. 1.

⁴ Ephes. vi. 5.

⁵ Rom. xii. 15.

⁶ 1 Pet. iii. 8.

⁷ Gal. vi. 10.

⁸ 1 Thess. v. 14.

⁹ Ephes. iv. 32.

to Christian subjects, that it is by the Lord, “kings reign and princes decree justice¹ ;” that “supplications,” therefore, “prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty² ;” that we must “render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s, and unto God the things which are God’s³ ;” that “whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God⁴ ;” that we should “submit ourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether it be to the king, as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well ;” that we should “honour all men, love the brotherhood, fear God, honour the king⁵ .”

And, observe further, the word of God prescribes the duties of governors, no less than of the governed. It bids them “defend the poor and fatherless,” and “see that such as are in need and necessity have right ;” to “deliver the outcast and poor, and save them from the hand of the ungodly⁶ .” It declares that “he that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God⁷ ;” that he must “not respect persons, neither take a gift, for a gift doth blind

¹ Prov. viii. 15.

² Matt. xxii. 21.

³ 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14, 17.

⁴ 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.

⁵ Rom. xiii. 2.

⁶ Psalm lxxxii. 3, 4.

⁷ 2 Sam. xxiii. 3.

the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous¹;" but "keep mercy and judgment, and wait on his God continually²." Lastly, it promises the Divine blessing upon all who thus strive and pray that they may walk worthily of their Christian vocation, and says "Happy are the people that are in such a case; yea, blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God³."

With such precepts and promises, then, before you, say not that Christianity and patriotism are opposed to each other⁴. Rather say, that, whilst patriotism, according to the common usage of the term, has been degraded by the worst men to the worst of purposes, and used as a cloak to conceal the designs of treachery and faction, Christianity strips off this deceitful guise, exposes the sophistry and baseness of those "who call evil good, and good

¹ Deut. xvi. 19.

² Hosea xii. 6.

³ Psalm cxliv. 15.

⁴ 'If the same men be members of a society not to be dissolved even in death, and of the civil likewise, must they not aim, in proportion to the dignity of each society, equally to advance the interests of both? Must not that acknowledged *relationship* of brethren in the *religious* society strengthen their attachment to each other as fellow-members of the same *civil* community? And when they are once persuaded (which every man of common sense will soon be) that to advance the happiness of civil society, is the best means of securing the interests of that other, which is never to end, will not their very zeal for their religion dispose them to as warm an adherence to the service of the State?'—Warburton's Alliance, p. 187.

evil¹," condemns and puts to flight the arrogant selfishness of the mock patriot, and teaches men to know that they "are not their own," but "are bought with a price," and should "therefore glorify God in their body and in their spirit, which are God's²," looking "not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others³." And these things it commands us to do, not only when the sunshine of God's favour rests upon us, and 'the fair breath of heaven wafts us gently to our purposes,' but even when shame and tribulation are our portion. For so does the example of St. Paul teach us, who, when he suffered "great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart," for his countrymen the Jews, declared that he "could wish himself accursed from Christ, for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh⁴." Yea, One greater than the great Apostle of the Gentiles, even Jesus Christ himself, has taught us the same by His example, for, though He was "despised and rejected of men⁵," He still loved the land that bore them, still turned with the tenderest compassion towards the city whither He was about to be "brought as a sheep to the slaughter⁶," "and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least, in

¹ Isaiah v. 20.

² Phil. ii. 4.

³ Isaiah liii. 3.

² 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

⁴ Rom. ix. 2, 3.

⁶ Isaiah liii. 7.

this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes¹." There indeed was the spirit of pure, unmixed love: there spake the voice of the Incarnate God, who, "having loved his own which were in the world, loved them unto the end²;" and, though He hath now "gone up on high, and led captivity captive³," though the gates of heaven have lifted up their heads, and opened wide their "everlasting doors," that He, the "King of Glory, might come in⁴;" yet, even in that glory, He is still "touched with the feelings of our infirmities⁵," is still ready by His Word to guide, and by His Spirit to comfort us; to make us "holiness unto the Lord⁶."

Oh, my brethren, turn not away from these great and precious privileges, nor from the obligations which they lay upon you. If He, who left us "an example that we should follow his steps⁷," hath thus sanctioned the feelings of men who love and cherish the welfare of their country; if the spectacle of Jerusalem's impending woe drew from His eyes the tear of mourning, and from His lips the language of sympathy and love; and if, from His exaltation at the right hand of the Majesty on high, we believe that He still speaketh in "righteousness,

¹ Luke xix. 41, 42.

² John xiii. 1.

³ Psalm lxviii. 18.

⁴ Psalm xxiv. 7.

⁵ Heb. iv. 15.

⁶ Jer. ii. 3.

⁷ 1 Pet. ii. 21.

mighty to save¹," and still "knoweth them that are his²," surely we must pray that we may know, at least in this our day, the things which belong unto our peace, and that they never may be hid from our eyes.

But the prayer of faith implies the work of faith. Although we feel and acknowledge that, "except the Lord build the house, their labour is but lost that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain³," yet, nevertheless, the hand of the labourer must build, the watchman must keep his vigils. He, therefore, who would seek to be a Christian patriot must use every aid, and make every exertion for the attainment of those blessings, which he prays the God of mercy to vouchsafe unto his country. And where is he to look for human aid, but in the well-combined and well-directed efforts of the many members of which the body politic is composed? Individual strength, and wisdom, and perseverance, may do much; they may set in motion engines of gigantic power; they may open the way to scenes of successful enterprise; but they cannot, singly, accomplish any durable or extensive good. Hence arises the necessity of union, of a sustained and disciplined system of combination, in which the division of labour allotted to each subordinate part, shall work to-

¹ Isaiah lxiii. 1. ² 2 Tim. ii. 19. ³ Psalm cxxvii. 1, 2.

gether for the peace and welfare of the whole. Such systems are obviously the result of time, of perseverance, of experience; and as well might we expect to rule the course of the winds which blow even as they list, as to find the existence of materials suited to our purpose, exactly at the moment we need them. They must be prepared beforehand, and it is the part of sound wisdom to apply them. Hence it comes to pass, that, in all ages and countries, public institutions have been established, and men appointed to conduct them, who have been 'associated by no other than public ties and public principles¹,' and who, for their brethren's and "companion's sakes," labour to do good to the land which gave them birth. The necessity of the case demands it; the instinctive feelings of humanity experience a satisfaction in obeying it; and the Word of God assures us, that, as in the natural, so in the spiritual body, the happiness of the whole depends upon this harmony of its component members, and, that, "whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it²."

To show how this combination of individual strength and wisdom has operated in our own country, and made her vast resources the instruments of peace and prosperity to her children, would only be

¹ See Burke's Reflections on the French Revolution, p. 286.

² 1 Cor. xii. 26.

to transcribe the annals of her eventful history, and retrace the steps, by which, under God's blessing, she has been raised to her present pre-eminence among the nations of the earth. But sure I am, that, among all the institutions which uphold the glory and power of the British empire, as there is none more ancient, so there is none more truly national in its character, more benevolent in its purposes, or more efficient in the general discharge of its high duties, than that whose Anniversary we are this day assembled to commemorate. It embraces, in fact, the most legitimate objects of interest which can animate the prayers and exertions of Englishmen and Christians. For our habitation is fixed among "the islands of the sea¹." Our empire is "founded upon the seas, and established upon the floods²." What duty, therefore, is of prior or more permanent obligation than to use all the 'means and appliances' within our reach to preserve the lives and property of those "that go down to the sea in ships, and occupy their business in great waters³?" We know that "these men see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep." We know also, that, in the language of Jeremiah, they "get bread with the peril of their lives⁴;" for, when at God's word "the stormy wind ariseth,

¹ Isaiah xi. 11.

² Psalm xxiv. 2.

³ Psalm cvii. 23.

⁴ Lam. v. 9.

which lifteth up the waves thereof, they are carried up to the heaven and down again to the deep," and their soul "melteth away because of trouble¹." It is to these men, then, more especially, that the hand of Christian kindness should be extended ; for these men, that every seasonable aid and assistance should be provided. The earliest epochs, accordingly, of our naval history, have borne testimony to the zeal which this country evinced, even in the infancy of her maritime greatness, for those who were the instruments of its promotion. And upwards of three centuries have elapsed since the foundation of this Institution was laid 'for the relief and augmentation of the shipping of the realm of Engand.' It has gone on, during that long period, faithfully and truly in the prosecution of its good work ; increasing with the increasing powers and exigency of the empire ; gathering fresh materials from the stores of science and experience ; marking, more and more accurately, the shoals and rocks of our "sea-girt isle ;" and raising up, on its bold headlands, those beacons of hope and joy, which not only shine brightly, through the darkness of night, to warn the mariner of dangers, but guide him "unto the haven where he would be²." These are among the valuable aids which it has extended to 'the maritime interests and general commerce of the

¹ Psalm cvii. 24, 25, 26.

² Psalm cvii. 30.

country;' but these are not all: for here, you know full well, the aged and worn out seaman finds a resting-place; here, the fatherless child and widow receive a shelter and a home. In this beneficent and useful course have this venerable Corporation proceeded, without partiality, without ostentation, and without reproach.

And more than this. No persons can have regarded with attention the records of our history, and be insensible to the extraordinary and peculiar services which have been rendered by this Institution to the country in periods of great danger. The recollection of those arduous struggles, in which our country was so long and so successfully engaged, can never be obliterated from the breasts of Englishmen. Neither can it be forgotten, that, in the most fearful crisis of those struggles, when, at the close of the last century, the safety of our fleets was endangered by the turbulent spirit of our seamen, and the dearest interests we possessed were on the point of being betrayed into the hands of them that hated us, it was to the promptitude and energy of the members of this Institution, that we were indebted for the design and execution of the plan whereby the mighty force which might have been turned against us, was rendered helpless, and the danger dissipated¹.

At a later period, again, when the hosts of the

¹ See Annual Register for 1797.

French invader were marshalled in formidable train upon his shores, that they might pour confusion upon our own, and the whole nation arose, as one man, to hurl back the threatened violence, these guardians of our naval strength were distinguished among the foremost in the struggle; devoting, freely and cordially, to the service of their patriot king, their time, and talents, and resources; directing them towards that quarter which their opportunities best enabled them to meet, and from which danger was most to be expected¹; and stretching across the bosom of that majestic river, over which we have passed this day, an impregnable barrier of defence, by which, under God's aid, not only would our houses and altars have been saved from the grasp of the spoiler, had he made the attempt, but all his array of pride and glory have been scattered, and made to sink "like lead in the mighty waters²."

These events have now passed away, and, to many of the present generation, may appear merely as "a tale that is told³," and be remembered no more. Occupied as they are only about the cares and pleasures of the present moment, they may know nothing of the dangers which their fathers encountered, and care nothing for the victories which their fathers achieved. Filled with the love of

¹ See Parliamentary Debates of the year 1803.

² Exod. xv. 10.

³ Psalm xc. 9.

change, and eager to embrace every scheme of novel and untried experiment, they may even think “scorn of this pleasant land¹,” upon which God hath poured so many benefits, and of the institutions by which our forefathers have sought to establish ‘among us for all generations,’ the interests of ‘peace and happiness, of truth and justice, of religion and piety².’ But “deal not so madly³,” I beseech you. It may be easy to demolish, but it is difficult, if not impossible, to reconstruct those fabrics of our hope and strength, which it has taken the wisdom and experience of ages to establish, and around which are entwined the dearest objects of reverence and love. Look carefully, then, to the bulwarks which have shielded you in the day of battle, and made you to prosper in the time of peace: turn not ungratefully away from the stronghold whence this protection has been derived, nor join in the cry of those who say, “Down with it, down with it, even to the ground⁴ ;” but “stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls⁵.”

These I believe to be the just and proper sentiments, which should be excited in the breasts of men, who are led, as we have been this day, to con-

¹ Psalm cvi. 21.

² Prayer for the High Court of Parliament.

³ Psalm lxxv. 5. ⁴ Ibid. cxxxvii. 7. ⁵ Jer. vi. 16.

sider, with more than ordinary attention, the objects and advantages of this, the most venerable Corporation of England. And, in proportion as its benefits are great, so does the weight of obligation rest upon its responsible directors to discharge the high trust committed to them with fidelity and zeal. "Beware that ye forget not the Lord your God in not keeping his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgments¹;" nor think to say in your hearts, "my power and the might of mine hand, hath gotten me this wealth²." Remember rather, that, all you have or hope for is in the hands of Him who can make even a "fruitful land barren for the wickedness of them that dwell therein³," and who hath taught us that the proper subject of glorying, is not in the wisdom of the wise man, or the might of the mighty man, or the riches of the rich man, but in understanding and knowing the counsels of the great God Himself, that He is the Lord which exerciseth "loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth⁴." Go forth, then, to the duties of your stations, trusting in His promise, praying for His grace, obeying His will. Remember, that, "unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more⁵." Let this be a

¹ Deut. viii. 11.

² Ibid. viii. 17.

³ Psalm cvii. 34.

⁴ Jer. ix. 23, 24.

⁵ Luke xii. 48.

motive to quicken your exertions and sustain your resolutions: let it enable you to hold on your course with patient and faithful spirit, “in nothing terrified by your adversaries¹;” but looking “unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith²,” and “casting all your care upon him” who “careth for you³.”

May we too, my brethren, who have borne our part in this day’s solemnity, feel that we have profitably kept the ordinance of the Lord! May it lead us to pray more earnestly for the peace of our Jerusalem, that “peace be within her walls,” and “plenteousness within her palaces!” For our “brethren’s and companions’ sakes may we wish her prosperity: yea, because of the house of the Lord our God, may we seek to do her good!” And as we go forth from this house of prayer, in which we have walked together as friends, to return once more into the busy walks of Christian life and duty, may we be strengthened daily with “the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and ghostly strength, the spirit of knowledge and true godliness⁴!” May we increase and go forward in these “manifold gifts of grace,” until, through the merits of our Redeemer, we are admitted into that city, which, in the fullest and truest sense, “is at unity in itself,”—that city “which hath foundations, whose builder and maker

¹ Phil. i. 28.

² Heb. xii. 2.

³ 1 Pet. v. 7.

⁴ Confirmation Service.

is God¹," whose "walls" are called "Salvation, and her gates Praise²;" and which hath "no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof³."

¹ Heb. xi. 10. ² Isaiah lx. 18. ³ Rev. xxi. 23.

SERMON IV.

ON THE MINISTERIAL OFFICE.

1 COR. iv. i.

Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

ACCUSTOMED as we have been, in the daily and weekly services of our Church, and throughout every other period of our changing and eventful life, which, whether marked by feelings of joy or sorrow, of hope or fear, the Church nevertheless seeks faithfully to convert into a season of spiritual grace unto us all, by impressing upon our hearts the lessons of Scriptural warning and consolation which are suitable to each;—accustomed as we have been, I say, from the days of earliest childhood, in the possession of these privileges, to see therein a distinct order of men set apart from the rest, for the express purpose of punctually and regularly performing these minis-

trations, and to connect with their persons, chiefly or entirely, the association of public religious duties ;— there is danger lest the very knowledge of such an appointment, so early presented to our minds, so constantly attending upon us through life, may, like any other possession with which we have become familiar, lose much of its usefulness and value, in the case of many amongst us, through our forgetfulness of its real character and importance. We may be tempted to look upon the subject of it, as one of those stated and customary matters which come, and pass away, and return as things of course, exciting no interest, and awakening no thankfulness. The very prevalence of the blessing received loses its attraction in the sight of the recipient ; its constant recurrence finds him heedless of its coming. We must confess that such is the infirmity which oftentimes blinds us to the value of those daily gifts of nature, which are common to almost all of us,—the light which cheers, the food which nourishes, the rest which refreshes our bodies¹ ; let us confess that it is an infirmity

¹ ‘ One great cause of our insensibility to the goodness of the Creator, is the very extensiveness of his bounty. We prize but little what we share only in common with the rest, or with the generality of our species. When we hear of blessings, we think forthwith of successes, of prosperous fortunes, of honours, riches, preferments, *i. e.* of those advantages and superiorities over others, which we happen either to possess, or be in pursuit, or to covet. The common benefits of our nature entirely escape us. Yet these are the great things. These constitute what most

which hinders our improvement, because it diminishes our sense, of spiritual gifts likewise. And, for this cause, let us take the present opportunity of enquiring, with the attention which it deserves, into the real nature of that sacred office which the Apostle has set forth in the text,—its obligation upon those who minister, its obligation upon the people who are ministered unto.

The Church evidently deems this a subject of needful contemplation to all who meet together in God's house of prayer, to observe her ordinances; for, as she pursues, each year, her 'round of holy thought', she brings it distinctly before us, and instructs us carefully in the same. Thus, in that opening period of her ecclesiastical year, which she has appointed for the purpose of preparing our minds for the religious commemoration of Christ's first Advent in the flesh, and for pressing upon us the application of those means of grace, which shall enable us to walk here as becometh the believers of that blessed truth, and, hereafter, to "rise to the life properly ought to be accounted blessings of Providence; what alone, if we might so speak, are worthy of its care. Nightly rest and daily bread, the ordinary use of our limbs, and senses, and understandings, are gifts which admit of no comparison with any other. Yet, because almost every man we meet with possesses these, we leave them out of our enumeration. They raise no sentiment; they move no gratitude. Now, herein, is our judgment perverted by our selfishness.'—Paley's *Natural Theology*, chap. xxvi. 'On the goodness of the Deity.'

immortal¹," before the glorious majesty of His second Advent,—she sets before us, in the first place, the authority of that sacred Scripture, which hath been written for our learning, and from which alone is derived "the blessed hope of everlasting life," and teaches us to pray for strength to embrace and ever hold it fast². She next proceeds, in the services of the ensuing Sabbath, to unfold to us another instrument of help, which has been mercifully vouchsafed of God, to keep those who have been taught His word, stedfast in its observance. She reminds us, that, as at Christ's first coming, there was sent "a messenger to prepare" His way before Him, so are there now "ministers and stewards" of His mysteries, ordained to make preparation for His second coming; and she prays unto the Lord Jesus Christ to grant them grace, so faithfully to discharge their office, "by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just," that, in the great and final judgment, His people may indeed be found acceptable in His sight³. How faithfully that first messenger of Christ fulfilled his calling; how zealously he rebuked the wicked, and put to shame the proud; how earnestly he proclaimed the coming terrors of the Lord, and summoned a whole people, that were laden with iniquity, unto repentance through Christ,

¹ Collect for First Sunday in Advent.

² Collect for Second Sunday in Advent.

³ Collect for Third Sunday in Advent.

are circumstances sufficiently made plain by the testimony of the Messiah Himself to that effect, recorded in the Gospel for that day's service. And how holy the office of God's ministers and stewards still continues to be, how ennobling its end, and how great the faithfulness that is required of all who have received such a ministry,—these are truths set forth with an illustration no less clear, in the solemn records of the Apostolic Scripture, which is read in the Epistle for the same day.

Seeing, then, that such is the important ordinance in respect to which, year by year continually, the Church repeats her faithful admonition and prayers, and such the mighty ends for which it was appointed of God; it surely may be accounted both a seasonable and needful duty for ministers and people to ponder upon it, in the spirit of humility and faith, and to pray that they may profit by its contemplation.

To ourselves, indeed, who have received such a ministry, I know not what assurance can make a more awakening appeal than that recorded in the text. To be told, that the office which we hold is that of “ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God¹,” and that the faithfulness which is required of all stewards is, therefore, specially demanded from ourselves; that, weak and fallible as we are, encompassed with the like temptations, and burdened

¹ ‘Æquipollent ista *dispensator mysteriorum Dei et sacerdos* : mysteria namque Dei *sancta* sunt, et *sacerdos* dictus est à *sacris*

with the like infirmities with those to whom we speak, we should yet be ordained to lift up that voice of warning, which once fell from the lips of the Baptist in the wilderness; that, like him, we should rebuke the sinner; like him, point to the Lamb of God that taketh away sin; yea, that we should be permitted to bear that blessed office, which Christ in His own person sustained, which He solemnly imposed upon His Apostles, which they, in their turn, conferred, by imposition of hands and by prayers, upon their successors in the ministry,—thus accomplishing the will of Him who gave them that authority, and thus handing down to ourselves, and to every future generation, that light of holiness and truth which can alone guide and cheer us on our way;—to be told, that we have been admitted to these holy functions, that we have been made subject to these solemn obligations, that we are ministers not of man but of Christ, that we are stewards not of the stores of earthly wisdom nor of earthly power, but of the mysteries of God,—mysteries which man could never have explored, but which the Spirit of God hath revealed,—the mystery of man's iniquity,—the mystery of Christ purging away that iniquity by his own precious blood-shedding,—the mystery of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, enlightening the darkness of our understandings, and purifying the baseness of

dandis.'—Chrastovius, Polan. p. 197. Quoted by Waterland in his treatise on Distinctions of Sacrifice, Vol. viii. p. 343.

our affections,—the mystery of prayer subduing the heart, of faith achieving the victory over the world, of death disarmed of its sting, and the powers of the dark grave destroyed;—and all this unfolding and preparing the way for the manifestation of the mightiest mystery of all, “the resurrection of the dead,” when that which was “sown in corruption,” shall be “raised in incorruption,” when that which was “sown in dishonour,” shall be “raised in glory,” when that which was “sown in weakness,” shall be “raised in power,” and that which was “sown a natural body,” shall be “raised a spiritual body¹ ;” —to be told, I say, that these mysteries are committed to our hands, not that we may lord it over God’s heritage, nor use them as instruments to usurp dominion over the consciences of our brethren ; not that we may cast around us the vague splendour of imposing ceremonies, nor, amid ‘the pomp of lustrations and sacrifices,’ seek to excite the imagination, and dazzle the eye of sense ; but, that we should feel the sanctifying power of these truths whereof we speak, first, in our own minds, and then inculcate them on yours ; that we should administer those blessed Sacraments of Christ, which are the ‘sure witnesses, and effectual signs of grace, and God’s good will towards us, by the which He doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 42—44.

strengthen and confirm our faith in Him¹; that we should lead you to worship God “in spirit and in truth²;” and beseech you, by the acknowledgment of His mercies, to “present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service³;” that we should “preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine⁴;” that we should regard neither the person nor the favour of men, but, “knowing the terror of the Lord, persuade⁵” them to flee from the wrath to come; that, “as ambassadors for Christ,” we should “pray you, in Christ’s stead,” to “be reconciled unto God⁶;” and, “as workers together with Him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain⁷ :”—and that of all this, as well as of every other obligation that is bound up with our Ordination Vows, we, and every minister in the Church, should, as often as we read these words of the Apostle, in the stillness of our chambers, or amid the assemblies of the Lord’s people, be distinctly and solemnly put in mind,—is a fact, the acknowledgment of which may well bow down our hearts, as the heart of one man, in deep humility, before the Lord⁸.

¹ See Article xxv. of our Church.

² John iv. 24.

³ Rom. xii. 1.

⁴ 2 Tim. iv. 2.

⁵ 2 Cor. v. 11.

⁶ 2 Cor. v. 20.

⁷ Ibid. vi. 1.

⁸ “The power of the ministry of God translateth out of dark-

And, if the most zealous of His faithful servants, if the foremost masters of our Israel, be oppressed with a sense of this mighty responsibility; if they feel, as they cannot but feel, that, not in their own strength nor wisdom can they discharge its obligations, and, that, unless the grace of God sustain their spirits, not one of them is sufficient for these things; if the conviction of this truth impart fervour to their prayers, and constancy to their exertions; then how must the heart dread to contemplate the guilt and danger of the careless and unprofitable minister,—of him, who exposes the truth to reproach, the Church to danger, and himself to shame; who, for the sake of worldly lucre or worldly honour, or with an hasty boldness or cold indifference scarcely less culpable, is content to hazard the dearest interests of immortal souls; not studying to show himself “approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth¹,”

ness into glory; it raiseth men from the earth and bringeth God himself down from heaven; by blessing visible elements it maketh them invisible grace; it giveth daily the Holy Ghost; it hath to dispose of that flesh which was given for the life of the world, and that blood which was poured out to redeem souls: when it poureth malediction upon the heads of the wicked they perish, when it revoketh the same they revive. O! wretched blindness, if we admire not so great power; more wretched if we consider it aright, and notwithstanding imagine that any but God can bestow it!—Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity, Book v. ch. lxxvii. 2.

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 15.

but “handling the word of God deceitfully¹ ;” and, in ignorance or forgetfulness of the sacred message intrusted to him, treasuring up unto himself, the heaviest of all woes,—the woe that shall fall upon the watchman who slumbers at his post, upon the steward who betrays his trust, upon the minister who obeys not, and preaches not, the Gospel of Christ ?

Did we not say, then, with good reason, my brethren, that the subject presented to our notice in the text, is one both needful and salutary for the ministers of God to contemplate ?—that it is fitted to impart seriousness to the trifler, resolution to the wavering, and energy to the weak ; that, to the highest not less than to the lowliest amongst us, it points out the nature and end of our duties, and the source from which strength to discharge them must be derived ; and, that the principle, here laid down by the Apostle, must be found controlling every word, and deed, and thought of ours, if we would seek to follow him, as he followed Christ ?

It is, indeed, a part of our subject so vast in its extent, and comprehending such numerous and important matters of detail, that it might well claim, upon its own account, a separate and undivided consideration. And, were it our office to address a congregation composed chiefly of our fellow-ministers, it would be right so to regard it, and to confine

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 2.

our thoughts solely to the strict examination of the grounds, upon which the authority of our office is established, and the character which is demanded of those who hold it. Such, however, is not the duty required from us at the present moment. We are now called upon to consider the relation which our office bears towards you, as well as towards ourselves. The words of the Apostle describe not only the character which the minister of God is required to maintain in his own person, but also the estimate of it, which ought to be entertained by others.

“Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God,” is the declaration of St. Paul. Now, it needs but a very slight acquaintance with the world around us, to see that we are not so accounted. The ministerial office is, in very truth, frequently not regarded by others as it ought to be. Neither would it be difficult to show that such errors of opinion are not, like many others, harmless and inoffensive in their results, but fraught with serious mischief both to those who hold them, and to ourselves whom they concern. How low and degrading, for instance, is the standard by which some men would judge of the ministerial office ! Esteeming it to consist merely in the formal and regular discharge of the public services of the Church ; or in abstinence from certain amusements ; or in conformity to the rules of conventional decorum ; they forget, that, what-

soever be the changing fashions of a changing world, the character of God's ministers, is independent of them all, and not to be controlled by any; and, that, whatsoever be the light in which the performance of our public duties is regarded, such duties are of no profit to ourselves, except so far as they be actuated by the spirit of Christian faith; that, if they want that spirit, they will be vain as the tinkling cymbal, vainer than vanity itself;—and, that, after all, they are but a portion, and perhaps not the most valuable portion, of that round of sacred duties which meets not the public gaze, but which, nevertheless, must be followed out with zeal, and perseverance and impartiality, by all who would seek to be faithful stewards of God's mysteries. Now, it cannot but be admitted, I think, that they, who entertain such partial and unworthy notions of the office of the Christian minister, must themselves have a false impression of the requirements of a Christian people. They demand not that “the priest's lips should keep knowledge¹,” because they themselves wish to receive none. They rejoice not in the zeal of the faithful messenger, because they themselves would go on calm and undisturbed. Neither knowing, therefore, nor desiring to know, the things that belong unto their peace, they deem any one competent to guide them along the same round of dull indifference. It is a task of mechanical formality which

¹ Mal. ii. 7.

may safely be entrusted, in their estimation, to the feebleness of mind that is unable to grapple with the difficulties of a secular profession. They know and can appreciate the keen and active spirit, which is demanded for struggling with success through the difficulties of other walks of life. They value there the fixed resolve, the lofty impulse, the unwearied perseverance, the upright principle; and yet, they dream that they may calmly consign the mightiest interests of our immortal nature to the care of the weak, the careless, or the ignorant. No marvel, if this be the mistaken view which is taken by some men of the ministerial office; if, acting upon such perilous notions, they urge any one who looks up to them for guidance, to rush, unbidden, into the sanctuary, that "the enemies of the Lord should blaspheme¹." No marvel that "the love of many" should "wax cold²;" that false teachers should infest the church of Christ; and that, in the day of trial, they who have thus been deceiving or deceived, should find their hope a mockery, and their strength but "the staff of a broken reed," which "shall go into their hand, and pierce it³."

Again, there is another error, coming indeed from an opposite quarter, but yet not less opposed to the Apostolic precept laid down in the text, nor less detrimental to the due discharge of the ministerial office than that already noticed. I mean the error,

¹ 2 Sam. xii. 14.

² Matt. xxiv. 12.

³ Is. xxxvi. 6.

which leads men to lay stress rather upon the person of the minister who speaks, than upon the things of which, or the authority by which he speaks ; to invest him, thereby, with prerogatives which the Church gives him no right to assume ; to make his opinions, for instance, the standard whereby to judge of every other ; to set him up as the guide and master of their faith ; and even to adopt his name, as the sign and test of a right belief. The principle of this error, I believe, is common to man. Whether it be a modification of that spirit of pride, which, in some shape or other, clings to so many amongst us, and loves to mark out for itself some exclusive privileges, some chosen adherents, some separate sphere of action ; and the effects of which may be traced in the rivalry and distraction of party spirit, which pervades every department of life ; or, whether it be that infirmity of our nature which is glad to make the work of salvation a vicarious work, and to transfer to the services of the minister alone, that burden of responsibility which should rest upon the souls of all who bear their part in the same services ; or, whether it be the excess of an amiable feeling towards those whom we have been taught to respect, and whom we love for their works' sake, I know not ; but the result, most undoubtedly, is contention, and division in the Church of Christ. The dogmas of men, in their single and separate capacity, are, from this cause, listened to with more eagerness

than the Word of God. The expositions of the modern controversialist are sought out with more exactness than the truth, as it is in Jesus, and as the voice of His Holy Church has proclaimed it throughout past ages. The Shibboleth, adopted by this or that section of society, is accounted a sufficient test, whereby to prove the character of those who repeat it; the motives of some who repeat it not are misrepresented, the actions and the words of others are exaggerated; and so, whilst the followers of respective teachers are saying, "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas: and I of Christ," they forget that Christ is not divided; that Paul was not crucified for them; neither were they "baptized in the name of Paul¹." They forget that truth which the Apostle proclaims and reiterates, with such earnestness, in the chapter preceding the present, and which, in fact, gives immediate rise to his present argument, that Paul and Apollos were only ministers by whom the Corinthians believed, "even as the Lord gave to every man;" that Paul had planted, and Apollos watered, but that neither was he that had planted any thing, neither he that had watered, but God alone that gave the increase².

To Him, therefore, whose servants we are, must we, who have received such a ministry, look up for guidance and support, and not to the favour of our fellow-men. We are His ministers and stewards,

¹ 1 Cor. i. 12, 13.

² 1 Cor. iii. 5—7.

remember, and not yours; to Him we are accountable, and not to you. We minister indeed for you, but not by your authority¹. We “watch for

¹ ‘The ministry of things divine is a function which as God himself did institute, so neither may men undertake the same, but by authority and power given them in a lawful manner. They are therefore ministers of God, not only by way of subordination as princes and civil magistrates, whose execution of judgment and justice the supreme hand of divine Providence doth uphold, but ministers of God, as from whom their authority is derived, and not from men.’—Hooker’s Ecc. Pol., b. v. c. lxxvii. 1.

The same distinction is insisted upon yet more expressly by Mede in his Discourse on our present text. ‘There are three words,’ (he observes) ‘in the New Testament translated Minister, Διάκονος, Ὑπηρέτης, Δειτουργός, the first is most frequent; but not one of them is given to the Apostles, in the whole Scripture, with relation to the Church or people: You shall never find them called Διάκονοι, or Ὑπηρέται τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, *Ministers of the Church*, which is so frequent with us, but *Ministers of God*, 2 Cor. vi. 4. 1 Thess. iii. 2. *Ministers of Christ*, as in my text, and 2 Cor. xi. 23. Col. i. 27. *Ministers of Jesus Christ*, 1 Tim. iv. 6. or Ministers of that which they minister, as *Ministers of the New Testament*, 2 Cor. iii. 6. *Ministers of the Gospel*, Ephes. iii. 7. Col. i. 23. But not ministers of them to whose behoof they minister. Yet might this speech, *Minister of the Church*, if rightly construed, be admitted; namely, if it be spoken by an ellipsis, for *Ministers of God for and over the Church*: so the Apostle, Col. i. 7. *A faithful Minister of Christ for you*, i. e. Christ’s Minister, not theirs: yet not for Christ, but for them. But those who use this speech commonly mean otherwise.’—And again: ‘This speech [*Minister of the Church, or of this or that Church,*] is so much the more incommodious, because it hath begotten (as incommodious and inapt

your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief¹;" but we do this, upon the strength of principles, whose intrinsic excellence rests upon far higher grounds than any which can be supplied either by the instruments to whom the ministerial office is entrusted, or by the objects for whose sake it was appointed.

Never, therefore, let the proper relation in which those, who are, respectively, the instruments and objects of the ministerial office, stand towards each other, be mistaken or misrepresented. On your part, it would be the error, the dangerous and fearful error, of trifling with an appointed means of grace; on ours, it would be the treacherous abandonment of the vantage ground on which God hath placed us, the unfaithful administration of the stewardship which God hath entrusted to us. We should incur, indeed, the heaviest penalty of God's righteous anger, and should destroy, with our own hands, all claim to the character of up-

speeches do,) an erroneous conceit, not only among the vulgar, but some of better understanding; viz. that a Minister is not lawfully called, unless he be chosen by the people, because he is *their Minister*, and so deputed by them. And indeed if he be their *Minister* in proper relation, they are his *Masters*, and so it is good reason they should appoint him, as Masters do those who are to serve them. But if in proper relation they are God's Ministers, and not theirs, (though for them) then God is to appoint them, or such as he hath put in place to do it.'—Mede's Discourses, Book i. p. 26.

¹ Heb. xiii. 17.

right messengers, if in any instance, either from the dread of man's reproach, or from the desire of man's applause, we shrunk from making known to the souls of the highest, as well as to the lowliest, of those to whom it is our office to speak, the awful requirements of Christian holiness, the heart-stirring appeals of Christian truth. It would be, in fact, nothing less than to bring down upon our heads the guilt of those Jewish rulers who drew back from confessing Christ, "for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God¹;" it would be to provoke the condemnation which our Lord cast upon them, when he said, "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only²?" That question of rebuke, I say, would come home to ourselves in such a case, and where should we find the means to evade or answer it? Or, how could we expect to be able to bring home to the souls of them that hear us, the blessed message of reconciliation and peace, in all its real and constraining efficacy; if, in our own persons, we had "forsaken the fountain of living waters, and hewed us out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water³?"

This is, indeed, an awful consideration for us, who are "ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God." It is one of those many thoughts which will crowd upon the heart, even in the busiest and most

¹ John xii. 43.

² Ibid. v. 44.

³ Jer. ii. 13.

exciting moments of our ministrations, and force us to tremble for ourselves, as we discharge them. It anticipates the very declaration which the Apostle goes on to make in the present passage; and constrains us, with the deepest emotions of spirit, to listen to those solemn words of his, "moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful¹."

Now, if this be our heavy responsibility, is it a small thing, think ye, to do any thing on your part, which shall tend to warp or destroy the faithfulness required of us? Is it a small thing to make the burdens that are laid upon us more heavy to be borne, the difficulties that encompass us more hard to be overcome, by misapprehending our office, or by encumbering the execution of our proper duties? And be assured that you do misapprehend our office, and, in the same degree, encumber the execution of our proper duties, whensoever you suffer yourselves to be carried away by the error to which I advert. Whensoever you "learn to think of men above that which is written," you fall at once into the very evil against which the Apostle, in the context, warns the converts of Corinth: "You are puffed up for one against another²." You have the "persons" of some "in admiration because of advantage³." You discourage the services of others by unfair, unwarrantable censures. You lose sight of the ends for which, and the authority by which we all

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 2.

² Ibid. iv. 6.

³ Jude 16.

are ordained to speak, in your undue regard to the person and manner of him who speaks. You magnify the man, and not the office ; the creature, and not the Creator. You come, by a necessary consequence, to estimate the substance of that which is spoken, only by the same rules which regulate your judgment in matters of mere human construction. You bring to bear upon us the same excited curiosity, the same perverse prejudice, the same capricious imagination, the same captious criticism, which, in the world around you, are so many active elements, unceasingly at work, to embroil the conflict of your opinions ; and you forget that our ministrations claim your attention, solely as the appointed channels through which the Divine blessing is conveyed to your souls and ours ; that, whether we administer the Sacraments of Christ, or pray in His name, or preach His word, we are manifesting those mercies, and exercising those means of grace, the efficacy of which depends not upon the wisdom, the learning, or the industry of man, but upon the will of God ordaining them, upon the power of God accomplishing them. “Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.”

I have spoken upon this subject, my brethren, without reserve, because, as I have already remarked, the erroneous principle, from which issues the mischievous result we deprecate, is one common

to man ; and, certainly, in our own day, and, amid the people of our own land, its prevalence seems not to be diminished. I have spoken of it, as one of those offences, against which it becomes every member of the Church to guard, if he would avoid the sin of casting a stumbling-block in the way of any of his brethren. To ourselves, indeed, I hesitate not to say, that it proves, very frequently, a grievous stumbling-block ; and presents one of the most dangerous snares that can entangle our present usefulness, or put to jeopardy our future peace. The vulgar profligacy of the scoffer, the supercilious contempt of the proud, the drowsy inattention of the mere formalist, we can better contend against, because we expect, and are therefore prepared, to encounter them. We know that these must be arrayed against us, as long as the contest shall continue to be carried on between light and darkness, between truth and error ; and we are content to abide the issue of the contest, through Him who strengthens us. But we are not equally alive to the existence of that other danger, of which I now speak ; and hence its formidable character. It gathers about us so gradually that we mark not its approach ; and, whether it be manifested, at last, in the hard judgment which tends to perplex the views, and daunt the resolutions of the inexperienced minister, or in the still more hurtful guise of flattery, which pampers his vanity and inflames his hopes,

the savour resulting from it is base and earthly ; it brings out the rivalry of human passions, the collision of human interests.

The danger, therefore, is from man ; but the help from God. Man tempts us to walk by the light of a fire whose sparks he himself hath kindled,—a light which must soon go out, and leave us to “ lie down in sorrow¹.” But God sends out His “ light and His truth, that they may lead us, and bring us unto His holy hill, and to His dwelling².” By this He reveals His mysteries from heaven ; by this He chases away the gloom from our spirits on earth. It is only by virtue of this light, that we can see our way clearly to avoid the evil, to which I have adverted, and its consequences. For by this, the Apostle in his day, was enabled to affirm, and by the same are we, in our day, enabled to repeat, the declaration with which he follows up his acknowledgment that faithfulness is required in God’s stewards ; and to say, each one of us, that “ with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment : yea, I judge not mine ownself³.” Not that, in saying this, we mean it to be understood as part of our duty, that we should cast away all regard for the opinions of our brethren. God knoweth we have need of all the help which their enlarged experience, their superior attainments, their

¹ Isaiah l. 11.

² Ps. xliii. 3.

³ 1 Cor. iv. 3.

calmer deliberation, so often extend to us ; yea, even from their rebukes, we would not turn away, but receive them patiently, and pray that we may profit by them, for we believe that they are spoken in love to our own souls. But still, we assert that it is our duty, and that this is expressed in the language of the Apostle before us, that the Word of God is to be listened to, more than the word of man ; the judgment of God to be feared, more than the judgment of man. And, even this conviction,—a conviction which shall teach us that it is a small thing to receive either the censure or the applause of our fellow mortals,—must not be maintained in a spirit of bold, unhesitating presumption, but with a distrust of ourselves, a distrust which arises from the consciousness of our infirmities, and which leads us to appeal unto God who “is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things¹,” rather than unto our own weak and erring thoughts. “For I know nothing by myself,” the Apostle proceeds to say, “I know nothing by myself,” (or, as the words might be more strictly rendered,) I am not conscious to myself of any cause for the reproach cast upon me, “yet am I not hereby justified : but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make mani-

¹ 1 John iii. 20.

fest the counsels of the hearts : and then shall every man have praise of God !”

O, my brethren, how ought the utterance of this solemn truth, to put to shame and silence our rash or envious judgments ! How humble ought it to make us all, how zealous, how watchful ! Is it possible that a more awakening appeal than this can reach the hearts of Christian ministers, or a Christian people ? Can any thing more closely bring

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 4, 5. ‘We may, (by the example of the Apostle,) make use of this ; the inward testimony of our hearts being sufficient to justify us against the accusations of men : but we may not rest upon this ; as if the acquittal of our hearts were sufficient to justify us in the sight of God. St. Paul knew it, who durst not rest thereupon : but therefore addeth in the very next words, “Yea, I judge not mine own self ; for I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified : but he that judgeth me is the Lord.” Our hearts are close and false ; and nothing so deceitful as they : and who can know them perfectly, but He that made them, and can search into them ? Other men can know very little of them : ourselves something more : but God alone all. If, therefore, when other men condemn us, we find ourselves aggrieved ; we may remove our cause into a higher Court ; appeal from them to our consciences, and be relieved there. But that is not the highest Court of all ; there lieth yet an appeal further and higher than it, even to the judgment-seat, or rather to the mercy-seat of God : who both can find just matter in us to condemn us, even in those things wherein our hearts have acquitted us ; and yet can withal find a gracious means to justify us ; even from those things wherein our own hearts condemn us.’—Bishop Sanderson’s Sixth Sermon, *Ad Populum*, p. 343.

home to every one of us the weight of our present responsibilities, or more vividly place before us the reality of our future destinies? Can any thing prompt us more dearly to prize the stewardship now committed to our hands; or more earnestly to look forward to the time when we must render our account of the same to Almighty God?

That time is fast approaching; and we too are drawing near to meet it. There is no aid but in His strength; no hope but in His promise. Seek we, therefore, by the help of His saving mysteries, to be filled more and more with that spirit of faithfulness which is required both of yourselves and us; that spirit which shall enable us, in this life, to run the way of His commandments, and to abide the issue of His final judgment, when time shall be no longer¹.

¹ See Rev. x. 6.

SERMON V.

THE DISOBEDIENT PROPHET¹.

1 KINGS xiii. 26.

It is the man of God, who was disobedient unto the word of the Lord.

THE disobedience of the man of God which is here recorded, and the awful punishment inflicted upon him on account of it, are detailed, with more than ordinary minuteness, in the chapter before us; and the narrative is marked throughout with circumstances of such peculiar solemnity, that it may well incline the hearts of us all to faith and calling upon God. The preceding history had set forth the manifold iniquities of Jeroboam, who, having, with the

¹ This Sermon was originally published among the number of Family Sermons, under the direction of the Committee of General Literature and Education, appointed by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. It is now reprinted with some alterations.

ten tribes, renounced the allegiance of Rehoboam, king of Judah, and established the separate kingdom of Israel, had set up two calves of gold at Dan and Bethel (the opposite extremities of his territory), in order that the people might no longer "go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem," but pay worship to those images, and thus be completely alienated from the authority to which they had formerly been subject¹. In furtherance of the same object, Jeroboam had "made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi." He had, moreover, changed the times of religious worship, and, "in the month which he had devised of his own heart, had ordained a feast unto the children of Israel²." At that feast he officiated in person, and, as "he stood by the altar to burn incense, the man of God" appeared from Judah, bearing the solemn message of rebuke, which he had received from the mouth of the Lord. Alone, the Prophet came into the assembly of idolaters. He was not dismayed by the presence of the sovereign or his attendant subjects, but, turning towards the altar, declared that the time should come when one "of the house of David, Josiah by name," should degrade and destroy it for ever, by burning thereon the bones of the priests who were then assisting in the unholy cere-

¹ 1 Kings xii. 27.

² Ibid. xii. 31, 33.

monies¹; a prediction which was literally fulfilled about three hundred and fifty years afterwards, as we learn from the twenty-third chapter of the Second Book of Kings. As a present proof of the truth of his words, "the man of God" declared further, that the altar should, on that day, be rent, and "the ashes that were upon it be poured out:" upon which Jeroboam, enraged at his intrusion and threats, "put forth his hand from the altar, saying, Lay hold on him." But lo! "the hand which he put forth against him dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him;" and the King of Israel stood, in the midst of all his people, a monument of His wrath and power, who "poureth contempt upon princes, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty²." At the same moment, "the altar was rent in pieces and the ashes of the sacrifice were poured out, according to the sign which the man of God had given." These things struck terror into the son of Nebat, and with earnest prayers he besought of the prophet to entreat "the face of the Lord, and pray for him, that his hand might be restored him again. And the man of God besought the Lord, and the king's hand was restored him again, and became as it was before." But still the heart of Jeroboam remained untouched. However great had been his alarm when he felt the Divine Power withering in

¹ 1 Kings xiii. 2.

² Job xii. 21.

an instant his arm of flesh, yet, when relief was given, he forgot the Giver of it, and knew not how to bow down in faith and humility before Him. But, unmindful as he was of the source from which the mercy had been extended to him, he yet acknowledged the channel through which it was conveyed; and “said unto the man of God, Come home with me, and refresh thyself, and I will give thee a reward. And the man of God said unto the king, If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place: for so it was charged me by the word of the Lord, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest. So he went another way, and returned not by the way that he came to Bethel.”

So far, there is nothing recorded of “the man of God” which does not tend to show the sincerity and stedfastness of purpose with which he was actuated. He had been commissioned by the Most High to deliver a solemn sentence of condemnation in the face of that king and people who had provoked the Divine displeasure; and he delivered it firmly and faithfully. He neither added thereto, nor took away aught from it. In the performance of this duty, he had felt himself protected by the same power which had authorized him to go to Bethel: he had stood unharmed before the angry king; yea, he had seen

that very king himself made subject to him, and crying out for mercy at his hands. All this must have impressed more deeply upon his mind the truth and the majesty of Jehovah; and, therefore, when the ruler of Israel urged him to go home with him, we can well understand the feeling which prompted him at such a moment to turn away at once from the offer, and remember the strict and solemn prohibition which he had received. If there had been in his mind the slightest wish to comply with the king's request, there were not wanting specious arguments to justify him in doing so; for he might have thought it possible that further conversation with Jeroboam would tend to reform him; that the miraculous cure which he had just been the instrument of effecting would dispose him to listen more patiently to his exhortations; and that, if the people should, as it was probable, follow their sovereign in his reformation, a great and precious blessing would be secured to the people of God. But the prophet dares not argue cases, where he had to obey a positive command. Whatsoever might be the conduct, or whatsoever the future destiny of Jeroboam and his people, God must be obeyed. The counsels of man must not be set up in opposition to the Divine Will¹. Well would it have been for the seer, if he had adhered as closely to these principles of obe-

¹ See Bishop Hall's Contemplations, in loc.

dience unto the end, and never permitted the voice of the deceiver to tempt him to his ruin! For, to this sad issue does the history now conduct us.

“There dwelt an old prophet at Bethel,” whose sons had been witnesses of the events which had occurred that day, and who might possibly have even borne a part in the idolatrous ceremonies; for they came and told their father “all the works that the man of God had done,” and “the words which he had spoken unto the king.” They informed their father, also, of the way by which he had set out to return to Judah; upon which he immediately went after him, “and found him sitting under an oak, and he said unto him, Art thou the man of God that camest from Judah? And he said, I am. Then he said unto him, Come home with me, and eat bread.” To these words the same answer was returned as had been given to Jeroboam; and the express command of the Lord was alleged, a second time, by the prophet of Judah, as totally prohibiting him from intercourse with the people of Bethel. Upon which the old prophet told him that he, also, had received a command from the angel of the Lord, by virtue of which he was to bring him back to his own house, that he might eat bread and drink water. “But he lied unto him,” says the sacred narrative. He spoke that which he knew to be false. Nay more, he pleaded a command from heaven, by way of confirmation of it, and thus tempted his brother-prophet

to be "disobedient unto the word of the Lord." "The man of God," who had been undaunted by the threats, and uninfluenced by the offers, of Jeroboam, listens now to the voice of one whose age was to be revered, and who wore the garb of a prophet. He listens to him, and yields. And what does this teach us, my brethren, but that which our own hearts must feel to be too true, that the great adversary of our souls never makes more dangerous assaults upon us, than when he has succeeded in persuading us that there is no evil in deviating from God's express commands? Dangers may be encountered with fortitude, and oppression endured with calmness; but it is when "Satan is transformed into an angel of light¹," that we are most in danger of bringing upon ourselves the woe of calling "evil good, and good evil," or putting "darkness for light, and light for darkness;" it is when he whispers into our ears, "Ye shall not surely die²," that we put forth our hands so eagerly to pluck and taste the forbidden fruit.

This portion of the narrative supplies us with most painful matter for contemplation. It exhibits a picture of fraud and duplicity triumphing over one who had been the chosen instrument of making known the Divine Will to the kingdom of Israel. Both the deceiver and the deceived were prophets;

¹ 2 Cor. xi. 11.

² Gen. iii. 4.

a fact which, indeed, teaches us the awful and humiliating lesson, that, however individual persons may be gifted, those gifts, whilst they are made to be the instruments of public benefit, do not necessarily imply the excellence, nor the happiness of their possessors. Thus, although Isaiah and Daniel, by whom the most distinguished manifestations of God's will were made known to men, were "blessed in their generation," and "holy unto the Lord;" yet Balaam, the son of Beor, who from "the high places of Baal," beheld in prophetic vision that "Star" which should come "out of Jacob," and that "Sceptre" which should "rise out of Israel¹," loved, nevertheless, "the wages of unrighteousness," and "ran greedily after reward²." He enjoyed privileges, but he abused them. He held the truth, but he held it in unrighteousness. He lifted up to others the bright light of hope which should cheer and guide them in their course, but he himself walked on in darkness. So was it with Balaam; so was it with many of those, "to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises³." So was it with the old prophet of Bethel; and even so hath our blessed Lord assured us that many shall say to Him in the last day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have

¹ Numb. xxiv. 17.

² Jude 11.

³ Rom. ix. 4.

cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works?" But he will declare unto them, "I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity¹."

There is good reason, however, for believing, in the present case, that the prophet of Bethel had, openly and altogether, departed from the service of the living God²; since we find him residing in the very place where the images had been set up by Jeroboam, and suffering his sons to be present at the worship paid to them. This fact of itself sufficiently demonstrates his indifference to Jehovah's glory; and the subsequent deceit which he practised upon the prophet of Judah is but a confirmation of that Scripture, which declareth that the words of men, from whom the fear of God hath departed, "are unrighteous and full of deceit³." But "a lying tongue is but for a moment⁴." The adversaries of the Lord are soon clothed with shame, and "cover themselves with their own confusion as with a cloke⁵." The lips of the deceiver may "drop as an honeycomb, and his mouth be sweeter than oil; but the end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged

¹ Matt. vii. 22.

² Josephus says that he was one of Jeroboam's advisers. 'Now there was a certain wicked man in that city, who was a false prophet, whom Jeroboam had in great esteem, but was deceived by him and his flattering words.'—Antiquities of the Jews, B. viii. c. 9.

³ Psalm xxxvi. 1—3. ⁴ Prov. xii. 19. ⁵ Psalm cix. 28.

sword¹." Yea, so just and wonderful are the overruling councils of God's Providence, that the arrow which strikes through the heart of the transgressor is oftentimes directed from the very bow which he had vainly trusted would be his strength. The companion of his sin is the first to cast reproach and shame on him for the evil which he has done. Thus, the prophet of Judah is no sooner at the table of his deceitful host, than he receives the first wages of his guilt in hearing this sentence pronounced upon him by his tempter: "Thus saith the Lord, Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the Lord, and hast not kept the commandment which the Lord thy God commanded thee; but camest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place of the which the Lord did say to thee, Eat no bread, and drink no water: thy carcase shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers." And so it came to pass. The prophet of Judah left Bethel, and came no more unto the sepulchre of his fathers; for "a lion met him by the way, and slew him." And when the old prophet heard it from the men that "passed by that way," he said, "It is the man of God, who was disobedient unto the word of the Lord: and he went and found his carcase cast in the way, and the ass and the lion standing by the carcase: the lion had not eaten the carcase, nor torn the ass." The

¹ Prov. v. 3, 4.

wild beast, observe, had not been driven forth by hunger from his lurking-places, else would he have devoured the prophet, "and torn him in pieces while there was none to help¹:" but he had "come up from his thicket²," to be an avenger of evil, to strike the man who was "disobedient unto the word of the Lord."

What a lesson is this for ourselves, my brethren! What a lesson both for ministers and people!—for *us*, that we may ponder upon the peculiar guilt and danger of that man, who, whilst he is ordained to deliver the message of God to his brethren, can yet disregard the terms of that message to himself³! and for *our hearers*, that they may feel the tremendous peril of habitual sins, if such were the signal punishment of one act of disobedience. "For if," in the language of St. Peter, "the time is come, that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall be the end of those that obey not the Gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear⁴?" It may be, indeed, that the spirit of self-love in our hearts, which

¹ Psalm vii. 2.

² Jer. iv. 7.

³ Alas, my brother! round thy tomb
In sorrow kneeling, and in fear,
We read the Pastor's doom,
Who speaks and will not hear.

KEBLE'S Christian Year.

⁴ 1 Pet. iv. 17.

is always so ready to dull the edge of any unwelcome truth, and so ingenious to evade its application to our own case, may tempt some of us to explain away, if it were possible, the force of the present warning. It may lead us to think that the sin of "the man of God" might have been excused, by reason of the deception to which he became a victim; that he did not intentionally err, and, therefore, was not morally guilty? But such thoughts, must not be listened to. They offer no safe guidance. Their only strength consists in the ignorance and weakness of the hearts that suggest them; and as their source is pride, so is their end foolishness. Let us be careful, therefore, not to make God's ways our ways, or His thoughts our thoughts; "for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways higher than our ways, and His thoughts than our thoughts¹." Had nothing more been recorded, in the present instance; still, to have known that the condemnation proceeded from the Lord, would have been enough to satisfy us that the condemnation was just. Yet, if we examine the narrative with attention, we shall find that there are circumstances connected with it, sufficient to convince us, even short-sighted as we are, that God is a God of judgment. The command, remember, which He had given to His servant was direct, simple, and

¹ Isaiah lv. 8.

authoritative. The prophet must have felt it to be so, or he would not have gone, alone, to defy the son of Nebat, in the midst of his idolatrous people. Its authority had been confirmed by incontrovertible proof; for the ruined altar of sacrifice, and the withered arm of Jeroboam, were evidences enough to show that the "Lord's hand was not shortened, that it could not save; nor his ear heavy, that it could not hear ¹." All this was clear and unequivocal. Not so the message which the old prophet of Bethel gave to him. True, that prophet said that he had been commissioned by an angel of the Lord to make him return; but such authority was altogether weak and vague, compared to the original command. The one was received immediately from God; the other related mediately by a man, and that man a stranger to him. The one was sure; the other was questionable. A prophet might deceive; the God of truth and holiness could not ².

We should consider, again, what the design was of the prohibition which the prophet of Judah had received from the Lord. It was obviously to mark his abhorrence of the place in which idols were set up and worshiped. Now, to such a design the pretended revelation of the man of Bethel was directly repugnant, and therefore liable to suspicion,

¹ Isaiah lix. 1.

² See Bishop Hall's *Contemplations*, ut *suprà*, and *Waterland's Scripture Vindicated*, Vol. vi. p. 155.

more especially coming, as it did, from a man, who (as I before observed) showed, by his living at Bethel, an indifference to the worship of the true God¹. If the Divine command had been repealed, the repeal would have been marked by the same proof and authority as had accompanied its original promulgation. It was so in the case of Abraham; the same voice which had bade him offer up his only son Isaac, ordered him, afterwards, not to lay his hand upon the lad. But no such mode of repealing the Divine command is found in the present instance. The original injunction remained, clear, and distinct: and it was not to be counterbalanced by the mere assertion of a man, whose authority and truth there was, as we have seen, abundant reason to suspect. And yet, notwithstanding this, the original injunction was forgotten and set at nought; and we know the punishment that followed. It is in vain, therefore, to attempt evading the admonition which this Scriptural record brings home to us, by pleading any special circumstances in the history itself. It points out to us all, in the strongest and most affecting terms, the danger of being beguiled with any enticing words, the danger of listening to any counsels, or of acting upon any suggestions, however specious or plausible, which are opposed to the supreme and incontestible authority of the Divine

¹ See Bishop Gleig's edition of Stackhouse, Vol. ii. p. 289.

Revelation. Seeing, therefore, the existence and the consequences of so great a danger, a danger which no sophistries can palliate, no stratagems remove, let us be “not high-minded, but fear¹.”

Shall it be thought, after all, that the commandment which “the man of God” transgressed was trifling in itself, and therefore the sin was pardonable? This question is at once answered. No commandment is trifling, which has God for its author; no prohibition is to be despised, which He has set forth; and no sin is pardonable here, which He hath not pardoned. It argues a gross ignorance of human nature, and of the first principles of morals, to suppose that the subject-matter of our crimes must be prominent or conspicuous, in order to constitute us criminals. The outward circumstances of our various stations in life may, probably, place us beyond the reach of many of those temptations which lead to public and notorious mischief; but still the thoughts of the heart may be evil continually, and shall not they condemn us? The conventional usages of society, or a regard to our own reputation, may preserve us from the commission of glaring outrages, even when better principles are wanting; but are we, therefore, to thank God that we “are not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers²,” or even as the despised publican? Can such senti-

¹ Rom. xi. 20.

² Luke xviii. 11.

ments or language justify us in the sight of Him with whom we have to do? Most assuredly not. It is the inward principle actuating the heart, and not the overt act resulting from it, which makes us sinners in the sight of God. The smallest straw gliding upon the surface of the stream, will point out the quarter towards which the current flows, as clearly as the largest and heaviest bodies which are borne along by it. And even so, actions apparently most trifling in themselves, sufficiently demonstrate the bent of our feelings, whether they are right towards God or not.

It was not, then, the mere act of eating bread and of drinking water in the land of Bethel which bore upon its front alone the appearance of such deep moral turpitude, but the forgetfulness of God's authority, which it manifestly involved:—a forgetfulness, like that which tempted our first parents to eat of the tree, which “was good for food,” and “to be desired to make one wise¹”; which urged Lot's wife to cast one lingering look upon “the burning cities of the plain²”; which caused Moses to “anger the Lord at the waters of strife³”; and led Saul to spare Agag, and “the best of the spoil of the Amalekites⁴.” All these, like the prophet of Judah, were “disobedient unto the word of the Lord;” disobedient in acts, the magnitude of which was not to

¹ Gen. iii. 6.

² Gen. xix. 26.

³ Numb. xx. 12, 13.

⁴ 1 Sam. xv. 9.

be determined by the external aspect, but by the internal motive ; and all these, like him, were punished.

But if such considerations compel us to bow down with solemn awe before these judgments of the Lord, what shall we say of the sinners who seem, in the history before us, to have escaped their righteous infliction ? The messenger who came from Judah perished, but the king,—the idolatrous and impious king, who taught Israel to sin, and against whom he had been commissioned to deliver the Lord's rebuke,—and the prophet of Bethel, who tempted him to disobedience after he had fulfilled his mission, survived. He, whose fall we commiserate, is cut off from the land of the living ; whilst they whose wickednesses were so great, as almost to steel every sympathy of the heart against them, are suffered to walk on still.

Do we think to understand this, my brethren, and “ find it too hard for us ? ” Are we perplexed and grieved, when we look upon the world, and “ see the ungodly in such prosperity,” who “ come in no misfortune like other folk ; neither are they plagued like other men ; whose eyes swell with fatness, and who do even what they lust ? ” Let us enquire whether it be really so. Let us go with the Psalmist into the sanctuary of God, then shall we understand “ the end of these men ; ” namely, “ how He doth set them in slippery places, and casteth

them down, and destroyeth them. Oh ! how suddenly do they consume, perish, and come to a fearful end ! Yea, even like as a dream when one awaketh, so shalt thou make their image to vanish out of the city¹.”

In how many instances are we permitted to see this description realized to the very letter² ! In how many more, then, even where we cannot see the operation begun, or carried on, ought we not to believe that there is a train of causes leading sooner or later to the same issue ! As long as the Word of God stands recorded against wilful and impenitent offenders, so long must we believe that the instruments of punishing them exist ; and the time for exercising this severity must be determined by One more wise, more mighty, more merciful than ourselves. The tares which we would fain pluck up, must not now be gathered, lest the wheat also be rooted out with them. A day will come when the separation, which is looked for, shall be made for ever. May we be prepared to meet it !

And who that looks forward to that solemn day of separation between the righteous and the wicked, can murmur at the prolongation of the season of grace ? Do you ask, Why was not the deceiving prophet punished ? Why was not the idolatrous ruler overthrown ? Tell me this. Why are you

¹ Psalm lxxiii. 3—19.

² The evidences of this truth are considered more at length in the following Sermon.

here this day in the presence of the Lord, when so many of His righteous servants have fallen on your right hand, and on your left? Have you never deceived your brethren? Have you never been “partakers of other men’s sins ¹?” Have you never bowed down before the idols of this world, and followed with eagerness the multitude to do evil? Have you never been “disobedient unto the word of the Lord?” Why, then, are you spared? Why, but that you may turn from your wickedness and live? Why have others fallen whose burdens were haply lighter than your own? Why, but that you may take warning by them, and “sin no more, lest a worse thing happen unto you ².” Worse things, you may be assured, can and will happen;—things which shall make “the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, hide themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains, and say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of His wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand ³?”

What a commentary is this upon the words of the Apostle Peter, when he declares, “God knoweth how to reserve the unjust to the day of judgment to be punished ⁴.” See here the destiny in store for

¹ 1 Tim. v. 22.

² John v. 14.

³ Rev. vi. 15—17.

⁴ 2 Pet. ii. 9.

sinner who now dream that they are safe. How weak and worthless therefore is the foundation upon which the fabric of their hope is, for a short season, reared up! And how light ought we to reckon the afflictions of this world; yea, how welcome its most agonizing bereavements, if from such consummation of sin, and from such outpouring of vengeance, they, by removal, save us! Temporal death appals; but, if thereby we are saved from the bitter pains of eternal death, will it not be a blessing? And who shall say that this may not have been the limit to which the punishment, sent upon the "man of God" from Judah, was confined¹?

We know that such was the limit of punishment in the case of Moses. Because he had trespassed

¹ 'Can we think,' (says Lightfoot in his Sermon on this subject,) 'that the good man having his sin so laid before him, (as it was by the prophet of Bethel,) and his dreadful punishment, was not deeply touched with the sense of his sin, and with all earnestness sought to God for pardon?—So that though he died for his sin, yet he died not in it. The case of David may give some illustration to this case. When Nathan told him home of his sin about Uriah and his wife, he instantly repents, is pardoned, that he falls not under condemnation for it; but he is not quit from temporal judgment and punishment for it. "The sword shall never depart from thine house;" and "the child shall die." So this man is told of his fault by the other prophet; he repents, is pardoned, that he falls not under condemnation; but he is not acquitted from a temporal punishment, and that a severe one, that cost him his life.'—Lightfoot's Works, Vol. vii. p. 173. 8vo. ed.

against the Lord at the waters of strife at Kadesh ; because he had not sanctified the Lord “in the midst of the children of Israel ¹,” he was permitted to see no more of the promised land than that which was afforded to him in the prospect from Pisgah’s summit ; and, although “his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated,” he “died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord ².” And yet, that sudden removal of the leader of Israel from the midst of the people who mourned for him, was no evidence that, from the presence of the Most High, he was cut off for ever : for the Word of Inspiration tells us that, from his secret sepulchre, he was summoned to witness, with the holy Tishbite, the transfigured glory of the Redeemer, to hear God’s voice which issued from the brightness of the overshadowing cloud, and which testified of that Blessed Son in whom both the Law and the Prophets were fulfilled ³.

Now, when we bear in mind the peculiar circumstances which marked the death of Judah’s disobedient prophet ;—that his body indeed fell beneath the paw of the lion, and came no more to the sepulchre of his fathers, but that no further laceration should have been made of his lifeless limbs ; nay, that the aged prophet who had deceived him, should have been permitted to take up the body from the

¹ Deut. xxxii. 51. ² Ibid. xxxiv. 1—8. ³ Matt. xvii. 1—6.

ground, and bear it to the city, and lay it mournfully in his own grave¹; that, with the homage which is so often extorted by truth from the lips of error, he should have acknowledged the authority wherewith the departed prophet had denounced the iniquity of Jeroboam, and, by virtue of this acknowledgment, have besought his sons, to bury him at his death by the side of that "man of God,"—that so his bones might rest in peace, and be saved from the pollution which, it had been predicted, should be hereafter cast upon the idolatrous altar, when David's future son, Josiah, should offer thereon the priests that burnt incense upon it, and men's bones should be burnt upon it²,—we may indeed think that mercy vouchsafed to smooth the path of justice. When we bear in mind, yet further, that these wishes were permitted to be realized;—that, when the faithful Josiah was raised up to repress the idolatries and restore the true worship of God's people, and when, in the prosecution of that purpose, he brake down the altar and the high place which Jeroboam had made at Bethel,

¹ It is worthy of remark, that, in the very next chapter, the reception of the rites of sepulture is expressly stated as a mark of God's favour towards Abijah, one of the sons of Jeroboam: "And all Israel shall mourn for him, and bury him: for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because in him there is found some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam."—1 Kings xiv. 13.

² 1 Kings xiii. 2.

and took the bones out of the sepulchres that were in the mount, and burned them on the altar, polluting both it and them, and stamping them small to powder ;—he paused, as his eyes rested upon the title of one of the sepulchres, and “he said, What title is that that I see? And the men of the city told him, It is the sepulchre of the man of God, which came from Judah, and proclaimed these things that thou hast done against the altar of Bethel. And he said, Let him alone; let no man move his bones¹ :”—when we bear in mind, I say, these various circumstances, especially this last one, which shows the reverence paid by the holy king of Judah to the memory of that “man of God,” we may well believe that his punishment, signal and grievous as it was, was yet but the punishment of temporal death, and did not, of necessity, involve a share in the eternal, irrevocable destiny of those who live, and die, hardened in impenitence.

Take we heed betime, then, while the day of salvation lasteth ; for “the night cometh, when no man can work².” The day of salvation was extended unto Jeroboam, when, in the midst of his bold defiance of the living God, the prophet was sent from Judah to rebuke him ;—it was extended

¹ 2 Kings xxiii. 17, 18. .

² John ix. 4.

unto his people, when they were permitted to behold the power of the prophet smiting the arm of their king, and rending the altar, and pouring out the ashes of its unholy incense; but, even in the solemnity of that saving hour, the sun, from which its glorious beams were seen to issue, went down, and the earth of that iniquitous people was darkened “in the clear day¹.” It was darkened by the gloom of their unrepented sins. Yes, the Word of Prophecy, which spake terror to the evil doers in after-time, was, by anticipation, realized against these despisers of Divine grace. Their feasts were turned into mourning, and their songs into lamentation: sackcloth was brought upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and “the end thereof” was indeed “a bitter day².”

God grant, my brethren, that the light of our day of salvation may not so be turned into darkness, nor the end thereof prove bitterness! Upon our land it shines with a lustre more pure and blessed than that which dawned upon the land of Israel; to us the characters of its gracious purity are given, not, as they were to Jeroboam’s subjects, amid the confusion of their idolatries, or by the lips of a fellow-mortal sinking beneath the burden of that frailty from which he was commanded to rescue his brethren,—but with the full knowledge and exercise of

¹ See Amos viii. 9.

² Ibid. v. 10.

truth's prerogatives accompanying them, and ratified by the surest mercies of the Triune God,—the Father ordaining, the Son accomplishing, the Holy Ghost revealing the work of man's redemption. By these are we now warned from evil; by these are we now encouraged to good. Let not the warning or the encouragement pass away unheeded. By these may we be saved from the sin and sentence of the disobedient; by these, be enabled to hold "forth the word of life," and "rejoice in the day of Christ, that" we "have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain¹."

¹ Phil. ii. 16.

SERMON VI¹.

ON THE SUSPENSION OF DIVINE PUNISHMENT.

ECCLESIASTES viii. 11.

Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

IT is not among the least conclusive evidences which we possess of the truth of Revelation, that it places before us a description of man, not as our pride or self-love would seek to represent him, but as he really is. We see him traversing each scene of Sacred History, the living image, the exact counterpart, of ourselves; debased by the same weaknesses, inflamed by the same passions, stimulated by the same hopes, restrained by the same fears. And

¹ An Assize Sermon, preached before Mr. Justice Park and Mr. Justice Coleridge, in the Church of St. Lawrence, Reading, on Sunday, the first of March, 1835.

this, probably, is the reason, why so many amongst us are unwilling to read and ponder upon the Word of God. They feel that it exposes too strongly their deformities, points too clearly to their dangers, re-proves too severely their transgressions. It speaks unto them no smooth things, nor prophesies deceits, but boldly and without reserve, reveals the naked and unalterable truth. Such a revelation, I say, must of necessity, be unwelcome to those who seek only the indulgence of their own appetites. It is a ray of intolerable light forcing its way suddenly into the dark chamber of their sins; a painful startling from that slumber of the soul, in which they would fain continue, without disturbance, and without alarm.

But whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, God's Word must be proclaimed, God's whole counsel must be declared, unto His people. They must be urged to look faithfully unto the guidance which He vouchsafes to them, unto the admonition wherewith He warns them. And certain it is, that, if that guidance be sought, and that admonition be obeyed, on their parts, in the spirit of faithful and fervent prayer; not only will the means of grace and salvation through Jesus Christ, be clearly set before them, but the way thereunto will be made the way of pleasantness and peace. The commandments of the Lord will be no longer grievous. The yoke of Christ will be easy and His

burden light, to those who are filled “with all joy and peace in believing ¹.”

Now, it is the very converse of such a state of mind, which is set forth in the text; a state not of peace, but of enmity with God; and that enmity, arising from the very fact of God’s delaying to execute the sentence against an evil work. A most humiliating description this, and yet a true one; an instance, as strong as any which can be adduced, of the fact which I have already referred to; viz. the reality wherewith the nature and the actions of man are depicted in the Word of God. The proposition in the abstract,—that, a being, endued with reason, should run directly counter to the best dictates of his reason; that, professing to believe in a God of holiness and power, he should yet defy the commandments of that God, simply because the judgments which He hath denounced are not speedily seen to overtake every transgression, would appear diametrically opposed, not merely to all consistent reasoning upon the subject, but even to those first instinctive principles of right and wrong, which guide us in the ordinary transactions of life. And yet, this inconsistency ever has existed, and still continues to exist, in man’s nature. The cause of it is evidently “an evil heart of unbelief²,” the ascendancy maintained within us by things that are

¹ Rom. xv. 13.

² Heb. iii. 12.

seen and temporal, over those that are not seen and yet eternal. The temptation to sin is present, is visible, is palpable; not so the misery consequent upon its commission. And hence, in the case of those who walk by sight, and not by faith, it is easy to foresee in what manner the senses of the animal nature, assailed and excited as they are, by every passing object of attraction, shall become more and more insensible to the realities of the future, till, at length, they cease altogether to acknowledge their authority and control. And that this is, in fact, the actual result; that, by such a process, the rebellious passions usurp the high prerogatives of reason and of conscience, pervert the will, corrupt the affections, and fetter the energies of immortal souls, is manifold from the history of man in every age; from the testimony borne to it in the records of Inspiration; from the struggles which the believer has made, and, as long as he remains in this earthly tabernacle, must continue to make, against the solicitations of sin. However earnest, for a season, may have been the acknowledgment, or however vivid the impressions, of Divine Justice; yet, these characters become gradually changed by the succession of other cares and other fears; and retain no stronger hold upon the mind than do the broken and incoherent images of some faintly remembered dream. Thus, even the tyrant of Egypt trembled, and confessed the iniquity wherewith he

oppressed God's people, when he saw the desolation spread upon his land by the fiery tempest and the consuming hail; yet no sooner had "the rain, and the hail, and the thunders ceased," than he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, "he and his servants¹." Thus, too, the servant in the Parable, was taught to do his lord's bidding, and to wait for his lord's return; yet, no sooner did he "say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming," than he began to "smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken²." So prone is the heart of man to start aside, like a broken bow, from the commandment given unto it; so eager is it to frame to itself excuses for sin, in spite of solemn denunciations and of fearful penalties.

It is needless, however, to refer to the history of other climes, or of other days, for confirmation of this painful reality which I am now seeking to expose. For what is it that has tempted yourselves, my brethren, to commit sin, but the hope either of escaping the punishment proclaimed against it, or of enduring it under some mitigated form? And what has encouraged that hope within you, but the fact that you have often escaped the punishment already, and therefore trust to the chance of escaping it again? In other words, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, there-

¹ Exod. ix. 34.

² Matt. xxiv. 48, 49.

fore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." The unholy thought has gained access to the heart, the unholy word has fallen from the lips, the unholy act has been committed by the hand, and yet no blow has been struck, no stain of infamy has fastened on your name. You have gone on along the broad way, calmly and successfully, without thought of detection or of judgment; or, if, for a moment, such dangers have gathered about you, and threatened to destroy your peace, the cloud soon passes away, and with it pass away also your caution and your fear. Thus does "the mystery of iniquity" work in man's heart, and furnish, in each step of its progress, a more express and emphatic commentary upon the truth recorded in the text.

But let us reason together upon this subject, for one moment. Think you that this suspension of punishment, this impunity of evil, arises from any defect in the wisdom of God to discern, or in the power of God to chastise the offenders? "Behold," saith the Prophet, "the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear¹." Remember too, the Psalmist's question,—“He that planted the ear, shall he not hear: or He that made the eye, shall he not see: or he that nurtureth the heathen: it is he that

¹ Is. lix. 1.

teacheth man knowledge, shall not he punish¹?" Most assuredly He shall. It is impossible to give any other answer than this to the truth of the Psalmist's appeal. Disbelieve it you cannot; and brave it out, you dare not. Why then doth He not punish? you will ask. Alas! what would have been our condition now, if He did! If every transgression and disobedience received, immediately and without reserve, "a just recompence of reward²," who amongst you could have stood, as you have done, this day, before God, in His House of Prayer? Call to mind those commandments of the Divine Law which, in this morning's service, you have heard repeated, and to obey which you have besought aid of the God of mercy. Call those obligations to mind, and say how you have kept them. Has no love for the creatures of the world's idolatry turned away your affections from Him, whom the heaven and earth and seas obey? Have your tongues been never tempted to speak the words of uncleanness and blasphemy? Has the holy Sabbath of the Lord never been converted by any among you, into a day of idleness and sin; and suffered to pass away without the devotion of a single word or work to His glory who ordained it? Is there no unthankful child amongst those to whom I now speak,—none who has disobeyed the

¹ Ps. xciv. 8—10.

² Heb. ii. 2.

voice of father, or of mother, despised their love, and made their hearts heavy with bitter sorrow? Are there none here, whose angry and bloody thoughts have made them murderers in the sight of God; none who have worked all uncleanness with greediness, and hastened to indulge those “fleshly lusts which war against the soul¹?” Have your lips spoken no guile, no falsehood against your neighbour? Have your hearts never rankled with covetousness, or your hands never been stretched out to grasp the wages of extortion or of fraud? It is for yourselves to see how these questions can be answered. But if the history of man be, as we know too well, the history of a sinner; and if each enactment in the tables of the Divine Law present but a dismal catalogue of crimes, must we not, I ask, be bowed down with the sense of our own unworthiness, and confess, in very truth, that “it is of the Lord’s mercies, that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not²?”

We are constrained, therefore, to come to the acknowledgment of this principle,—a principle which the Word of Inspiration confirms,—that, if God suspends the execution of His sentence against an evil work, it is not in forgetfulness of the offence, but in mercy to the offender. He willeth not the death of any man, but that all should turn to Him

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 11.

² Lam. iii. 22.

and live. His “goodness,” in the language of St. Paul, “leadeth” us “to repentance¹.” It extends to us, *i. e.* the time for repentance; it grants to us the means of repentance; yea, it reveals to us that blessed hope without which the sorest repentance, though we sought it carefully with tears, would be all in vain,—the hope of salvation through Christ Jesus; the hope, that, in His blood our sins shall be washed out, that though they “be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool².”

Take heed, then, that ye despise not this glorious and blessed hope. If that be lost, every thing is lost. “There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries³.” It is even so. The sentence which is not executed speedily, because mercy intercedes, will be executed at last, when mercy shall intercede no longer. There is a judgment to be looked for. There is a fiery indignation ready to be poured out upon the world of the ungodly. For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it: “The way of transgressors is hard⁴.” “Evil shall hunt after the wicked person to overthrow him⁵.” “There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked⁶.” “The hour is coming in

¹ Rom. ii. 4.

² Is. i. 18.

³ Heb. x. 26, 27.

⁴ Prov. xiii. 15.

⁵ Ps. cxl. 11.

⁶ Is. lvii. 21.

which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation¹." These, and such as these, are the solemn denunciations written in the pages of Inspiration; and it is not for man to obliterate their character, nor to evade their power. Before us, as before the Israelites of old, are placed "life and death, blessing and cursing²." We have seen how the Almighty invites us, by "the riches of his goodness and forbearance, and long suffering³," to lay hold upon the one, and flee the other: let us see now the manner in which the contemplation of His justice enforces the same lesson, and repeats the same warning.

It is the assertion of the Wise man that "Sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily;" and we have seen the grounds upon which the truth of that assertion is established. But can it be predicated, with equal certainty, of every evil work? Does the principle obtain, invariably, throughout every stage of man's existence? Is there no record to be found of instant, immediate chastisement? If not, what mean the words wherewith the Royal Preacher of Israel follows up his assertion in the text?—"though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet

¹ John v. 28, 29.

² Deut. xxx. 19.

³ Rom. ii. 4.

surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before Him: but it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not God." Assuredly, this declaration of Divine Justice cutting off the days of the wicked, is as true as that which speaks of Divine Mercy suspending their condemnation. If evidence of this be sought for, go to the pages of the Inspired Volume; mark well the lessons which are written there; and then ask yourselves what meant the sentence of wrath passed upon our first parents at the fall, and to the reality of which, the whole creation, groaning and travailing in pain together until now, gives mournful testimony¹? What meant the destroying waters of the deluge poured out, in after ages, upon a rebellious world²? What meant the overthrow of the sinful cities of the plain, whose "smoke went up as the smoke of a furnace³?" What meant the monument of an unbelieving soul⁴ which stood there, and which our Lord Himself commands us to remember⁵, that we may take warning from it? What, the many other grievous judgments of God upon the disobedient; the horse and his rider, the chariots and armed retinue of Pharaoh cast into the sea⁶;

¹ Compare Gen. iii. 14—19, and Rom. viii. 22.

² Gen. vi. 13.

³ Gen. xix. 28.

⁴ Compare Gen. xix. 26, and Wisd. x. 7.

⁵ Luke xvii. 32.

⁶ Exod. xiv. 28.

the earth opening wide her jaws to swallow up the rebellious people¹; the fiery serpents rustling through the tents of Israel, and destroying her children that murmured²; and the plague sweeping off the hosts of their lustful brethren³? What mean, again, the records of Divine Providence unfolded to us, not only under the elder dispensation, but in the days of the Gospel covenant? There it is you read of the son of perdition reaping the bitter harvest of his sin⁴; of the speakers of falsehood falling dead at the Apostles' feet⁵; of the impious Herod smitten upon his throne of pride⁶; and of the sorcerer struck blind⁷. And more than this. The woes which you remember fell from the lips of the prophetic Saviour⁸, have been accomplished in Jerusalem; her walls are cast down, her temple is swept away, her land is made desolate, her children are trodden underfoot among the Gentiles, and, to this day, a by-word and reproach upon the earth. Alas! Jerusalem stands not alone. The Churches that once shone brightly in the light of Christian truth, have lost their heavenly splendour. Their works, and labour, and patience, and stedfast resistance against the power of evil, to which such glorious testimony was given by Him who called them into being, have ceased any longer to exist. He ex-

¹ Numb. xvi. 32.² Numb. xxi. 6.³ Numb. xxv. 9.⁴ Acts i. 18.⁵ Acts v. 10.⁶ Acts xii. 23.⁷ Acts xiii. 11.⁸ Luke xix. 43, 44.

tended to them the season of repentance; but they repented not. And lo! His word of mercy being despised, His word of vengeance hath been fulfilled. He hath, indeed, come unto them quickly, as He threatened, and hath removed their candlestick out of its place ¹.

Here then is abundant evidence of the fact, that not at all times, nor under all circumstances, is the infliction of Divine Justice suspended in this world. These are the executions, the speedy executions, of God's "sentence against an evil work." These are the monuments of God's avenging power, when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth. And, believe me, the same process is still at work. The system of retribution is going on, far more extensively and visibly, than our self-love chooses to acknowledge. It is carried on, I grant, through the agency of secondary causes; but not less surely, on that account, is it directed by Him who is the First Great Cause of all things; not less surely is the testimony of Holy Writ accomplished, which declares, that "righteousness exalteth a nation ²," but "a fruitful land maketh He barren for the wickedness of them that dwell therein ³." Was it only, think ye, to the people who received and who despised "the oracles of God ⁴," that He gave "a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind ⁵?" Was it only

¹ Rev. ii. 2—5.

² Prov. xiv. 34.

³ Ps. cvii. 34.

⁴ Rom. iii. 2.

⁵ Deut. xxviii. 65.

for them to cry out under the burden of their iniquities, and “in the morning” to “say, Would God it were even! and at even” to “say, Would God it were morning¹?” Let our own experience supply the answer;—the agony which has wrung our hearts, the shame which has covered our face, the tears which have streamed down our cheek, let these be our witnesses to tell us “that thou, O Lord, hast searched us out, and known us;” that, “from Thy Spirit and from Thy presence we cannot go².” Is it not so, I ask, with us all? Whence come the abasement of the proud, the ignominy of the profligate, the confusion of the deceiver, the poverty of the slug-gard? Whence the dungeon or scaffold of the malefactor, whence the degraded banishment of the exile? Whence all those countless ways whereby the crime is made the source and instrument of torture to the criminal? Say not that these are the natural effects of man’s imprudence; for who but the God of nature made them so³? Say not that they are ‘the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune;’ for what is that but to deny the Providence

¹ Deut. xxviii. 67.

² Ps. cxxxix. 1. 6.

³ ‘If the natural course of things be the appointment of God, and our natural faculties of knowledge and experience are given us by Him, then the good and bad consequences which follow our actions are his appointment, and our foresight of those consequences is a warning given us by Him, how we are to act.’—Bishop Butler’s Analogy. Part I. chap. 2.

of the Almighty? Such palliatives are but the contrivances of man's pride to hide his transgressions; the opiates by which he would try to lull to sleep the struggles of an awakened conscience. Say rather that they are the signs of heavenly Majesty chastising human sinfulness:—that the “sentence recorded against an evil work” is, and shall be, executed. Confess this certain fact,—and be bowed down with a sense of your infirmities and danger, as you make the confession,—that God is just, and true, and powerful; that His justice, and truth, and power stand forth even here, within sight of our mortal faculties on earth, in characters too broad and legible for any one to attempt to deny, that, “verily there is a reward for the righteous; doubtless there is a God that judgeth the earth¹.”

My brethren, we speak not the language of mere vague, unmeaning declamation, when we declare these things unto you. “We speak forth the words of truth and soberness².” We speak that which the Oracles of God have revealed unto us all;—that which, whether under the Law or under the Gospel, has alike proclaimed the righteousness of our Heavenly Judge. When, under the Law, for instance, there was a controversy among men, they were commanded to “stand before the Lord, before the priests and judges, which shall be in those days; and the judges shall make diligent inquisition³.”

¹ Ps. lviii. 10. ² Acts xxvi. 25. ³ Deut. xix. 17, 18.

—“then shall they justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked ¹.” Thus too, under the Gospel, the Apostle bids “every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil ².”

Now, it is the very display of such power,—a power which “shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked;” which, to those who do good, shall minister praise of the same; and, against those who do evil, shall bear not in vain the sword of avenging wrath,—that we, who have come this day into the Lord’s “gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise ³,” are soon to witness. It is no vain unmeaning pageant that shall pass before our eyes; no idle ceremony of man’s device that shall attract, for a few hours, the gaze of an anxious

¹ Deut. xxv. 1.

² Rom. xiii. 1—4.

³ Ps. c. 3.

multitude, and then vanish, leaving no trace behind ; but a solemn and awful scene, fraught with most deep and lasting interest to all who shall be its spectators. Before to-morrow's sun shall set, the "diligent inquisition" of human justice shall have put forth its solemn authority in this place. Before to-morrow's sun shall set, the accused prisoner shall have been seen standing at the bar, a spectacle for men to gaze at ; the witnesses shall have been sworn ; the verdict shall have been returned ; and the faithful judge shall have pronounced either the joyful sentence of acquittal, or that condemnation which shall speedily begin to take its course in the person or property of the convicted offender.

And what shall we feel who now look forward to that solemn scene ? Shall we regard it, merely with a kind of dramatic interest, and then retire ? Is there no lesson for us to read, no warning for us to receive ? If not, then have we yet to learn that we are sinners, and that, for our sins, we shall be judged of the Lord. If not, then will the records of God's Providence have been read in our ears in vain ; the prayers which we have uttered, and the confessions which we have made, will have been but the observance of so many idle forms ; and the thoughts which have presented themselves to our minds, as we have this day essayed to contemplate the mercy and the justice of the Most High, will have been but as the phantoms of some midnight

vision, which add, for a moment, to our disordered fancies, and then depart, leaving us still locked and bound in heavy slumber. But, “awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light¹.” Awake from that fatal slumber of careless impenitence. Rise up, and look instantly to the danger which threatens, as well as to the help which is offered. Know that the solemnities which you now witness, are but the shadows of God’s coming judgment. Call to mind the saying which is recorded of one of our own countrymen, that, he never beheld a criminal carried to the place of execution, but the thought came home to his own mind, that, if all his misdeeds were brought to light, and the just recompence of each were meted out unto himself, his might be the portion of the man condemned to die. Call this to mind, and then say whether your present opportunities and means of grace be not the evidence of God’s mercy pleading with yourselves; whether it speak not a word of warning as touching and solemn as that which was addressed, by our Lord, to the man whom he had healed at Bethesda, “Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee².”

Hear and obey this voice of warning, and the error, exposed in the text,—and exposed only to be condemned,—will not be yours. With the strength of such a conviction working its way to your con-

¹ Ephes. v. 14.

² John v. 14.

science and your affections, and retained in them by the spirit of earnest and repeated prayer, you will not, you cannot have your hearts fully set in you to do evil. Albeit that the condemnation of the wicked may linger in its course, its final consummation upon the impenitent, you will feel, is certain; and, by the knowledge of that certain issue,—by the knowledge of your own dangers,—by the knowledge of that grace which is able to save you from them all,—you will shrink from the indolence of the slothful, from the false security of the presumptuous, and judge yourselves, that ye be not judged of the Lord, when He appeareth. None shall be too mighty to withstand, none too lowly to escape the judgment of that Great Assize. Both we who speak, and you who hear, must then render our account to the Searcher of all hearts. They who now stand above their fellows to guide, and to admonish, and who in obedience to their country's laws, are called upon to bear their part in the just enforcement of them, must themselves bow down before the Great Lord of all. Yea, the earthly judge shall himself be judged. The secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed; and the unprofitable and faithful servant shall be for ever separated. "To day," then, "if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts:—but exhort one another daily, while it is called to day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin¹."

¹ Heb. iii. 7.

SERMON VII.

THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST STEWARD.

LUKE xvi. part of ver. 2.

Give an account of thy stewardship.

THERE are probably few persons, who, in reading or hearing the well-known Parable from which the text is taken,—the Parable of the unjust steward,—have not felt some misgiving as to the sense in which certain parts of it are to be understood, and the practical bearing upon themselves of the lessons which it professes to inculcate.

The commendation, for instance, of the unjust steward, for the wisdom of his injustice,—and, again, the precept to “make to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness,”—directly and openly as they both seem, at first sight, to oppose not only our instinctive notions of what is right, but the

whole tenor and analogy of God's unerring sanctions, certainly deserve, on that account, a careful and patient examination. And although I do not believe it to be a pursuit that tends much to edification, to be for ever canvassing difficulties; neither do I consider the habitual seeking after such topics to be a sound and healthful state of feeling, either on the part of those who discuss them, or of those who love to hear their discussion; yet,—where the difficulties lie, as they do in the present instance, upon the surface of a Parable, which, from the days of childhood, has been familiar to us all; which is so frequently recurring either in our private perusal of the Scriptures, or in the daily and weekly services of the House of Prayer, and which we believe to be fraught with admonitions so needful to our souls;—it surely may be accounted a seasonable and needful duty to make it, from time to time, the subject of our thoughtful contemplation, and of our earnest prayer to God through Christ, that, from this, as well as from every other portion of the Inspired Volume, we may derive lessons that are profitable for our improvement in righteousness.

The first part of the Parable before us, viz. that which describes the dishonest stratagem of the steward to screen himself from the consequences of his misconduct, is, of course, easy to be understood. None of us can be at a loss to discover the motive which prompted him, in the moment of his detection

and disgrace, to call his lord's debtors unto him; and,—learning from one of them, that he owed an hundred measures of oil, and from another, that he owed an hundred measures of wheat,—to bid the first sit down quickly and reduce his bill to fifty measures, and the other to fourscore. It was clearly purchasing the favour of his lord's creditors at the expense of the lord himself; diminishing, by his own counsel, the amount of the debt for which they were respectively liable to another; and so securing for himself a refuge in their houses, when he should be put out of his stewardship.

“And the lord commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely.” What lord, my brethren? not He who spake this Parable, and whom we acknowledge to be “God and Lord:” but, as the whole context of the passage authorizes us in interpreting the words, the lord of the unjust steward¹; he who had summoned the unfaithful

¹ I am aware that some commentators are to be met with, who understand the commendation passed upon the unjust steward, as having been pronounced not by his master, but by our Lord Himself. Their number, however, is but small and insignificant, when compared with the long train of high authorities upon the other side; nor should I have thought it necessary to dwell upon the matter, were it not that, in Mr. Greswell's Exposition of the Parables,—an exposition which, for the vast range of laborious research, and profound learning comprised within it, and for the spirit of piety which pervades it, must command the respect and attention of every Christian student,—the name of

servant to his presence, and bade him render an account of his stewardship; he, at whose expense

Jerome has been added,—I think erroneously,—to the list of those who ascribe to our Lord the commendation spoken of in this passage. Mr. Greswell, after having clearly shown that it ought to be regarded as having been pronounced by the master of the steward, and not by our Lord, adds, that “among commentators of old, however, Jerome understood it in the latter sense. ‘*Alteram de Evangelio Lucæ quæstiunculam proposuisti: quis sit villicus iniquitatis, qui Domini voce laudatus est. Epistola ad Algasiam.*’ Operum IV. pars. i. 195. *ad med.*” (Greswell on the Parables, Vol. iv. p. 39.)

Now, upon referring to the passage in question, I find that the words above quoted, (and which, if taken alone, would certainly bear out Mr. Greswell’s statement,) occur at the beginning of the answer which Jerome is about to give to the Sixth Question proposed to him by Algasia for solution. And by examining the sequel, it is quite evident that they ought to be regarded, not as conveying Jerome’s own interpretation, but as embodying the substance of the difficulty which had presented itself to the mind of Algasia. Thus, after having shown the connexion of the present Parable with the three which are recorded in the preceding chapter, and having touched briefly upon some of the duties which belonged to the office of steward in those days, the words of Jerome, with reference to the commendation bestowed upon the steward, are these, ‘*Si ergo dispensator iniquæ mammonæ, domini voce laudatur, quòd de re iniquâ sibi justitiam præparârit; et passus dispendia dominus, laudat dispensatoris prudentiam, quòd adversus dominum quidem fraudulenter, sed pro se prudenter egerit: quantò magis Christus, qui nullum damnum sustinere potest, et pronus est ad clementiam, laudabit discipulos suos, si in eos, qui credituri sibi sunt, misericordes fuerint.*’ The words marked in Italics show with

these further fraudulent measures were about to take effect, and from the consequences of whose just punishment, they had been contrived as a defence. He saw, he confessed, he commended, you observe, not the iniquity of the contriver, but the wisdom of the contrivance. The iniquity was punished, and punished instantly; for the stewardship was taken from the hands of him who was no longer worthy of the trust. But, nevertheless, the tenacity of purpose wherewith that dishonest servant clung to the object which he desired; the eagerness wherewith he strove to avoid the dangers which he dreaded; the zeal, the dexterity, the foresight which he evinced in providing for himself, in other quarters, the protection which he had forfeited in his master's house, were such as to draw forth,—irrespectively altogether of the motives which prompted them, or of the consequences to which they led,—the commendation of that very master. It was the wisdom of the serpent, which he wondered at, gliding, with stealthy but certain course, towards the prey on which it was about to fasten, or back to the lurking-place which might shield it from immediate danger. Its keen quick darting glance, its noiseless yet rapid movement, its bright and changing colour, its caution, its cunning, its watchfulness, may extort the

sufficient clearness to whom the commendation of the unjust steward is ascribed by Jerome.

admiration even of those who fear, and hate, and shrink from the deadly venom of the reptile itself.

It will be seen then, I trust, on what grounds the commendation of the master in the Parable before us rested, and to what parts of his servant's conduct it was confined. Carry on your thoughts now to the commentary which our Saviour makes upon the subject of this commendation, and see the humiliating lesson which it teaches—"for the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light."—"Wiser in their generation," observe:—not wiser in the abstract object of their choice; for we know that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom¹," and the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ more precious, than all the might of the mighty, or the wisdom of the wise of this world. The children of light, then, who profess to embrace salvation through Christ, have so far followed the steps of Mary, when she chose that good part which should not be taken from her². Abstractedly, the wisdom of their choice is perfect; but, relatively, "in their generation," *i. e.* in their conduct with reference to the interests of this life, in the means employed by them to seek out and preserve the object of their profession, in the spirit wherewith they exercise those means, in their zeal, their caution, their perseverance, they are less wise

¹ Prov. ix. 10.

² Luke x. 42.

than the children of this world. And this they are, simply because it is an easier thing to walk by sight than by faith. The object of their hope is distant; whereas the instruments which they have to deal with, in their progress towards the accomplishment of it, are present. The inheritance which they seek is unseen; whereas the interests which attract them, as they press forward to that prize of their high calling, are seen and tangible. Hence comes the struggle between sight and faith; between the hopes and fears, the cares and pleasures of the life that now is, and the enduring promises of that which is to come. The frailty of the flesh bends down the aspirations of the spirit. The rebel appetite that craves for the indulgence of itself; the temptations of the world that fascinate, the dangers of the world that terrify, the self-love that speaks smooth things and prophecies deceits, the indolence that shrinks from toil, and the weakness that is appalled by difficulties,—these, and all the countless modifications which attend them, are the stumbling-blocks which hinder the advancement of holy purposes. They hang like a burden even upon the spirit of prayer; and when prayer grows feeble, where is the strength of man? Well may the children of light, then, confess their dangers and their trials, and learn, more and more earnestly, the way to triumph over them! If it were possible,—and possible we know it was,—for men who “denied

the Holy One and Just ¹," to be busy and stirring in the dead hour of night, to gather their forces, and come with swords, and staves, and torches, to seize Him whom the traitor had agreed to deliver into their hands; whilst His chosen followers,—in spite of the solemn charges given unto them, and the fearful dangers threatening them,—had their senses weighed down with heavy slumber, and could not watch with Him even one hour; well may His disciples now mistrust the weakness of their nature, and watch and pray that they enter not into temptation! Well may they be excited to emulation even by the example of those who are panting after the riches of earth! They see in such men the operation of strong energies, bearing, directly and uniformly, upon whatsoever be the object of their desire; and so far must they acknowledge the wisdom of the children of the world. Be it the accumulation of wealth, or the acquisition of a great name, or the prize that is to be won in the strife of political turmoil, or the discoveries of philosophical research, or the urgent and oftentimes distracting task of providing for those who are dear to and dependent upon them, there is still no relaxation, no compromise, no faltering in their course. They early rise and late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness. The hand is swift to execute the

¹ Acts iii. 14.

plans which the wisdom of the head has contrived. New energies keep pace with new calls to exertion. Difficulties only stimulate the resolution to persevere: and so, with fresh materials of interest supplied by every passing object of the scenes around them, with fresh excitement, and fresh hopes, the children of the world struggle on, until their strength returns to dust, and they are taught to feel, that all is vanity.

But all is not vanity to the children of light. What though their spirits may often wax feeble, and the shadows of this life darken their field of vision, yet that prospect passeth not away. It is as eternal as He who gave it; and therefore the exhortation is given to press on and be stedfast; to remember the success which follows the laborious enterprises of man's nature on earth; and to apply, with loftier hopes, and to nobler purposes, the energies which are often wasted on perishable things.

Say not that the lessons here inculcated are weakened by reference to the conduct of one whose injustice was so flagrant, and whose example is so pernicious. Say rather that even the practices of the world may afford us useful instruction, if we regard them in the spirit, and determine them by the word of Christ. Is not this the argument by which He Himself has established the reasonableness of prayer,—“If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much

more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him¹?" And does He not further show, from the Parable of the poor widow, prevailing in her entreaties with the unjust judge, the mighty encouragement which is therein given unto men, that they "ought always to pray, and not to faint²?" Just so, in the present instance, good is elicited from evil; the lessons of holiness and prudence stand out in strong relief from the dark policy of the world; and the persons of the wicked become the instructors of the righteous. Israel is provoked "to jealousy by them that are no people³." It is the hand of the Gracious Physician bringing out healing medicine from the poisonous herb. It is the counsel of the wise Master Builder converting those very objects, which, to the hardened and impenitent are stones of stumbling, into steps of safe and sure ascent in the believer's path towards heaven.

In accordance with this merciful purpose, our Blessed Lord proceeds, in the sequel of the Parable, to enforce upon the children of light the duties of zeal, and watchfulness, and perseverance, by setting before them the view of the "exceeding and eternal weight of glory⁴," in store for them. His words are thus expressed: "Make to yourselves friends

¹ Luke xi. 13.

² Luke xviii. 1.

³ Compare Deut. xxxii. 21. and Rom. x. 19.

⁴ 2 Cor. iv. 17.

of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." Now, by the word "mammon" it is hardly necessary to remind you, that we generally understand wealth or money: and, therefore, by the expression "mammon of unrighteousness," if we were to take it singly, and without reference to the context, we might be led, at first sight, to suppose that it meant unrighteous wealth, *i. e.* wealth obtained unrighteously, the result of fraud or violence. But this signification of the term would involve a duty so directly at variance with all that is elsewhere taught concerning the duties and privileges of Christian men, that it were impossible to receive it as the true one. And, indeed, the context sufficiently proves that the interpretation to be attached to the epithet "unrighteousness," is not that of injustice or dishonesty, but that of frailty or uncertainty. Thus, in the eleventh verse of the present chapter, the same term is again brought forward by our Lord, and applied, by way of contrast, to the true and enduring riches of heaven. "If therefore," He saith, "ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" Yet this does not clear up all the difficulty. For even, according to this sense,—even supposing that the mammon or riches of the world, which are entrusted to our hands, be not darkened with any shade of infamy either in acquiring, or in using them,—yet,

frail and perishable as they confessedly are, making “themselves wings,” and flying “away as an eagle toward heaven¹,” how can they be said to help us in our way towards the everlasting habitations of God’s presence? How can it, in any way, accord with the precepts of our Lord, or with the exhortations of His inspired servants, to be told to make unto ourselves friends of such fallacious possessions? This question is at once answered, and the objection implied in it at once removed, by a simple denial of the matter of fact which it assumes. No such command is here given. The enquiry, therefore, which is based upon it, rests altogether upon a false hypothesis. We are not required to make the frail mammon of the world our friend; but, through its means, by the right and proper use of its agency, to make unto ourselves friends of others. That this is the proper meaning of the preposition which, in our authorized version, is translated by the word “of²,” might be proved, if it were necessary, by reference to abundant authorities. The command of our Lord, therefore, in the present instance, is but the application of that general principle which is at all times incumbent upon us,—viz. that we should exercise the gifts of God in the service of God. Whatsoever be the frailty of the world’s wealth, it is, nevertheless,—like any other possession or advantage extended to us in

¹ Prov. xxiii. 5.

² Ἐκ, ἰ. q. *ἐκ*. See Schleusner’s Lexicon, in loc.

the world, whether rank, or power, or learning, or time, or intellect,—a talent which God hath bestowed upon us who are made the stewards of His “manifold grace¹ ;” a talent which must be used to His glory, and the account of which must be rendered to His judgment. It was so used by the faithful Zacchæus; for, although he was “the chief among the Publicans, and rich²,” yet was he eager to welcome the Redeemer, and received him into his house joyfully. Yea, he “stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham³.” The friendship, therefore, to be obtained by the right exercise of our stewardship is neither mercenary in its motives, nor transitory in its nature. It comprises not only the purest joys of this world which are felt, when the blessings of the poor and fatherless and those that are ready to perish come upon their deliverer, and the widow’s heart singing for joy brings sweetest music to his ears; but also the favour of Him who hath declared, that, they who, in the name of Christ, have fed the hungry, or given drink to the thirsty, or sheltered the wandering, or clothed the naked, or visited the sick, or consoled

¹ 1 Pet. iv. 10.

² Luke xix. 2.

³ Ibid. 8, 9.

the imprisoned brethren of Christ, have done the same unto Himself¹. It depends not upon any of the interests of the world, perishable and fleeting as the world itself; but upon the sure promise of that redeeming love which appoints him who has "been faithful over a few things," to be "ruler over many things;" and bids him "enter into the joy of" his "lord²." It is the friendship proclaimed by those ministering sons of light, who are "sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation³;"—who sing their loudest hymns of praise over the repentant sinner, who see God's brightest glory manifested in the joys of His redeemed, and who, when the earthly course of those His faithful children is finished, and all the duties and trials of their mortal life have ceased to be, shall receive them "into everlasting habitations."

Contemplate, therefore, I beseech you, seriously and impartially, the greatness of the trust committed to you, the greatness of the blessing promised to you. See how the same spirit of faith which enables you to discharge the one, prepares you to enjoy the other: and then say, whether you are not furnished herein with the most constraining motive to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of your stewardship. This motive must not be lost sight of. Our Lord forbids us to do so: nay, He distinctly

¹ Matt. xxv. 35—40.

² Matt. xxv. 21.

³ Heb. i. 14.

reiterates it, in the words wherewith He concludes this Parable; saying, "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?" The contrast made here between things temporal and things eternal is most distinct. The former are called "least," the latter "much;"—the former "unrighteous," (*i. e.* fallacious and transient) the latter "true," (*i. e.* real and lasting;);—the former belonging to another, (*i. e.* entrusted unto us by a power wholly independent of ourselves, and which we have not the ability to secure or retain,) but the latter our own; for, although equally conferred upon us by a power independent of ourselves, yet the possession of them, like the mercy of Him who gave it, endureth for ever. They are the "treasures," which our Lord, elsewhere, hath commanded us to lay up for ourselves "in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal¹."

Notwithstanding, however, this marked contrast between things temporal and things eternal, there is

¹ Matt. vi. 20.

yet this congruity between them, that the disposition which rightly employs the one, is meet for the enjoyment of the other ; and, that, which misapplies the one, is unfit for the reception of the other. The one is like the pale and flickering light, which, though often enveloped, and well nigh extinguished by the noxious damps and vapours of the world in which it exists, shall, nevertheless, like “the path of the just,” shine “more and more unto the perfect day¹.” The other is that impenetrable gloom of hatred, in which he who walketh, “knoweth not whither he goeth, because darkness hath blinded his eyes².” It is impossible for these to blend into each other, like the twilight of the morning or the evening. The line of demarcation between each is broad and definite. The grace of God, indeed, may “deliver us from the power of darkness, and translate us into the kingdom of His dear Son³ ;” but it is impossible to be so translated, whilst the power of darkness remains upon us ; it is impossible for those who sleep in the deep lethargy of unrepented sins, and are as men “drunken in the night, to be of the day” and “sober ;” it is impossible for them, whilst they continue in that state, to put “on the breastplate of faith and love ; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation⁴.” “For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness ? and what commu-

¹ Prov. iv. 18.

² 1 John ii. 11.

³ Col. i. 13.

⁴ 1 Thess. v. 7, 8.

nion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel¹?" If therefore the commandments given unto us,—to "come out from among them," and to "be separate, and touch not the unclean thing,"—joined with God's blessed promises that He will receive us, "and will be a Father" unto us, and that we shall be "sons and daughters" of "the Lord Almighty²,"—if such commandments and such promises be rejected, what remaineth for those who are guilty of these sins, but to be themselves rejected with shame and condemnation from their stewardship? Whilst faithfulness in the least shall lead the way to faithfulness in "much;" so injustice in the least, must continue injustice in "much." It is the solemn fiat pronounced by the angel of the Lord, saying, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still³."

Realize this awful truth to your minds, ye who live on, from day to day, in the enjoyment of gifts for which you are responsible to the Giver, and yet are unmindful of the potent influence which the commission of single and daily acts has on the formation of your habits, whether for good or evil.

¹ 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15.

² Ib. 16—18.

³ Rev. xxii. 11.

Let it show to you the danger of swerving from the least of God's commandments, of forgetting for a single moment the position in which you all stand before Him as His stewards. Let it put to shame the pride of the presumptuous, the levity of the trifler, the boldness of the profligate. Let it sustain the lowly, with a motive as constraining as that which makes the lofty to bow down. Let it remind him that the single talent is as much a trust committed to the servant from his lord, and that an account will be as strictly required from him, as from those who have received the five, or the two talents; that, to each, "according to his ability¹," is the distribution made by the Great Lord and Master of us all; and that, as there is nothing which they have not received, so there is nothing for which they shall not have to account. Your stewardship must soon be ended;—no man knoweth how soon. Your strength must fail; and with it fail, for ever in this world, your means and opportunities of grace:—but from "the book of remembrance²" written before the Lord, shall they again come forth, as messengers of wrath to the unjust, of blessing to His faithful stewards.

¹ Matt xxv. 15.

² Mal. iii. 16.

SERMON VIII.¹

ISRAEL IN THE WILDERNESS, A WARNING TO THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

1 COR. x. 11, 12.

Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples : and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

IN the Epistle for this morning's service, we have had presented to our notice, the whole context

¹ Preached at Windsor Castle, before their Majesties and the other Members of the Royal Family, on the 16th of August, 1835, being the Ninth Sunday after Trinity. It may serve to explain some of the allusions made in the course of the Sermon, to state that the confirmation of Prince George of Cambridge had taken place in St. George's Chapel, Windsor, on Saturday, the 8th of August ; that, on the Sunday following, he received the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, together with their Majesties and the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge ; and that, on the next Saturday, the 15th of August, he received the Investiture of the Order of the Garter.

of the passage from which these words are taken ; and we find there, the Apostle bringing to the recollection of his Corinthian converts, the privileges, the sins, and the punishments of the Israelites in the wilderness, as an example and admonition to themselves. He gives to the Israelites the title of “our fathers,” not only because they were the immediate ancestors of himself, who was, (as he declares in another place,) “of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews¹ ;” but also, because all “they which are of faith,” *i. e.* all they who believe the revealed word of God, (and to such he is now addressing himself,) “the same are the children of Abraham².”

In speaking then of the privileges vouchsafed unto these their “fathers,” St. Paul refers first to the baptism which they underwent, when they so miraculously passed through the waters of the Red Sea, and were overshadowed by the dewy cloud of Jehovah’s presence ; secondly, to the manna which fell to them from heaven, and which he calls their “spiritual meat ;” and, lastly, to those streams which flowed from the rock at Rephidim, and which he calls their “spiritual drink : for they drank,” saith he, “of that spiritual Rock that followed them : and that Rock,” he emphatically adds, “was Christ.”

¹ Phil. iii. 5. ² Compare Gal. iii. 7. and Rom. iv. 12. 16.

Now, in this brief but comprehensive description of God's mercies unto Israel, we have a signal evidence of the unity of His counsels. We perceive that they were all directed to one end; and that end, the salvation of man by Jesus Christ. Whatsoever was wrought in the generations of old, was not merely preparatory to, but typical of, that glorious consummation: they were prefigurations of the truth; they were shadows of the coming Redeemer. Thus, were the sons of Israel "baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea," when they fled from the tyranny of the oppressor to the land of promise? Even so we,—when God saves us from that bondage which is more grievous than that of the task-masters of Egypt, the bondage of the strong man of sin within us, and opens unto us a way of refuge to our heavenly Canaan,—are baptized unto one greater than Moses or the prophets, even Him in whom both the law and the prophets were fulfilled, Jesus Christ:—we are cleansed in the waters of His holy ordinance, we are grafted into the body of His Church, and the solemn prayer is then offered up for us, that 'being stedfast in faith, joyful through hope, and rooted in charity, we may so pass the waves of this troublesome world, that, finally, we may come to the land of everlasting life ¹.'

Did the Israelites, moreover, "all eat the same spiritual meat?" What is that, again, but a type

¹ Baptism Service.

of Him, who is our spiritual food in the Eucharist? —who came down from heaven, to nourish and sustain the souls of His people, as they journey through the wilderness of the world; who, in that world, was “bruised for our iniquities¹,” and bore the unmitigated burden of those griefs which would have bowed ourselves to the very dust, and hindered us for ever from approaching the place of our rest? And, in tracing this analogy between the dispensations of God to Israel and to ourselves, observe, we are not working out the fanciful theories of man’s device, nor indulging the imagination at the expense of truth. We are simply following the safe and certain guidance of Christ’s own teaching. For if you refer to the sixth chapter of St. John’s Gospel, you will find, that, when He rebuked those persons who had resorted to Him only from carnal views, and had asked of Him a sign of His Divine commission, similar to that which Moses displayed, when he gave their fathers “bread from heaven to eat,” He answers them in these words: “Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give, is my flesh, which I will give for the life

¹ Isaiah liii. 5.

of the world¹." What clearer commentary can be found upon the words of the Apostle in the present passage? What more convincing evidence can be required to show, that, when he spake of the "spiritual meat" of the Israelites, he spake of that which prefigured Christ, and was fulfilled in Christ? So likewise, with regard to the miraculous means by which the thirst of the Israelites was satisfied; it was the "spiritual drink," saith the Apostle, "which they drank, of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ." This language is clear and simple. It is impossible to mistake its meaning, or pervert its application. The Rock in Horeb was smitten by the rod of the Lawgiver, when it poured out its refreshing stream; and so did the curse of the law smite Him from whom flowed "rivers of living water²." Yea, He Himself said to the woman at the well of Sychar, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life³." The consolation indicated, by the one image, of these "waters of life," is not more emphatic, than the durability expressed, in the other, the Rock from which they flow: and both appear exactly to fulfil that description which

¹ John vi. 30—51. ² John vii. 38. ³ John iv. 13, 14.

Isaiah gives, when he saith of the future Redeemer that He shall be “as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land¹.”

It will be seen, I trust, from this brief examination of the privileges vouchsafed to Israel in the wilderness, that they are identified with our own in the Christian Church. God is the author of both; Christ the Mediator of both. That which was typical in the one case, is realized in the other; that which to the Israelites was prophetic, is to the Christian a sure record of the past; and not only so; but the same assurance is likewise his safest guide in present duties, his strongest confidence in future blessings. Be it that Jehovah's presence is no longer manifested unto us, as it was unto His people of old,—since the purposes, for which those manifestations were made, have been accomplished;—be it that no bright Shechinah is seen to hover above the altar of our sanctuary, no angels' food showered down upon us from above, no waters gushing out from the rocks of our land; yet the same power which ordained those mercies, upholds our own footsteps, enlightens and purifies our own hearts. In Christ is the foundation of our hope established. He is the “chief corner-stone in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord².” “Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name

¹ Isaiah xxxii. 2.

² Ephes. ii. 21.

under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved¹." And need I remind you, how faithfully our Church has trained us in the knowledge of these blessed truths : how earnestly she points to the Scriptures as their sole depository ; how mercifully she applies their sanctifying power, in her various ordinances, to every part of our earthly pilgrimage? For this end, she presents the infant children unto the Lord ; for this, she teaches them to learn His will ; for this, she leads them to make open profession of their faith ; for this, she feeds them with the spiritual food of the most precious body and blood of His Son our Saviour Jesus Christ ; for this, she still follows them along every path of duty, speaking to their hopes and fears, to their joys and sorrows, to every changing scene of their changing lives ; and, when their course is finished, their work achieved, their warfare accomplished, even then she is still with them, and commits their bodies to the ground, ' earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, in sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be like unto his glorious body, according to the mighty working, whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself².'

It were needless, I trust, to dwell longer upon this part of our subject. Every heart, that has been touched with the sense of God's mercy, must have

¹ Acts iv. 12.

² Burial Service.

felt the force of those to which I refer ; and every tongue, that has rejoiced to speak of the wonderful works of God, must have numbered them among his praises. But yet, however earnest may be our conviction of this general truth, or however sincere our acknowledgment of its obligation, there are occasions and seasons, marking the lives of us all, in which its voice speaks with more loud and solemn authority, and awakens in our hearts a more earnest and affectionate response. Not to listen to that appeal, would be to reject the counsel of God against ourselves ; and to make the things, which He hath ordained for our peace, an occasion of falling. For it is only in mercy to our souls, that He vouchsafes thus to arrest our attention ; and, whatsoever may be the outward difference of the means employed to effect that object, or whatsoever contrast the feelings of serious thought excited by them may present ; the end, intended by them all, is, most assuredly, our growth in grace, our improvement in every good word and work.

Truly then it is for us to recognize and be thankful for the operation of such gracious counsels, in the solemn services which have recently engaged the hearts and minds of those, to whom I now speak. Those services have been observed, I trust, in the spirit of sincere and humble faith. The blessings which they commemorate, the promises to which they aspire, and the duties which they involve, cannot and must

not be forgotten. Did not the light of the preceding Sabbath witness, in this place, the celebration of that hallowed ordinance which Christ hath instituted in remembrance of Himself? And did not thoughts of deep and awful interest accompany its observance? It was the fulfilment of Christ's command; the drawing near with faith unto the table of the Lord; the prayer for pardon, for strength, for holiness; the humble confession of unworthiness; the due reception of those holy mysteries, whereby you acknowledged that Christ had died for you, that Christ's blood was shed for you; it was the outpouring of your praises unto the heavenly King, unto Him, who, with the Holy Ghost, is most high in the glory of God the Father.

It was all this, my brethren, and yet much more than this. For there was one among the devout worshippers of that day who did, for the first time, lift up his heart and voice in acknowledgment of these mercies; who testified, by that act, the sacred power of that obligation, which, on the preceding day, he had taken upon himself. And what obligation could be more binding upon the disciple of Christ, than that which was so conferred? To feel that, there, in the presence of God, and of that congregation, he had renewed the solemn promise and vow that was made in his name at baptism; that, he had ratified and confirmed the same in his own person, and acknowledged him-

self bound to believe, and to do, all those things which his Godfathers and Godmothers then undertook for him ; that, there, having joined in supplication to his heavenly Father, with those who were dearest to him upon earth, he had received the imposition of hands from the rulers of our Church, after the example of those early converts who were thus confirmed by the Apostles¹, and heard, at the same moment, that affecting petition offered up in his behalf, ‘Defend, O Lord, this thy servant with thy heavenly grace, that he may continue thine for ever ; and daily increase in thy Holy Spirit more and more, until he come unto thy everlasting kingdom² ;’—to feel, I say, that he had been made a partaker of such privileges, and, with the impression of them fresh and deeply graven on his heart, that he had come to testify his faith, his love, his allegiance to the Great Captain of his salvation :—what could more powerfully affect his own heart, or the hearts of those who then knelt with him around the table of the Lord? Surely the fidelity, and wisdom, and care, with which our Scriptural Church seeks to build up her children in the faith, must then have been thankfully confessed. Surely, that merciful and all-wise God who, from the cradle to the grave, sustains His people ; who, in the buoyancy of childhood, or the sedateness of maturer years, has still a warning and a blessing for those who trust

¹ Acts viii. 14—17.

² Confirmation Service.

in Him, must then indeed have been recognized, as revealing the most pure and precious consolations of His Holy Spirit.

And yet, with what scrutinizing jealousy does it behove us to watch the workings of our own hearts even at this very time? For if, whilst the recollection of these solemnities and these blessings is present to our minds, we read—as we have read this day,—of the privileges, the sins, the chastisements of God’s people in the wilderness, and hear the Apostle telling us that “all these things are written for our admonition,” to the end that “he who thinketh he standeth, should take heed lest he fall:”—are we not furnished herein, with a clear and direct command to judge ourselves that we be not judged of the Lord? If it were possible for our spiritual “fathers” to have received such especial mercies at the hands of Jehovah, and so soon to forget the Giver: if they, who had seen the horse and his rider, the chariot and armed retinue of Pharaoh, sink like “lead in the mighty waters,” and who had joined in the exulting strains of Miriam’s song, because “the Lord had triumphed gloriously¹,” could so quickly disobey His will; nay, if the mercies to which the Apostle has referred in this very passage of Scripture, were freely given to them all; and yet murmurs and rebellions were heard among them:—if, when He delivered unto them His statutes, He sent forth

¹ Exod. xv. 1. 10.

thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the blast of the loud trumpet; and, from the midst of such terrible mysteries pronounced those commandments which we, no less than the Israelites, have received, and which we have this day prayed unto the Lord that He would incline our hearts to keep;—and if, furthermore, Moses was commanded to “draw near unto the thick darkness where God was,” and received, in that high and holy conference, the knowledge of such things as were at once a guide for present duties, and the type of future blessings unto His people;—and yet, notwithstanding all this, if their hearts turned back again to the abominations of Egypt, their tongues spake guile, their hands wrought shame, and their feet were swift to do evil,—what a spectacle does it present of the stubborn sinfulness of man; and how intimately does it concern ourselves who gaze upon it! The sons and the daughters of Israel stand not alone. We who have shared their privileges, have shared too, I fear, their sins. We hear of their lusts, their idolatries, their pride, their murmurings, their rebellions; and what are these but records of man’s guilt in our own day?—evidences, painful evidences, of the fact, that those impieties, which provoked the Lord God to anger in the desert, and for which the punishments enumerated by St. Paul in the words before us were inflicted, are still found to cling with all their fearful

variety of aggravation unto ourselves, and make the burden of our offences intolerable. No vague, unmeaning words have those been, wherewith we have this day confessed the humiliating truth, that, 'we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and have done those things which we ought not to have done.' No needless petition has that been which this day has besought the Lord 'to have mercy upon us, to spare them which confess their faults, to restore them that are penitent, according to His promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesu our Lord.'

God grant that our confession may have been sincere, our prayers for pardon fervent! For, certain it is, that, if there be any consideration, which can more especially impart sincerity to that confession and fervour to those prayers, it is the conviction which arises from the contemplation of our weakness and of God's great mercy. Never, therefore, let the impulses of youthful energy, or the brightness of youthful hope, obliterate that conviction. Rather let us pray that the guileless spirit of the young may receive a deeper impression of the truth; and that a more pure and intense glow of devotion may thus be shed over his words and works of faith. It is in vain to hide from ourselves the necessity of this aid from above: it is in vain to speak smooth things, or prophesy deceits, or say peace, where there is no peace. Let not him, therefore,—whose heart has been so recently

impressed with the sense of this reality, and whose lips have made the public acknowledgment of it,—be tempted so far to forget its influence as to think that no clouds shall ever gather over the bright landscape of his existence, or that no temptations shall assail his nature, and no trials bear down his strength. They must have come to him already; and increasing years shall only increase their number, and diversify their form. How then is he to encounter their opposition, or endure their rigour? Whence is he to derive his strength, and confidence, and hope? I might point to the restraints and encouragements which even the world affords. I might lay stress, for instance, upon the obligation laid upon him to return the affections, and fulfil the hopes, of parental love. I might point out to him the claims of those who, possessing not a parent's name, have yet bestowed upon him a parent's care. I might refer to the duties which he owes to a country that has nurtured the years of his childhood, and shed its noblest honours upon the path of his early manhood. I might remind him of the jealousy with which the actions and words of those who stand in the high places of the earth, are scrutinized by the crowds beneath them; and of the heavier burden of reproach that is laid upon all who stumble or fall in the path of greatness. I might dwell upon all these; but I forbear to do so, because I feel that the young, and ardent, and generous spirit is eager to acknowledge their influence, and

because the interests and associations of the world will always be ready to supply such motives and ends of action. I seek, therefore, to recall his thoughts to that truth which shall remain, when earthly honours shall have crumbled into dust; that truth, which the Church has taught him; that truth, which its faithful ministers and the guardians of his youth have impressed upon him; which has grown with his growth, and strengthened with his strength; the authority of which he has been enabled to ascertain; the obligations of which he has publicly confessed,—in a day when many think scorn of such sacred ordinances;—and the memory of which, I trust, shall never be effaced, wheresoever may be the scene, or whatsoever the destinies of his future life.

I seek to impress these things the more earnestly upon him by reason of the admonition addressed to us in the present passage. When the Israelites sinned, and the anger of the Lord fell upon them, it was not the wisdom of the wise, nor the might of the mighty, that restored them; but He, by whose Word and guidance they had been hitherto sustained. Thus, when fiery serpents destroyed the affrighted multitude, it was the brazen serpent,—which Moses was commanded to lift up on high among the people, and to which they looked with the eye of faith,—that healed their misery, and put away from them their terror. And what was that blessed mystery, but a type of Christ, lifted up on the cross, that

“whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life ¹?” Again, when the plague went forth among the people, we are told that it was Aaron who “ran into the midst of the congregation and put on incense, and made an atonement for the people; and stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stayed ².” And was not that earthly high priest a type of Him who is our “High Priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedec ³ ;” who hath put on the incense, not of earthly perfumes, but of His own all-prevailing merits, and made atonement for the people; who hath stood, and still stands, between the dead and the living; who hath stayed, yea, who still stays, and by His meritorious intercession ⁴ will continue to stay, the moral plague that is gone forth among us, that deep infection of our nature, which, if there were none to help, would cast both soul and body into hell. He, then, is your hope and your salvation. Lay hold upon His promises. Cast yourself unreservedly upon His power. Look earnestly and stedfastly to His glory. Then will you be able to possess your soul in patience, and feel, more clearly than any tongue can tell, the blessedness of that assurance, where-with St. Paul closes his present exhortation, “There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not

¹ John iii. 15.

² Numb. xvi. 47, 48.

³ Compare Ps. cx. 4. Heb. vii. 3. ⁴ See Heb. iv. 14, ad fin.

suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it¹.”

And are there any here, my brethren, who shall be tempted to think that the reflections, suggested by this passage of Scripture, come not home unto their own hearts, with an authority and application as cogent as unto him to whom we have addressed this admonition? Are there any here who dream, that they are standing upon that high vantage ground, from which they can calmly look down upon their fellow-mortals, and speak to them the language of cold dictation, whilst their own hearts are untouched, their own affections unsubdued? God forbid that we should be so deceived, or so deceive others! Let all of us, who think that we stand, take heed lest we fall. If the Apostle speaks, at the conclusion of that chapter which immediately precedes the present, of the necessity that was laid upon him to “keep under his body and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when he had preached to others, he himself should be a castaway² ;” who amongst ourselves can dream of ease or safety, or think that he is exempt from a life of struggling, of watchfulness, of prayer? Whatsoever admonition, therefore, we may have addressed to the youthful disciple of Christ, whatsoever thoughts of seriousness

¹ 1 Cor. x. 13.

² 1 Cor. ix. 27.

may have been excited within us by the reflection of his vows, or his responsibility, let all these centre in our own hearts; there let them be preserved in the spirit of earnest and thankful humility. For have we not all taken upon us the same vows? Are we not all subject to the same responsibility? And if more years have rolled over our heads, since we first renewed the solemn profession of our Christian allegiance, has that diminished aught of our difficulties or our dangers? Has not that lapse of time rather brought us nearer to our great account; to that period, when time wasted, and talents abused, and means of grace despised, shall rise up in judgment, to condemn the careless, and put the proud to everlasting shame? Let us then "be not high-minded, but fear¹;" fear to offend God, fear to provoke His anger, fear to reject His love. He has spoken to us this day in the accents of solemn warning. He has led our hearts to think upon those things, which, by His grace, shall cleanse and strengthen them; and if the recollection of one, who is about to enter upon the path of life, with all the strong energies of the youthful spirit, shall have led ourselves to ponder anxiously upon the means which can alone enable him to finish that course with joy²; if it shall have awakened within us a feeling of thankfulness, that he has been thus far protected amid the dangers of this frail estate, and been

¹ Rom xi. 20.

² Acts xx. 24.

enabled to understand and to give “a reason of the hope” that is in Him; let us recognize in all this an additional motive and encouragement unto ourselves, “not to be weary in well-doing².” Let us eagerly confess this as a great and special cause for thankfulness, amid the mercies vouchsafed unto us; and pray unto the ‘Lord of all power and might, who is the Author and Giver of all good things, that He would graft in our hearts the love of His name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of His great mercy, keep us in the same: through Jesus Christ our Lord³.’

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 15.

² Gal. vi. 9.

³ Collect for Seventh Sunday after Trinity.

SERMON IX.

EZRA READING THE LAW.

NEHEMIAH viii. 9.

And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.

THE portion of Sacred History contained in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah is, not unfrequently, I believe overlooked amid the multitude of solemn and affecting truths which fill up the Volume of inspiration. They contain, it may be thought, no specific prophecies of our Saviour's days, nor of the nature of His kingdom. They do not immediately connect themselves with the consideration of our Saviour's Ministry: and, therefore, we are tempted to pass them by. Yet notwithstanding, they form part of "the whole counsel of God¹."

¹ Acts xx. 27.

They are written, like every other part of Scripture, for our admonition. They reveal that which must especially claim the attention of all who seek diligently to compare spiritual things with spiritual, viz. the steps by which God's providence prepared the way for the coming of Him who was "the Desire of all nations," and who should fill His latter house with a glory greater than that of the former, and give, in that place, peace unto His people¹. They describe, moreover, scenes not only of deep and touching interest, in their own character, but such as are calculated, by God's blessing, to guide, instruct, and encourage the spirits of all who pray that "through faith and patience," they may "inherit the promises²," and be ever mindful of the noble works which God hath done in their days, and in the old time before them³.

These Books relate, for instance, the return of the Jewish people to Jerusalem from their long captivity in Babylon; the rebuilding of their Temple and City, notwithstanding the opposition of open enemies and the treachery of false friends; the restoration of Jehovah's statutes, and the renewal of Jehovah's ordinances. The history of all these leading events is attended with marked and peculiar circumstances. Many years were required to bring them to their completion; and, during those years, the hearts of God's people

¹ See Haggai ii. 7—9.

² Heb. vi. 12.

³ The Litany.

were sometimes elated with hope, sometimes depressed with fear. At one moment, they rejoiced to think that they had taken down their harps from the willows which grew by the waters of Babylon, and could once more sing, unbidden, the true songs of Sion in their own, their father-land. At another, the trumpet sounded an alarm in their holy mountain; and the builders were girded with the sword of battle; and the watchmen held "the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared¹." Now, we hear the shouting of the people, because the stones were hewn again and brought to our excellent work; and the foundation of the Lord's House was laid amid the music of their cymbals and hymns of thanksgiving. But soon, again, the voice of the ruler is lifted up to rebuke the people for their sins; his hand is stretched out to punish those who had joined in unholy marriages with strangers; and he summons the whole assembly with solemn fasting and humiliation, to confess the iniquities of themselves and of their fathers, and to worship the Lord their God. A most difficult and arduous work, therefore, was to be wrought out by those who were set, at such a time, in authority over the Jewish people; and, in the zeal wherewith they applied themselves to accomplish it, in their steadfast watchfulness, in their earnest supplication

¹ Nehem. iv. 21.

for Divine aid, both the rulers and the people of our own day may find a lesson, as needful as it is salutary, for their guidance.

Zerubbabel and Jeshua the high priest were the first to whom this important trust, of leading back Israel to Jerusalem, was committed; "and with them were" Haggai and Zechariah "the prophets of God helping them¹." Into their hands had Cyrus, the king of Persia, delivered the vessels of the Temple, when he took Babylon; and, under their direction, "the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem²," and commenced the work of restoration. About twenty years after, Ezra was appointed to be unto them not only a preacher of righteousness, but the judge of secular abuses; and he, again, at the distance of thirteen years, was succeeded in his civil duties by Nehemiah; but still continued, in his character of Priest and Scribe, to exhort and instruct the people. It was the influence of Nehemiah, which, under God's blessing, gave stability to Jerusalem, and cast confusion upon her enemies. He held an office of great honour in the court of Artaxerxes at Shushan; but there was that within him which far outweighed the privileges of earthly distinction,—a heart sanctified by the fear and love of God,—a heart which taught him, even amid the luxury and pomp of

¹ Ezra v. 1, 2.

² Ibid. iii. 1.

eastern palaces, to think upon the chosen city of the Lord; and to repeat in spirit, if not in words, the earnest aspiration of the Psalmist, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth: yea, if I prefer not Jerusalem in my mirth ¹." There was the Sanctuary of Jehovah rising slowly from its ruins; there were his brethren struggling with fearful difficulties; the sword of the avenger was drawn to slay them; the snares of the envious were laid to deceive them; "without were fightings, and within were fears ²." No marvel, therefore, that the countenance of Nehemiah should have been sad, even at the royal banquets; and that, when the king enquired the reason, he should have told him, without reserve, that it was because "the city the place of his fathers' sepulchres was lying waste, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire." He besought the king accordingly, that he might go to the assistance of his countrymen: and his prayer was "granted," (as he himself so devoutly acknowledges) "according to the good hand of his God upon him." He was commissioned to go to Jerusalem with the title of *Tirshatha* or governor.

I might pause here, if time permitted me, to dwell on the character of Nehemiah, and show how

¹ Ps. cxxxvii. 5, 6.

² 2 Cor. vii. 5.

Divine grace, whilst it sustains the lowly, is still the best safeguard to protect those who stand in the high places of the earth ; how it enables them to withdraw from the allurements of ease, and to resist the temptations of wealth and power, by fixing their affections, purified and exalted by the hope of heavenly promise, on Him who is mightier than the mightiest ; and how, by a necessary consequence, it teaches them to remember their God, in the brightest hour of their prosperity ; and to regard the external privileges which He vouchsafes to them, as so many instruments to promote his glory in heaven, and the welfare of their brethren upon earth. I might also stop to point out the full and perfect patriotism of Nehemiah's character ; and describe the bright contrast which it presents to the base and selfish purposes which are so often sheltered beneath that honourable name ; but these considerations, however just in themselves, or however intimately connected with the sacred narrative, would lead me too far away from the subject, more immediately suggested by the text, viz. the people of Jerusalem mourning when they heard the words of the law.

In order to understand fully the circumstances connected with this passage, it will be necessary to bear in mind that the Law, *i. e.* the five books of Moses, had never been read to the Jewish people since their return from Babylon. And the reason

of this was not only the removal of the original manuscripts of the Law and of the Prophetical writings, at the time when Jerusalem was captured and the Temple destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar; but also the fact of the long captivity of the Jews having generally substituted the use of the Chaldee for the Hebrew language in which, as you are aware, the Sacred Books were written. To collect, therefore, and revise the various manuscripts, which had been dispersed during the captivity, and to explain the same to the people in the language which they commonly understood, was a work of no ordinary difficulty. This work was allotted to Ezra; and he executed it with zeal, with diligence, with fidelity. Upon the present occasion, which we are told was the feast of the trumpets,—*i. e.* the beginning of the civil year of the Jews,—the people were assembled from all parts of the land at Jerusalem; and, knowing that Ezra had finished his revision of the Law, and transcribed a correct copy of it, they called upon him to have it read unto them. Whereupon a large stage or scaffold was erected in the most spacious street of the city near to the water gate. Ezra ascended to it with thirteen others of the principal elders; and having placed six of them on his right hand, and seven on his left, he stood up in the midst of them, “and blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered Amen, Amen, lifting up their hands: and they

bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord, with their faces to the ground." Ezra then proceeded to read the Law in the Hebrew text; and, as he read, the thirteen Levites who were standing on each side, and whom he had instructed and appointed for this purpose, translated it, sentence by sentence, into Chaldee, which, as I before observed, was the language in common use,—and thus gave to the people the meaning of each successive portion of the Divine Word, and made them to understand the same. This was repeated daily during the entire Festival, till they had gone through the whole Law.

And now, observe the impression made upon the people by the declaration of these solemn truths. Their eyes were opened to the clear knowledge, of those things which they had before seen only through the partial and remote instruction of teachers in the land of their captivity. Their hearts were touched with the consciousness of the great mercies which the Lord their God had wrought for them, and upon the sad return which the history of their own sins, and the sins of their fathers, presented. They were overwhelmed with sorrow, as they thought upon His holiness, and their own iniquity; upon His mercies and their own unthankfulness.

Well might they weep, as they heard and pondered upon these things. For if, in former days, the king Josiah, who "did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the ways of

David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left¹," was nevertheless shaken to his very soul, when his ears were opened to the awful solemnities of revealed truth; if, when he heard Shaphan the scribe reading "the words of the book of the Law," which Hilkiah the priest had "found in the house of the Lord," "he rent his clothes²," in token of his alarm lest the wrath of the Lord, which he felt had been justly kindled against his people³, should be in very truth accomplished,—how much more must the hearts of Israel have trembled now, whilst they heard the words of the Law? Theirs must have been the deep humiliation of Job, when he listened to the voice of the Lord answering him out of the whirlwind; and, as each successive manifestation of His glorious Majesty passed before their mental vision, each one of them, like the conscience-stricken Patriarch, must have confessed, "I have heard thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes⁴." Theirs must have been that overpowering sense of human frailty and of the Divine perfections, which filled Isaiah's spirit, when he saw "the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filling the temple, and the attendant seraphim crying out, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord

¹ 2 Kings xxii. 2.

² Ibid. 8—11.

³ Ibid. 13.

⁴ Job xlii. 1—6.

of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory;” and which forced him to exclaim, “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 hosts¹.” Yea, if we can imagine scenes less mysterious indeed, less marked with images of a awful sublimity than these, but not less powerfully carrying to the heart the conviction of its own unworthiness in the sight of God; we may conceive that the feelings of Israel, bowed down and weeping as they heard the words of the Law, were akin to those of the Apostle Peter, when, astonished at the miraculous draught of fishes, which, after a night of wearisome and unprofitable toil, had been taken by the simple fiat of his Master’s will, “he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord².”

The reading of the Law, in fact, revealed to the eyes of Israel a spectacle, the same in kind as that which had overwhelmed with awe the spirits of the Patriarch, the Prophet, the Apostle. It was the spectacle of Jehovah’s creative glory, Jehovah’s avenging power, Jehovah’s redeeming mercy. They saw there His gracious counsel calling their great ancestor to the knowledge of His will, giving unto them the promise of His covenant, and sealing that covenant

¹ Isaiah vi. 1—5.

² Luke v. 8.

with the solemn token of His own appointment¹. They saw there that “a Syrian ready to perish had been their father,” that he had gone “down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and had become there a nation, great, mighty, and populous².” They saw there, further, that, from the tyranny of Egyptian bondage, the Lord had brought them forth “with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs and with wonders³.” Amid those wondrous signs they saw judgments mingled with mercies;—the waters standing on an heap as a way for the ransomed to pass through; the pillar of fire and of cloud; the manna falling from heaven; the water flowing from the Rock; the Law proclaimed amid the terrors of Sinai; the tabernacle appointed with its sacred ordinances; and the terror of opposing enemies baffled and confounded. These were the miracles of God’s love; and alas! with these they saw also the signs of His righteous anger;—the Sabbath-breaker stoned; the leprous Miriam; the yawning earth; the fiery serpents; the wasting pestilence. Still they looked onward, and saw there the onward course of God’s good promise;—the land flowing with milk and honey; their fathers entering therein; and receiving for their portion “great and good cities which” they had builded not,

¹ See Genesis, chapters xii. xv. and xvii.

² Deut. xxvi. 5.

³ Ibid. 8.

“and houses full of all good things,” which they had filled not, “and wells digged” which they had digged not, “vineyards and olive-trees” which they had planted not¹;—and notwithstanding that they forgat and transgressed His word, they saw God still bearing with them, still multiplying His acts of goodness, still sending unto them all His “servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them².” Was not this a picture fitted to subdue the spirits, and to call forth the tears of those who gazed upon it? To see God’s vineyard fixed “in a very fruitful hill;” thus fenced on every side, the stones thereof gathered out, and a tower “built in the midst of it;” to see it planted with the choicest vine, which, “when it had taken root, filled the land,” and covered the hills with its shadow, “and its boughs were like the goodly cedar trees;”—to see all these things, and yet to find that, when the Great Master of the vineyard “looked that it should bring forth grapes, it brought forth wild grapes,”—what was this but cause for mourning? “He looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry³.” No marvel that the sentence of God’s wrath should have gone forth against the place of the vineyard, which His right hand had planted, and the branch which He had made so strong for Himself. No

¹ Deut. vi. 10, 11.

² Jer. vii. 25.

³ Compare Isaiah v. 1—7. and Psalm lxxx. 8—11.

marvel that it should have been burnt with fire, and cut down, and have perished at the rebuke of His countenance¹. They who now listened to these revealed counsels of the Lord had known, had seen, had felt their awful reality. They had been driven forth with shame from the gates of Sion, and the chosen city and temple of the Lord had been “delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence²,” even as His prophets had foretold. In the far off land of their captivity they had suffered the threatened chastisement of the Lord. He had fed “them with the bread of tears,” and had given “them plenteousness of tears to drink.” He had made them a very strife unto their neighbours; and their enemies had laughed them to scorn³. The vineyard, once fenced on every side, had been broken down; the wild boar out of the wood had rooted it up; and the wild beasts of the field devoured it⁴. “Turn us again,” then, was the prayer which fell from the hearts and lips of disobedient and chastised Israel, “turn us again, O Lord God of hosts; shew the light of Thy countenance, and we shall be whole⁵.” And verily their cry had come up before the throne of the Lord of hosts. Their prayer had been answered. He had turned Him again, and looked down from heaven, and beheld, and visited

¹ See Psalm lxxx. 15, 16.

² Jer. xxxii. 36.

³ Psalm lxxx. 5, 6. ⁴ Ibid. ver. 12, 13. ⁵ Ibid. ver. 19.

His vine. He had promised that Israel should not be forgotten of Him ¹, and His promise was accomplished. What though desolation had been spread upon the face of Palestine, and the hand of the Babylonish tyrant stretched out against her children, yet did the Lord redeem Jacob, and “glorify Himself in Israel ².” “The word of His servant” was confirmed, and “the counsel of His messenger performed,” “that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof: that saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers; that saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure; even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid ³.”

The multitudes who now thronged the streets of Jerusalem had been themselves eye witnesses of these things. They had seen the pomp of Belshazzar’s pride, the destruction of Belshazzar’s fall; —the gates that defended him broken through, and the bars of iron cut asunder; the waters of the broad Euphrates dried up; and the hand of the spoiler falling upon the horses, and upon the chariots, upon the treasures, and upon all the mingled people that were in the midst of the idol city ⁴. They had seen these things. They had heard

¹ Isaiah xlv. 21. ² Ibid. ver. 23. ³ Ibid. ver. 26—28.

⁴ See Isaiah xlv. 1—3. Jer. l. 35—38.

the proclamation of the royal Cyrus, bidding them go forth to Jerusalem ; and as, in their hour of distress, the cry for pity and for pardon had been heard among them, so now, “when the Lord turned again the captivity of Sion, as the rivers in the south, their mouth was filled with laughter and their tongue with joy¹.” They had sown in tears, but now they reaped in joy. They had gone on their way weeping, and bearing forth good seed ; but now they had come again with joy, and brought their sheaves with them². Behold then the mingled feelings of Israel’s people. Behold the record of all these marvellous acts brought, one by one, before them ; all that could melt the hardened, or subdue the reckless, or awaken the sluggish, or quicken the faith, and hope, and love of the believer,—and then may you understand the blessed fulness of that consolation wherewith their rulers encouraged them, saying, “This day is holy unto the Lord your God ; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.”

I invite your attention to this subject, my brethren, because I believe it to be one which deeply and personally concerns us all. The pencil of the painter may pourtray it upon the canvas ; the pen of the chronicler may write it in the annals of past ages ; but however faithfully by these it may be presented

¹ Ps. cxxvi. 1, 2, 5.

² Ibid. ver. 6, 7.

to the eye of imagination or of sense,—however vividly we may see arrayed before us the Priest reading the Law, the Levites translating it, the people hearing it, and weeping as they hear;—there are, nevertheless, feelings suggested by the contemplation of this subject, which far transcend the most affecting associations of its historical interest, because they come home directly to the hearts of each of us, and make us not spectators but actors in the solemn scene before us. For is not this day holy unto the Lord our God? Are we not assembled here, in His presence, to hear the words of His revealed Will? And do not the characters of man's perverseness and rebellion, which that revelation depicts, stand out in as strong and humiliating contrast with the mercy and long-suffering of God now, as they did in the day of Jerusalem's redemption from captivity? The hearts of her children were softened, and their eyes run down with tears, whilst the counsels of God's gracious Providence were proclaimed in their presence. And can we listen to those counsels unmoved,—we, who have heard not only the Law, but the Gospel,—not only the testimony of Moses, who “verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant,” but that of Christ, who is “as a son over his own house¹ ;”—we, who have received not the ministration of the Old but of the New Testament; not the temporary ministration of

¹ Heb. iii. 5, 6.

the letter and of death, glorious though it was, and “written and engraven in stones,” but the far more glorious and eternal “ministration of the Spirit,” of “life,” of “righteousness¹?” Can we, I ask, remain unmoved, who have been redeemed not from the bondage of the Babylonian oppressor, but from the prison-house of the strong man of sin; for whom, not Cyrus has come forth as God’s captain to dry up the deep waters of the river that separated His people, or as God’s shepherd to lead back His flock to the pastures and fold which He had prepared for them; but for whom that Great Captain of our salvation hath appeared, who “hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over²,” that Good Shepherd of the sheep, who seeketh them and delivereth them “out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day,” who feedeth them and causeth them to lie down in rich pastures, who seeketh “that which was lost,” and bringeth “again that which was driven away,” and bindeth “up that which was broken,” and strengtheneth “that which was sick³,” who leaveth not His flock, as the hireling doth, to robbers or devouring wolves, but layeth down His life in their behalf. And therefore doth His father love Him, because He layeth down His life that He may take it again⁴. Verily, the words of Prophecy have, by this wondrous work of mercy, been accomplished for our

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 6—10.

² Isaiah li. 10.

³ Ezek. xxxiv. 11—16.

⁴ John x. 11—17.

salvation. "The breaker is come up before" the company of the redeemed: "they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it: and their king shall pass before them, and the Lord on the head of them ¹."

Who amongst us can dare to remain cold or careless, whilst the tidings of this salvation are ringing in our ears? Assuredly we all need the message which is here conveyed to us. The evil which we have done, and the good which we have left undone, are evidences enough to show that an arm mightier than our own is required to help us. Yea, the sins which have gathered so quickly about our path,—when walking therein according to our own devices,—"have taken such hold upon" us, that we are "not able to look up; they are more in number than the hairs of" our head, and our "heart hath failed us ²." And yet, like Israel, we are permitted to draw near unto the Lord, to hear His Word, to keep His ordinances. His wisdom, His love, His power, His justice, are all revealed unto ourselves, as mercifully as unto them;—revealed, not by the slow process through which, as we have seen, the words of the Law were translated, verse by verse, unto the listening multitudes of Jerusalem, but, speaking to us, from earliest childhood, in the dear accents of our mother-tongue; and associated with all those blessed ordinances of the Church which

¹ Micah ii. 13.

² Psalm xl. 15.

track our footsteps along each path of our pilgrimage on earth; and seek, with a faithfulness and diligence that are never wearied, to sanctify to our souls' eternal welfare, each passing incident of our lives. We know that the heart swells with thankfulness, and that tears, more eloquent than words, pour down the cheek, when earthly benefactors compassionate our sorrows and supply our wants. But what compassion or what aid can be compared with His, who has heaped upon us such benefits as these;—who hath thus sent His Anointed “to preach good tidings unto the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound: to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified¹?” Yes, my brethren, we have indeed been made partakers of that new covenant which the Lord, by the mouth of His prophets, declared that He would make “with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not (saith He) according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in

¹ Isaiah lxi. 1—3.

the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an 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 people¹." Thus, it is our privilege to know that we are no longer under the Law, but the Gospel; no longer under the covenant of works, but the covenant of grace. "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ²."

Let us take heed, however, to ourselves, that, in so confessing that truth of Christ which has made us free, we mar not the confession by abusing the freedom. We are freed from the Law as a covenant; but we are not freed from the Law as a rule. The curse that was due to sin has been taken away; but thereby only a more solemn obligation has been laid upon us to avoid sin. The liberty, therefore, which we enjoy, as the redeemed of Christ, must not be used "for a cloak of maliciousness³;" neither must His truth be held in unrighteousness; nor His Gospel be so received by any man, as that He should forget the requirements of the Law. And, remember, that, in preach-

¹ Jer. xxxi. 31—33. and Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.

² John i. 17.

³ 1 Pet. ii. 16.

ing the Law, we do not put forth its terrors, in order that men may be affrighted or despair; but that they may be startled from the slumber of a false security, and fly for refuge unto Christ. 'To preach the law alone,' (saith a Bishop of our Church in the seventeenth century,—than whom, certainly, no man can be found to give more direct and emphatic testimony to the free grace of God),—'to preach the law alone by itself, we confess, is to pervert the use of it; neither have any power or commission so to do; for we have our power for edification, and not for destruction.—It was published as an appendant to the Gospel, and so must it be preached: it was published in the hand of a Mediator, and it must be preached in the hand of a Mediator: it was published evangelically, and it must be so preached. We have commission to preach nothing but Christ, and life in Him; and therefore we never preach the law, but with reverence and manuduction to Him¹.' On this ground, the Apostle commands us to owe nothing but love to each other; "for he that loveth another (he saith) hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love

¹ Bishop Reynold's Treatise on the Sinfulness of Sin. Vol. i. pp. 317—349. 8vo. ed.

thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law¹." It filleth the law, observe, by constraining us thus to "judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again²." Hence the petitions which we have offered up this day, in our solemn Litany, unto the good Lord, that, by the mysteries of Christ's redeeming power, and by the coming of the Holy Ghost, He would deliver us from sin and wrath; and hence the public rehearsal in our ears of the commandments, once written by the finger of God at Sinai, followed by our united supplication unto Him, that He would have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep these laws.

Who then, I ask again, can venture to remain unmoved, when brought within the hearing of these promises, and the observance of these ordinances? The mere formalist may indeed do so; the hypocrite, the proud, and the impenitent may lay this burden upon their souls;—but what shall their end be? Must not their fruit wither, and they themselves, like every other plant which our "heavenly Father hath not planted," be "plucked up by the roots," and cast forth as brands for the burning³? And must not the bare contemplation of such an

¹ Rom. xiii. 8—10.

² 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

³ Compare Matt. xv. 13. and Jude 12.

issue make us tremble both for ourselves and others ; —tremble, “lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it ¹ ;”—tremble, lest, in the accepted time wherein He hath heard us, in the day of salvation wherein He hath succoured us ;—we should have received “the grace of God in vain ² ?” O, my brethren, this is not a fear which mistrusts the heavenly promises, or which keeps us back from “the love of God,” and from “the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life ³ ;” this is not a fear which robs us of any of the blessed fruits of the Spirit, of love, or joy, or peace, or long-suffering, or gentleness, or goodness, or faith ;—but it is that holy and humble reverence which causes us to feel most acutely our weaknesses, and dangers, and responsibilities, even at the very moment when we are upheld by the arms of Divine compassion ; which constrains us to weep with Israel, as we hear the words of the Law ; and yet with Israel to remember the encouraging assurance,—“mourn not, nor weep, for this day is holy unto the Lord your God.” Be ye therefore holy, even as He is holy. “Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time ⁴ .”

¹ Heb. iv. 1.

² 1 Cor. vi. 1, 2.

³ Jude 21.

⁴ 1 Pet. v. 6.

SERMON X.

JESUS WEEPING.

JOHN xi. 35.

Jesus wept.

IT is a remark which has often forced itself upon the attention of those who are occupied in the exposition of the Inspired Volume, that, whilst the division of its Books into chapters and verses, has greatly facilitated the means of reference to particular passages,—it has been found, nevertheless, in many instances, to break the continuity of narrative or of argument contained in the passages themselves; and thereby has a tendency to leave upon the memory only partial and disjointed impressions of that which ought to be regarded in immediate connexion with the context. The fragments of the building are thus collected and carefully treasured up; whilst their relation to each other and to the whole, to-

gether with that exact coherence of the several portions, which gives grace and stability to the perfect structure, is forgotten. The truth of this remark must certainly be admitted; and the evil to which it adverts must be regarded as one of the many imperfections which attach, more or less, to every human invention and contrivance. But yet, I am disposed to think, that, in the instance now before us, the arrangement in question may have been found productive of great advantage, by helping to arrest the attention, and thereby quickening the affections of many who are led to peruse the present portion of the Gospel history. To meet, in the course of that history, with a verse which comprizes but two words,—and those words descriptive of a fact so memorable as that of the Redeemer of mankind shedding the tears of human sympathy,—is sufficient, I am persuaded, to make the most careless and superficial reader pause and reflect upon the touching interest of the scene. Should he only have given a cursory glance at the preceding narrative, he would now look to it again with renewed and with fixed attention; he would retrace the ground which before he had passed over hastily; and mark with earnest care each step that he made in the progress of it. Every incident, would now be clothed with fresh interest, and every word of the blessed narrative felt to be more full of consolation than ever, for they would be linked, in his associa-

tion, with the fact recorded in the text, that "Jesus wept."

A similar impression to this will also be produced, I think, upon our minds, whensoever we hear the contents of this single verse recited, in the public assemblies of the Lord's people, as a subject fitted for our contemplation. So simple in expression, and yet so comprehensive in meaning; so easy to be retained in the memory, and yet so impossible to be embraced, in all its actual fulness of reality, by the imagination; the mere utterance of this brief sentence is enough to spread a feeling of more than ordinary reverence and solemnity, upon the hearts both of the people who hear, and of the minister who essays to speak concerning it. Ye, who are acquainted with the context, will at once picture to yourselves the scene which is there described,—the grave of Lazarus with the stone blocking up its entrance,—his sisters weeping, as they lead the Redeemer to the spot,—the Jews, who followed them, weeping also, and exclaiming, as they see the tears of Jesus, "Behold, how He loved him;"—all this, I say, will be present to your mental vision, as you listen to the text, and furnish you with ample materials to engage and fix your attention. And ye, to whom the recollection of these circumstances is not familiar,—if indeed ignorance of so remarkable a portion of the history of Christ can be supposed to exist among any who are called by His Name,—must

feel desirous, the moment you hear the words which I have just read, to know more of the cause which led to that marvellous exhibition of the Redeemer's sympathy, and of the result which followed it ¹.

¹ 'Whoever divided the chapters of the New Testament into verses,' (says Dr. Donne, in his Sermon on this passage) 'seems to have stopped in an amazement in this text; and, by making an entire verse of these two words, *Jesus wept*, and no more, to intimate that there needs no more for the exalting of our devotion to a competent height, than to consider, how, and where, and when, and why Jesus wept. There is not a shorter verse in the Bible, nor a larger text.' Again, he says, 'We take knowledge that our Lord wept thrice. He wept here, when he mourned with them that mourned for Lazarus; He wept again, when He drew near to Jerusalem, and looked upon that city; and He wept a third time in His Passion. There is but one Evangelist but this, St. John, that tells us of these first tears; the rest say nothing of them. There is but one Evangelist, St. Luke, that tells us of His second tears; the rest speak not of those. There is no Evangelist, but there is an Apostle that tells us of His third tears; St. Paul says, "That in the days of His flesh, He offered up prayers with strong cries and tears." (Heb. v. 7.) And those tears, expositors of all sides refer to His Passion; though some to His Agony in the Garden, some to His Passion on the Cross: and these, in my opinion, most fitly; because those words of St. Paul belong to the declaration of the Priesthood, and of the Sacrifice of Christ: and from that function of His, the Cross was the Altar; and therefore to the Cross we fix those third tears. The first were Human tears; the second were Prophe-tical; the third were Pontifical, appertaining to the Sacrifice. The first were shed in a condolency of a human and natural calamity fallen upon one family; Lazarus was dead. The second

In carrying therefore your thoughts and mine to the contemplation of this subject, let us not attempt the presumptuous task,—presumptuous as it must be futile,—of tracing out in the language of human thought, all the deep mysteries which mark it. For if,—as our own experience tells us,—we cannot at all times give utterance to the emotions of our own hearts, how shall we be able to discern or express all those of the Incarnate Word? Yet, let us approach the consideration of His great love, manifested in His tears at the grave of Lazarus, with the conviction that it contains a precious lesson for our instruction and comfort, and with the prayer for God's grace that we may profit thereby.

The time will not permit us to dwell at length upon the many points of interest which crowd the earlier portion of the present chapter; yet the most transient glance will enable us to perceive bright rays of heavenly mercy shed over them. There is, first, the peculiar blessing recorded of the family of Bethany, that the Redeemer's favour rested upon them all. "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus¹." What a blessing was this!—that the Light

were shed in contemplation of future calamities upon a nation; Jerusalem was to be destroyed. The third in contemplation of sin, and the everlasting punishment due to sin, and to such sinners as would make no benefit of that sacrifice which He offered in offering Himself.' Donne's Serm. xxi: Vol. i. p. 153.

¹ John xi. 5.

which was sent "to lighten the Gentiles and to be the glory of Israel¹," should thus shine within the precincts of a single household; that the Good Shepherd should here gather His "little flock" together, and encourage them to "fear not," by the assurance that it was their "Father's good pleasure to give" them "the kingdom²;" that He who "knew what was in man³," should abide in the dwelling of those who were not worthy that He should come under their roof; that, with reproving mercy, He should restrain the anxieties of the one sister, who was "cumbered about much serving," and, with unreserved promise, ensure unto the other who sat meekly at His feet, the possession of "that good part which" should "not be taken away from her⁴;" that the hand of the Good Husbandman should thus prepare the ground for the reception of the seed of eternal life, which He scattered upon it; that He who was "the way, the truth, and the life⁵," should thus reveal things that were hidden "from the wise and prudent," unto those who, in child-like simplicity, were "babes⁶;"—this was indeed an accumulation of blessing far outvying the choicest treasures of the world, because it was the very substance of that happiness of which they are but the dim, imperfect, and fleeting shadows. It was, in fact, the visible accomplishment of that pro-

¹ Luke ii. 32.² Luke xii. 32.³ John ii. 25.⁴ Luke x. 38. ad fin.⁵ John xiv. 6.⁶ Matt. xi. 25.

mise which our Lord Himself has declared to be the privilege of all who trust in Him, saying, "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him¹."

Observe, now, for one moment, the other circumstances which mark this part of the sacred narrative. Lazarus, whom Jesus loved, fell sick. His sisters, therefore, sent unto Jesus, who was at that time tarrying on the other side of Jordan², tidings of this their trial; and, by the love which He bore to them and to their brother, besought His help. The power and the compassion of His help were, doubtless, known full well by these earnest supplicants. The path of His gracious ministry had been too thickly strewed with miracles of mercy, not to leave traces of them on every side. The eyes of the blind which had been opened, and the ears of the deaf which had been unstopped; the lame man who leaped as an hart, and the dumb who sang in freedom the praises of his Deliverer³; the hungry who had been filled, the weary who had been refreshed, the weak who had been made strong, the sick who had been restored to health, and the mourners who had received their dead to life again,—these were the monuments of their Master's goodness, these were the encouragements to plead their Master's

¹ John xiv. 23.

² John x. 40.

³ Compare Isaiah xxxv. 5, 6. and Matt. xi. 5.

aid. And yet, the petition of those whom Jesus loved, was not answered. Their message seemed fruitless ; their sorrows unheeded. Lazarus sickened, and died ; and “ when Jesus came, He found that he had lain in the grave four days already ¹.”

O ! my brethren, how often does the thick gloom which then hung over the sisters of Bethany, darken our own horizon ! How often are the most faithful servants of the Lord assailed with trials, and compelled to drink the cup of trembling to the dregs ! They, like the members of that family whom the Redeemer loved, may have learnt the lessons of His heavenly teaching, and rejoiced to walk in the steps of His holy way ; and when the child, or brother, or wife, or husband, or friend, of their affections, are, like Lazarus, brought low through weakness, they may have offered up the very prayer which was urged in his behalf, and have said, with trembling and earnest entreaty, “ Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick.” And yet He, who came not to Bethany to stay the hand of the destroyer, grants not their petition. Their cry is loud and urgent ; but it returns unto them void. They look on every side for instruments and means of help, and would have them come, if it were possible, with the speed of lightning at their command ; but the wheels of His chariot, who alone can bless the issue, appear to

¹ John xi. 17.

linger in their course ;—death draws near ; and the desire of their eyes is gone. I seek not to draw any picture of imaginary woe ; still less would I revive or deepen the anguish of the heart which, by painful reality, “knoweth his own bitterness¹ ;” but let us ask ourselves whether consolation is not to be derived from the present history. Does it not tell us that the bereavement suffered by Martha and by Mary,—whilst to the eye of sense, it appeared to be misery, hopeless, and inexplicable,—was nevertheless a means ordained to an end ; and that end, the glory of God and their own everlasting joy ? And may not we learn from the remembrance of this fact a lesson for ourselves ? Does it not teach us that the way in which God answers our prayers is not to be determined by our desires ?—that, what we may deem a desolation too terrible even to think upon, may nevertheless be the chosen method by which the Author of wisdom and mercy is making “all things work together for good to them that love²” Him ? We know, from the narrative before us, the reasons for which it pleased our Lord to withhold, for a time, the fulfilment of the petition addressed to Him ; and is not a sure encouragement herein given unto us to believe, that reasons equally righteous and merciful exist, even in cases where the same knowledge is not revealed ? It speaks a message unto

¹ Prov. xiv. 10.

² Rom. viii. 28.

our hearts like that which the prophet, when he stood upon the watch tower, received from the Lord, saying, "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 ¹." As "the husbandman" therefore "waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain ²;" so let us, who profess to "walk by faith, not by sight ³," be patient, and stablish our hearts, remembering that "the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness ⁴."

What though Lazarus was borne down by the weight of sickness which seemed mortal, yet Jesus, when He heard it, said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby ⁵." What though "He abode two days still in the same place where He was ⁶," apparently unmindful of the message which He had received, unmindful of the care and love which prompted it, He yet knew the progress which sickness made each day and hour, upon the feeble body. He knew at length when that body had ceased to breathe; and bade His disciples arise and go with Him to the very region where "the Jews of late had sought to stone ⁷" Him,—that He

¹ Hab. ii. 3.

² James v. 7.

³ 2 Cor. v. 7.

⁴ 2 Pet. iii. 9.

⁵ John xi. 4.

⁶ Ibid. 6.

⁷ Ibid. 8.

might awaken the sleeping Lazarus. His disciples indeed thought that their Master had spoken unto them "of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him¹."

And here the house of mourning is opened to our view. The sisters were not alone; for "many of the Jews" had come "to comfort them concerning their brother²." Yes, the sympathy of friends and kindred does give comfort in affliction. It proves that man lives not, and is not meant to live, for himself; that there are feelings in his heart which can only be brought out into action by the spectacle of others' sorrow; and, that, when so developed, they lift him from the base level of selfish thoughts, and animate him with desire and with strength to run instantly to succour the distressed. It is not the wild extravagance of a morbid sentiment, but the consistent working of an healthful principle. It springs not from the conventional customs of the world, but is a ray from heaven itself, penetrating the polluted vapours of earth; a relic of that perfect loveliness in which the being, who was made "in the image of God³," was first created, and which even now, though broken and defaced, is found amid the miserable ruins of his fall. Yea, it is the first feature which is restored in those

¹ John xi. 13—15.

² Ibid. 19.

³ Gen. i. 27.

who have “put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness¹ ;” “for by this,” saith our blessed Lord, “shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another² ;”—love which shall constrain you to “rejoice with them that do rejoice, and to weep with them that weep³ ;” which shall teach you “that there be no schism in the body of Christ ; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it ; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it⁴ .”

There was greater comfort, however, in store for these bereaved sisters than any which the sympathy of their Jewish brethren could furnish ; for they, as we learn from the sequel of the narrative, had not yet been taught to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah⁵ ; and therefore the riches of Christian consolation were not theirs to give. But now,—as our Lord had already assured His disciples,—the glory of God was to be manifested, “that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.” “Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him : but Mary sat still in the house.” And wherefore did Mary remain ? Was it that her faith, her submission, her love to Christ were gone ? Did she think it a vain effort to go out and meet the Lord to

¹ Ephes. iv. 24.

² John xiii. 35.

³ Rom. xii. 15.

⁴ 1 Cor. xii. 25, 26.

⁵ John xi. 42.

whom she had sent in vain her prayer for help? Not so, my brethren. The anchor of her hope still clung firmly to the Rock, notwithstanding that the waves of this troublesome world beat heavily upon it. She remained in the house; not because she disregarded, but because she heard not the tidings which had come to the ears of Martha. She heard them not; because that calm retiring spirit, which once led her to sit so attentively at the feet of Jesus, and to bear so meekly the impatience of her sister,—saddened as it was now by her mournful ‘cast of thought,’—kept her absorbed in her own reflections. She knew not, nor heeded the things that were passing around her. But Martha, prompted by the same eager, quick, and active temper, which on other occasions distinguished her¹, was the first to learn her Lord’s approach, the first to go out to meet Him. It is just one of those incidental touches of nature which truth alone can impart, marking the distinctive characters of the persons spoken of,—not purposely or designedly, as if those distinctions were the prominent points of notice,—but simply because they arise out of the course of events which is going on in subordination to the main object of the narrative.

“Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I

¹ Compare Luke x. 40. and John xii. 2.

know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee¹." How naturally do these words describe the feelings of one who felt that she was standing before Him who had come from God, but knew not yet that He was God Himself. She confesses that His presence could, if He had so willed it, have saved her brother from the grave; that, even now, any petition, addressed by Him to God, would be granted; and yet, although it is evident what she would have had embodied in that petition, she durst not, she could not, give it utterance. Her faith in the power of God to accomplish any future purpose, was struggling against her conviction, that, to reverse the past was hopeless. He therefore who knew her thoughts vouchsafed to guide them. He did not at once reveal the fulness of the truth; but, step by step, led her to discern and embrace it. He "saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha said unto Him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection in the last day²." In saying this she made confession of a part, but not of the whole truth. She expressed her belief in a general resurrection, which the Jewish people, for the most part, entertained³; but gave no specific ac-

¹ John xi. 21, 22.

² Ib. 23, 24.

³ Hence St. Paul, in defending himself before Felix against Tertullus, speaks of his "hope toward God," *as that which the Jews themselves also allowed*, "that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust." Acts xxiv. 15.

knowledge that the power of Christ could accomplish it. To this end therefore did He now conduct her, by saying, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto Him, Yea, Lord: I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world¹." Herein Martha did indeed witness "a good confession²." It was equal in fulness of truth to that which Peter had returned in answer to his Lord's question; nay, expressed in words almost identically the same with those which that Apostle had employed, and which had drawn down upon him the blessing and the promise of his Lord³; and therefore bore testimony no less precious to the strength of her faith and hope. For, in declaring that Jesus was "the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world," what was it else but to acknowledge Him to be the seed of the woman which should bruise the serpent's head⁴; the son of Abraham's promise, in whom all families of the earth should be blessed⁵; the Shiloh who should come to Judah, and to whom the gathering of the people should be⁶; the Star that should come out of Jacob, and the Sceptre that should arise out

¹ John xi. 23—27.

² 1 Tim. vi. 13.

³ Matt. xvi. 16—18.

⁴ Gen. iii. 15.

⁵ Gen. xii. 3.

⁶ Ib. xlix. 10.

of Israel¹; the Prophet whom the Lord God should raise up in Israel, of their brethren, like unto their lawgiver²; the Emmanuel that should appear unto His people³; the Rod that should come out of the stem of Jesse, and the Branch that should grow out of his roots⁴; the Child that should be born, the Son that should be given, upon whose shoulder should be the government, whose name should be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace⁵; He who should bear the title of “The Lord our Righteousness⁶,” “whose goings forth had been from of old, from everlasting,” and whose birth therefore gave glory to Bethlehem Ephratah, though it were little among the thousands of Judah⁷; the Lord who should suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant, in whom His people delighted⁸;—yea, the Priest to make atonement, the Prophet to instruct, the King to have dominion for ever and ever? Truly, no less than this was comprehended in the confession of Martha’s faith: “Lord, I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.”

“And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The

¹ Numb. xxiv. 17.

² Deut. xviii. 15.

³ Isaiah vii. 14.

⁴ Isaiah xi. 1.

⁵ Isaiah ix. 6.

⁶ Jer. xxiii. 6.

⁷ Mic. v. 2

⁸ Mal. iii. 1.

Master is come, and calleth for thee. As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto Him¹." Did we not say, then, with good reason, that Mary's remaining in the house was not the coldness of indifference or the stillness of despair; but the result of that deep absorbing train of thought, which shut out the consciousness of external objects? No sooner was that consciousness restored by her sister returning, and secretly announcing to her the fact that the Master was come and called for her, than instantly she arose, and went forth to meet Him. With her also followed the Jews, who had been with her in the house, thinking within themselves, and saying, "She goeth unto the grave to weep there²;"—and thus were they led to be the witnesses of the wonderful scene that followed. "Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying unto Him, Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto Him, Lord, Come and see. Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how He loved him³." It was indeed a testimony of the love of Jesus. It proved that He was "made like

¹ John xi. 28, 29.

² Ibid. xi. 31.

³ Ibid. xi. 32—36.

unto His brethren¹;" that He was "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," and "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin²." Be the power therefore of human sympathy what it may; howsoever closely it may draw together the bands of affection around the hearts of kindred and of friends in the day of trouble; or with whatsoever earnestness it may lead them to make the grateful acknowledgment that their cup is not all bitterness,—these influences could not have been more deeply felt by any than by those who now drew near to the grave of Lazarus, nor more faithfully depicted than in the simple record of the beloved Disciple and Evangelist. And yet, much more than human sympathy is here unfolded to our view. The tears of the Redeemer attest not merely the love of man, but the love of God. For "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself³." "In Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily⁴." Those unutterable perfections of the Divine Majesty, which man could no more acquire the strength to contemplate, than he could endure to gaze upon the unveiled splendour of the sun at noon-day, were, in Christ Jesus, shaded within an earthly tabernacle; and thus was the glory of the Incarnate Word, "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of

¹ Heb. ii. 17.

² Ibid. iv. 15.

³ 2 Cor. v. 19.

⁴ Col. ii. 9.

grace and truth¹," brought within reach of mortal sense. That heavenly Love which drove not the guilty exiles forth from Paradise until they had received the promise of redemption,—and which directed the whole course of after generations towards the accomplishment of that promise,—was thus seen, in the likeness of a man, living and moving upon earth, bearing the infirmities and sharing the sorrows of its people; it was heard, in the accents of a man, proclaiming the glad tidings of man's salvation. And does not the knowledge of this blessed truth furnish ourselves with a ground of hope both sure and lasting? Does it not sustain us, in our own trials, by the conviction that He who thus stooped from heaven to earth, to refresh the weary, to enlighten the ignorant, to console the mourner, to cleanse the sinner, is still perpetuating that work of mercy? He hath indeed entered again into His glory; but even there, knowing our infirmities and remembering our cares, "He ever liveth to make intercession for²" us. We are told distinctly by the Apostle, that this is the very ground upon which we should believe that "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him³." Is it possible, therefore, that greater encouragement can be derived from any quarter than from that which tells us that He who wept by the grave of Lazarus, sees and compassionates our tears; that He hears our prayers; that

¹ John i. 14.² Heb. vii. 25.³ Ibid.

He presents them, through His mediation, unto the Father; that hence the Spirit of God proceedeth unto us to help our infirmities¹; to teach us “that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us;” and that “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 God²?” Can any motive, I ask, be found to act more directly upon our hearts than this, or more powerfully incite us, to obey the Apostle’s precept, and “come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need³?”

The history then which we are now considering, supplies one of the most striking testimonies upon which this belief and hope of the Christian are established. And if, peradventure, the thought should have presented itself to the minds of any of us, Why was not this troubling, this groaning of the Redeemer’s spirit spared?—if resurrection were the end in prospect, why should He have wept for the dead?—let the prospect of consolation herein opened to our view teach us to dismiss the thought as vain. He that would indulge it might as well repeat the question of the Jews who then bore witness to His

¹ Rom. viii. 26.

² Ibid. viii. 18—21.

³ Heb. iv. 16.

love for Lazarus, and ask, "Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died¹?" Most certainly he could;—but would the works of God have then been made manifest in Lazarus, or the Son of God been glorified thereby²? Should we have had the evidence which we now possess of the tender mercies or the mighty power of our Lord? Does the restoration of health to the sick, or prolongation of life to the feeble, reveal the same testimony of God's Majesty as the summons of the dead to life? Or did any such summons aforesaid involve that fulness of mystery which was seen in the resurrection of Lazarus? The ruler's daughter had scarcely sunk into the sleep of death, when Jesus took her by the hand, and she arose³. The widow's only son had not been committed to the grave, when "they that bare him stood still," and heard the words of Jesus commanding him to arise, and saw him that was dead sit up and begin to speak and again delivered to his mother's arms⁴. Those were indeed miracles which only God doeth: but what were they in comparison of the resurrection of one from the grave in which he had lain four days buried? No hope, however venturous, no wish, however visionary, could dare picture to itself any other object there than the thick-coming horrors of corruption. Even that very

¹ John xi. 37.

² Compare John xi. 4. and ix. 3.

³ Matt. ix. 25.

⁴ Luke vii. 14—16.

sister, who had heard and confessed that Jesus was the Christ,—forgetting what He had said unto her, that, if she would believe, she should see the glory of God¹,—forgetting that He was the resurrection and the life; that he who believed in Him, though he were dead, yet should he live: and whosoever lived and believed in Him should never die;—even she shrank from the hideous spectacle of him who had made his “bed in the darkness;” who had “said to corruption, Thou art my father; to the worm, Thou art my mother and sister².” But “Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go. Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him. But some of them went their ways

¹ John xi. 40.

² Job xvii. 13, 14.

to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done¹.”

See we not now the truth of our Saviour's words made good, that the sickness of Lazarus was “not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby?” See we not also, in the belief wrought upon the minds of many who witnessed the miracle, the accomplishment of that merciful purpose whereby, not for His own sake but theirs, the Redeemer thus spake and thus acted before them? And what if some did not believe, but “went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done,” and thus incited them to take counsel together to put Him to death²; “shall their unbelief make the faith of God of none effect³?” Shall the stubbornness of those who closed their eyes that they could not see, and their ears that they could not hear, the things that belonged unto their peace, be suffered to rob the believer of his hope and joy? It may not, it cannot be; unless we would have our portion with the children whose Sanctuary is swept away, whose land and city are trodden under foot of strangers, and they themselves become “an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word among all nations whither the Lord⁴” hath led them. But, “O my soul, come not thou into their secret;

¹ John xi. 40—46.

² John xi. 53.

³ Rom. iii. 3.

⁴ Compare Deut. xxviii. 37. and Luke xxi. 24.

unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united¹." Seek rather of the Lord that thou mayest dwell in His house all the days of thy life, "to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit his temple²." Yes, my brethren, let this desire and prayer of the Psalmist be the desire and the prayer of us all. Let it be for us to urge it with the same assurance which sustained himself when he said, "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his tabernacle: yea, in the secret place of his dwelling shall he hide me, and set me up upon a rock of stone³." The very history before us points out the strong foundation upon which this assurance is established. The words of Christ Jesus piercing the dull, cold ear of death; summoning from the recesses of the sepulchre the body that lay there; giving it strength to rise and come forth whilst the garments of the grave were yet bound upon its limbs; and commanding the witnesses of this mighty miracle to loosen those bonds, to receive the imprisoned and the dead to their arms again a free and living man;—what more pregnant testimony could be established to prove that He was, in very deed, "the Resurrection and the Life?" What more conspicuous precursor could be found to prepare the way to the mightiest miracle of all, His own Resurrection from the grave? What more convincing

¹ Gen. xlix. 6.

² Ps. xxvii. 4.

³ Ibid. 5.

demonstration could be given to the certainty of our own? Or what could more distinctly verify the solemn declaration that "the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear" the voice of the Son of Man, "and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation¹?" Behold then warning for the impenitent, and consolation for the faithful. By virtue of this authority the Apostle teaches the Thessalonians not "to be ignorant concerning them which are asleep," and exhorts them "to sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if," saith he, "we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him²." He bids them exhort and "comfort one another with these words³;" and assuredly the remembrance of the same remaineth a comfort to ourselves. In the time of our trouble we too may fly for refuge to this stronghold, and find our joy and our defence within the secret places of this tabernacle that is prepared for us. It is the rock, even the rock of our salvation, upon which the Lord hath set us up. Connecting all these solemn and affecting truths with the history of the risen Lazarus; and, seeing how the reception of them into our hearts is enforced by the conviction, that the Redeemer, who

¹ John v. 28, 29.

² 1 Thess. iv. 13, 14.

³ Ibid. 18.

wept for and assuaged his sisters' sorrows, is still inviting and encouraging ourselves, still mitigating our grief, still strengthening our weakness, still purifying our affections, may we not share the grateful wonder of those who stood by the grave of Bethany, and not only exclaim, as they did, Behold how He loved the poor child of earth that lay there,—but behold, also, how He loveth ourselves; yea, “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God¹ ;”—that He should have given to us the record of eternal life, and that this life should be “in His Son² ?” Yes, the summons which bade Lazarus come forth, proclaims the same tidings of light, of life, of liberty, to all who lie bound and fettered in the dark prison-house of their iniquities, and are dead in trespasses and sins. It saith to each one of us, “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light³ .” Be it that the clouds of trial and adversity dim its brightness for a season, the light itself shall never be extinguished. Be it that the course of God's Providence assume the aspect not of peace but wrath; and that affliction, not joy, be made the portion of your inheritance;—still “let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid⁴ .” If you, like Mary, have learned the truth in Jesus; like her you shall hear the blessed tidings,

¹ 1 John iii. 1.

² 1 John v. 11.

³ Ephes. v. 14.

⁴ John xiv. 27.

“The Master is come, and calleth for thee.” Like her you shall be made to hear of joy and gladness, that the bones which have been broken may rejoice. Like her, you shall find, that, whether in joy or heaviness, whether in strength or weakness, whether in life or death, the love of God in Christ is your present stay, your future glory.

SERMON XI.

THE SPIRIT REPROVING THE WORLD OF SIN, OF
RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND OF JUDGMENT.

JOHN xvi. 8, 9, 10, 11.

And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment : of sin, because they believe not on me ; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more ; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

WE learn from the verse immediately preceding these words, that He, to whom this peculiar office of reprovng the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, is ascribed by our blessed Lord, is none other than "the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom," as He had already assured His disciples, the Father, granting His prayer, should send in His name, to teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever He had said

unto them¹ ;”—“even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father,” who should testify of Christ²,—who should guide them “into all truth,” and shew them “things to come ;”—who also should glorify Christ ; for he should receive of Christ, and should show it unto them³. He calls this blessed guide the Comforter, or, as the original expresses it, the Paraclete, the Advocate :—one, *i. e.* who not only intercedes with the judge for the accused, but also pleads and maintains his cause against the adversary, and thereby, in an especial manner, extends unto him comfort⁴. By no other Evangelist than St. John is the discourse, which reveals these gracious promises, related ; and in no other discourse of our Lord is the title of Paraclete assigned to any of the persons of the Godhead. It is matter, therefore, both of interest and of thankfulness to observe, that, now, when the Redeemer was about to be betrayed into the hands of sinners ; when, with all the touching solemnity of a parting exhortation, He was comforting the troubled hearts of His Apostles with the hope of glory, and with the assurance that the

¹ John xiv. 16. 26. ² John xv. 26. ³ Ibid. xvi. 13, 14.

⁴ This double meaning of the term Paraclete, applicable, *i. e.* both to the advocates who were employed to plead the cause of the accused, and to the friends who came forward to assist him by their presence and intercession with the judge, is abundantly proved by the authorities which Bishop Pearson has adduced in his Exposition on the Eighth Article of the Creed, p. 329, fol. ed.

petitions offered up in His name would be granted ; now, when He was commanding them to abide in Him even as the branches in the vine, and promising that in His strength they should bring forth fruit, and that their fruit should remain, He speaks no less than four distinct times of the coming Spirit of Truth as the Paraclete, the Advocate, that should be sent to guide, to teach, to comfort them. And one passage more there is in the Sacred Volume which encourages the believer with the same peculiar hope of consolation ; a passage written indeed, as the present is, by the pen of “ the Disciple whom Jesus loved¹,” yet referring not to God the Holy Ghost, but to God the Son. For these are the well known words of St. John in his First Epistle, “ If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous ; and he is the propitiation for our sins ; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world².” It is the same word, observe, which in the Gospel is translated Comforter, and in the Epistle Advocate : the same title which is ascribed to, and the same office which is said to be exercised by, the Holy Spirit in the one case, and in the other by the Son. And hence St. Paul, in the eighth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, where he is recounting the privileges which the believer enjoys from the Spirit helping his infirmities, and

¹ John xiii. 23.

² 1 John ii. 1, 2.

making intercession for him, “with groaning that cannot be uttered,” speaks likewise of the salvation given by “Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who *also* (he saith) maketh intercession for us¹.” Both therefore are intercessors, operating indeed in different regions and by different modes, yet for the same ends ; both are comforters ; both are advocates. Nay, our Lord Himself implies as much, when, speaking of the promise that was in store for His faithful servants, He saith, “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you *another* Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever².” By His word and by His presence, He comforted the hearts of His people then ; and still, to all our future generations He continues our Comforter, because He is our Advocate with the Father, pleading the precious merits of His atonement, at the right hand of God. Again, the Spirit

¹ Rom. viii. 26. 34.

² John xiv. 16. Chrysostom, in his Commentary on this passage, cites this verse as a direct refutation of the advocates of the Sabellian heresy, who denied the distinction of persons in the Divine Nature. Συγκαταβάσεως πάλιν ὁ λόγος· ἐπειδὴ γὰρ οὐδέπω αὐτὸν ἐγνωκότας εἰκὸς ἦν σφόδρα ἐπιζητεῖν τὴν συνουσίαν ἐκείνην, τὰ ῥήματα, τὴν κατὰ σάρκα αὐτοῦ παρουσίαν, καὶ μηδεμίαν δέχεσθαι παραμυθίαν ἀπόντος, τί φησιν ; ἐρωτήσω τὸν πατέρα, καὶ ἄλλον παράκλητον δώσει ὑμῖν, ἄλλον ὡς ἐμέ· αἰσχυρνήτησαν καὶ οἱ τὰ Σαβελλίου νοσοῦντες, κ. τ. λ. Tom. ii. p. 865. Edit. Savile. The whole passage is eminently deserving the attention of the Christian student, for the clearness and cogency of the exposition contained in it.

is our Comforter, because He is the Advocate among men, that proceedeth from the Father, and the Son, to testify of Him ; to plead with, to subdue, to sanctify their rebellious natures, and so to make the pilgrims and sojourners of this world meet to be partakers of that inheritance of the saints in light, which Christ hath purchased.

Now, it is stated in the text to be one of the means whereby this work of blessed consolation is achieved by the Holy Spirit, that He reproveth the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. In one sense indeed, our Lord Himself had already reproveth the Jewish people of these same three things¹. Thus He had reproveth them of sin, when He said, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin ; but now they have no cloke for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also²." Again, of righteousness, when He said, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee ; but I have known thee ; and these have known that thou hast sent me³." And, lastly, of judgment, when He told them of that coming day, in which it should be said "unto them on his left hand, Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels⁴." But notwithstanding that our Lord had already so vindicated and set forth these solemn truths, He still ascribes the special function of that

¹ See the exposition of Augustin on this passage. Tom. ix. p. 325.

² John xv. 22, 23. ³ Ibid. xvii. 25. ⁴ Matt. xxv. 41.

office to the Holy Spirit ; because by Him it was to be performed in a different and peculiar sense : with reference not only to the Jewish but to the Gentile world, and that not merely for a season (as was the case with our Lord's ministry), but to the end of time. It was not only to be an open vindication of the truth and consequent rebuke to those who denied the truth, or held it in unrighteousness ; but it was to work a conviction of the truth upon the minds of men. It will be found that the word which, in the text, is translated "reprove¹," has this meaning in the original, and indeed it is so expressed in the margin of our Bibles, viz. to convince. It will be found also that such is the strict signification of the term ; and that it involves nothing less than a complete refutation of an adversary's cause by arguments of clear and convincing urgency. We meet with it, accordingly, in this sense, in the eighth chapter of St. John's Gospel, where the Scribes and Pharisees, who had brought unto our Lord the woman taken in adultery, are described as "being *convicted* by their own conscience, and going out one by one" from the presence of Him who had exposed the corrupt working of their hearts. And so, too, in the conference which our Lord held afterwards with the people, He asks, "Which of you *convinceth* me of sin ? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe

¹ ἐλέγξει.

me¹?" Again, it is employed by St. Paul in the first chapter of his epistle to Titus, where he urges him to "hold fast the faithful word as he had been taught, that he might be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to *convince* the gainsayers²." In all these passages, and others of a similar import which might be adduced, the conviction spoken of will be found to be expressed by some form of the same verb, which, in the text before us, is rendered by the word "reprove³."

It is well to bear in mind this proper meaning of the term; not only because it may serve in some degree to illustrate the operation of the Holy Spirit, but also because it may explain some portions of the text which, without it, would be difficult to understand. For although it be perfectly easy to conceive how reproof (in the ordinary acceptation of the word) may relate to sin, we should be at a loss to know in what sense it can apply to righteousness or to judgment;—in what sense either the one, or the other, can be said to be blamed or censured. But let the word be taken in the sense to which originally it is restricted, and the application of it will be found as apposite to the second and third divisions specified in the text, as to the first: and it will be seen to be the office of the Holy Spirit, to bring home to the

¹ John viii. 9, 46.

² Titus i. 9.

³ See Matt. xviii. 15. John iii. 20. 1 Cor. xiv. 24. Ephes. v. 13, &c.

heart conviction of the sin which it has committed, —of the righteousness which it has undervalued,— of the judgment which it has despised.

I stop not to dwell upon the parallel which is by many commentators supposed to exist between the threefold office here adverted to, and the threefold process observed in the courts of Hebrew judicature:—the first, alluding to the public judgments in criminal matters, which consisted in the condemnation of false prophets and other offenders against God;—the second, to the vindication afforded to the innocent from the assaults of the slanderer and oppressor:—and the third, to the plea of retaliation which was urged against those who had committed any trespass against the person or property of their neighbour¹; because, however just this illustration may be, or however clear the language in question may therefore have appeared to the Jewish people, the main object for our consideration is the practical bearing of the gracious offices which it describes, upon the hearts of our brethren and ourselves.

I. And first of sin;—“He will reprove (or convince) the world of sin, because they believe not on me.” But, was not the world, it may be asked (the Heathen world, *i. e.* as well as the Jewish) already convinced of sin? Have we not already adverted to the condemnation so emphatically pronounced upon the Jews for their sin by our Lord? And was not the

¹ See Hammond and Lampe, in loc.

power of that destroyer felt and acknowledged by the Heathen also, to be a painful, a solemn reality? Were not the miseries of the world so many monuments of sin's dominion, and the laws of the world so many barriers set up to oppose its progress? Most undoubtedly they were. The strength of reason had been able to discern the fatal operation of those great and atrocious crimes which shake society to its very centre; but utterly unequal was it to the task of searching them out to their origin, or of revealing their consequences, or of arresting their corrupt and turbid course. Utterly unable was it to bring forth to the light of day those secret abominations that lurk in the dark "chamber of" man's "imagery¹;" or of exposing the fallacy of those equivocations by which the world strives to "call evil good, and good evil²." That was a work which could only be accomplished, in its depth and in its fulness, by Him who "knew what was in man;" who even on earth put the hypocrite and the deluded to shame; and who continues to carry on the same triumphant process by His Word, which is described by the Apostle, as "quick, and powerful, and 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 discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart³." It is this which reveals the cause, the character, the consequences of sin; it

¹ Ezek. viii. 12.² Isaiah v. 20.³ Heb. iv. 12.

is this too which reveals the only way of refuge from it, Salvation by the blood of Jesus. If we, therefore, refuse to come unto Christ that we may have life; and put away from us the acknowledgment of Him who hath trodden alone the wine-press of the wrath of Almighty God, who speaketh "in righteousness, mighty to save¹;" who is the Prophet to instruct us, the Priest to make atonement for us, the King to rule over us;—our sin becomes exceeding sinful, and the burden of provoking the heaviest anger of the Lord must be our portion. There is no other sacrifice which shall be offered for our transgressions; no other place of refuge which shall be opened for our escape. For this cause, the sin of unbelief is fixed upon in the text, as the parent of every other,—as that which, as long as it maintains its strong hold, excludes all hope of succour².

It was this sin which Peter, when filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and afterwards when he had healed the lame man at the beautiful gate of the Temple, alleged against the Jews³:—it was this which Stephen urged as the reproach and condemnation of the Council before

¹ Isaiah lxiii. 1—3.

² 'Hoc enim peccatum quasi solum præ cæteris posuit, quia hoc manente cætera detinentur, et hoc discedente cætera remittuntur.'—Augustin. in loc. Vol. ix. ut suprâ.

³ Acts ii. 23. iii. 13, 14.

whom he pleaded¹:—it was this which was sounded from heaven in the ears of Saul of Tarsus, as the cause that struck him to the dust²: and truly it was the conviction of this which caused the people when they heard the teaching of the Spirit, to be “pricked in their heart,” and to say unto Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do³?” Behold in their deep searchings of heart, in their anxious prayer for guidance, a commentary upon the truth of Christ’s promise concerning the Spirit in the text,—“when He is come, he will reprove the world of sin, because they believe not on me.” Behold also the merciful aid which, from the same gracious source, was ready to be imparted to the sons of Abraham thus humbled and thus penitent. The Physician who probed the wound supplied the only balm that could assuage its pain: and hence the answer of Peter to their perplexed and earnest enquiry, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; for the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call⁴.” He therefore who gives the conviction of sin, gives also the hope of consolation.

II. And thus we are led to consider the next.

¹ Acts vii. 51.

² Acts ix. 4, 5.

³ Acts ii. 37.

⁴ Acts ii. 38, 39.

division of the text, He will reprove, or convince, the world “of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more.” Of what righteousness? my brethren. “The righteousness which is of God by faith ¹” in Jesus Christ. For “in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily ² :” and in Him therefore is made good the blessed name by which Jeremiah was commanded to designate Him, “The Lord our Righteousness ³.” This was the “everlasting righteousness” which, according to Daniel, was to be brought in, when He should “make reconciliation for iniquity ⁴.” It had been manifested in the ministry of Him who was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners ⁵ ;” and yet, notwithstanding, the Jews had cast it from them. They “denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto ⁶” them. His rising therefore from the dead, His going unto the Father, His abiding in heaven until His mediatorial kingdom should cease, so that His disciples on earth saw Him no more on earth,—and of all this the coming of the Holy Ghost gave testimony,—proved that the aspersions which His adversaries had cast upon His truth and holiness, had been as false as their hearts were stubborn. It proved that He had, indeed, come forth from the bosom of the Father, and come into the world : according as it had been written of Him in the

¹ Phil. iii. 9.² Col. ii. 9.³ Jer. xxiii. 6.⁴ Dan. ix. 24.⁵ Heb. vii. 26.⁶ Acts iii. 14.

Volume of the Book “to do Thy will, O God¹ ;” —again, that He had left the world, and had gone unto the Father².” It gave, therefore, the strongest possible corroboration to those memorable words of His, “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father³.” The evidence of all this, I say, was found in the coming of the Holy Ghost. For thereby was it proved that the word spoken by “the Prince of life⁴,” was true, that His promise was fulfilled, that He “Himself was glorified.” By this did all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God had made that same Jesus, whom they crucified, “both Lord and Christ⁵.” He “was delivered,” saith St. Paul, “for our offences, and raised again for our justification.” And therefore is the acknowledgment so truly made in one of the Homilies of our Church: that ‘it had not been enough to be delivered by His death from sin, except by His resurrection we had been endowed with righteousness. And it should not avail us to be delivered from death, except He had risen again to open for us the gates of heaven, to enter into life everlasting⁶.’

¹ Psalm xl. 8—11.² John xvi. 28.³ John x. 17, 18.⁴ Acts iii. 15.⁵ Acts ii. 36.⁶ Homily on the Resurrection, p. 368.

Upon the same ground also, St. Peter blesseth “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead¹.”

No more was He to be seen on earth, walking as a man among men; but, by the gift of the Spirit, He showed that not “by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He had entered into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for” His people, even “into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for²” them. For the Spirit was not to come, till He was glorified. Its very coming depended upon the promise of the Son:—and now that it actually was seen to have come, admonishing, exhorting, and reminding His chosen servants of the things He had said unto them;—now that it was perceived infusing fervour, and unction, and holiness into every energy of their nature;—now that it purged and took away the base alloy from their hearts and lips with a power as bright and penetrating as that which once touched the lips of the prophet with “live coal³” from the altar of Seraphim;—now that it was setting up trophies of its victory on every side, and gathering daily into the bosom of Christ’s Church such as should be saved;—what other conviction could be

¹ 1 Pet. i. 3.

² Heb. ix. 12. 24.

³ Isaiah vi. 6.

wrought upon those who witnessed such mighty workings, but that “all the promises of God in Christ are Yea, and in Him Amen¹ ;” that the gates of Heaven had indeed lifted up their heads, and its everlasting doors been opened wide, that He, the King of Glory, might come in² ; that the voice of the Almighty, which, in former days had said “Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people,” was heard once more speaking unto the ends of the earth, bidding His anointed servants “speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned : for she hath received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins³ ?”

And so in truth it is. The work which was then miraculously begun has, through the operation of the same Divine counsel, been ever since carried onward. It is the Holy Ghost which witnesseth unto us that Christ, “by one offering hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified ;” and, that, in Him the covenant has been ratified, which spake of God’s laws being written in the hearts and minds of His people, and of their sins and iniquities being remembered by Him no more⁴. By the gracious influences of the same Comforter, the power which once worked “in the children of disobedience,” causing them to fulfil “the desires of the flesh and

¹ 2 Cor. i. 20.

² Ps. xxiv. 7.

³ Is. xl. 1, 2.

⁴ Heb. x. 14—17.

of the mind," is subdued¹; their ignorance is enlightened; their weakness is made strong; their estrangement and alienation from God exchanged for that blessed spirit of adoption which enables them to cry "Abba, Father²," and through which they "wait for the hope of righteousness by faith³." Yea, in Christ they "are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit⁴." By Him the world is convinced of everlasting righteousness, because the Son of God hath gone to His Father, and is seen no more on earth.

III. Yet is there a third conviction ascribed, in the words before us, to the Holy Spirit. The Saviour who "had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool⁵." And since "the prince of this world," is the power which "worketh in the children of disobedience⁶;" since he darkens "the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them⁷," and is therefore the foremost of those enemies who shall be made Christ's footstool; the Spirit is said further to convince the world "of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged."

¹ Ephes. ii. 2, 3.

² Gal. iv. 6.

³ Gal. v. 5.

⁴ Ephes. ii. 22.

⁵ Heb. x. 12, 13.

⁶ Ephes. ii. 2.

⁷ 2 Cor. iv. 4.

Now, the Scripture tells us of a threefold judgment passed upon "the prince of this world:"—the first, pronounced in Paradise, when our parents fell;—the second, proclaimed in the sufferings and death of Christ; the third, to be accomplished in the end of the world.

It is with reference to the second of these that the words of the text are more especially to be understood;—seeing that Christ then blotted "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 it¹." For this cause the Apostle speaking of the children of men as "partakers of flesh and blood," saith of Christ, that He "also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them, who through fear of death were all their life time subject to bondage²." And it is evidently with reference to this triumphant issue that our Lord Himself spake thus unto the people, at the moment when that mysterious voice was heard from heaven speaking of His glory, "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth,

¹ Col. ii. 14, 15.

² Heb. ii. 14, 15.

will draw all men unto me¹." It was indeed so. These words were true, as the Evangelist tells us, when "signifying what death he should die²:" but how much more glorious was the confirmation of their truth, when He that was lifted up from the earth to the cross, was again lifted up from the earth to heaven? Then indeed was liberty proclaimed "to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound³." Dagon then sank down to the earth before the ark of the Lord⁴. The prospect which the Redeemer once saw of Satan falling "as lightning from heaven⁵" was realized; the serpent's head was bruised; the strong man of sin was bound; the powers of darkness were overcome; captivity was led captive; the prince of this world was judged. The coming of the Spirit, as we have seen, proclaimed that triumph; convinced the world of that judgment. It hath revealed the glory which attends the great Captain of our Salvation in the confusion of His enemies, in the praises of His redeemed. It hath taught us that "God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father⁶."

¹ John xii. 31, 32.

² John xii. 33.

³ Isaiah lxi. 1.

⁴ 1 Sam. v. 3, 4.

⁵ Luke x. 18.

⁶ Phil. ii. 9—11.

And have not we, my brethren, made that glorious confession before God and man? Are not we assembled here this day in token of its truth? Is it not the substance of our faith and our hope as Christian men? Assuredly then it is our part to see whether it be really dwelling in our hearts, with its proper and constraining influence; or whether it be repeated only in the idle ceremony of lip service. For what will it profit us to have pondered upon the promise of the Redeemer in the text; or upon the fulfilment of that promise which the Scripture hath made known unto us; unless that enquiry shall lead us to search into our own hearts, and see whether we have been yet brought to the practical and experimental knowledge of the truths whereof we have heard? If it be the office of the Spirit to convince the world of sin, must not the result be witnessed in our humility and contrition, in our unfeigned consciousness of guilt and danger, and in our earnest supplications unto God to be merciful, to make us “a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within¹” us? If again it be His office to convince the world of righteousness, must not that conviction fill us “with all joy and peace in believing²,” and lead us in the deep thankfulness of faith to cast our burdens at the feet of that great Physician of the soul? Must we not pray that since we,

¹ Psalm li. 10.

² Rom. xv. 13.

like Israel, have destroyed ourselves, so we may find our help¹ in Him who of God is made unto the believer “wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption²?” And lastly, if it be His office to convince the world of judgment; if that judgment be already begun in the condemnation of “the prince of this world,” of him who “was a murderer from the beginning,” who “is a liar, and the father of it³ ;” if it be denounced in the anathema which Scripture hath affixed against the hypocrite and impenitent; and if all the records of God’s chastisements be but the shadows of His coming day of vengeance;—what jealousy of ourselves can be too great, what fear too earnest what watchfulness too unremitting, what prayers too fervent, lest at any time we “draw back unto perdition;” and so be thought worthy of the sorest punishment of those who have “trodden under foot the Son of God, and have counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith they were sanctified, an unholy thing, and have done despite unto the Spirit of Grace⁴?” I know that these are solemn and appalling words; that they refer to an issue too dreadful to contemplate, and from the danger of which we would fain consider ourselves exempt. Yet, if they are to be found, in the Volume of Inspiration, addressed unto those who had received the promise,

¹ Hosea xiii. 9.

² 1 Cor. i. 30.

³ John viii. 44.

⁴ Heb. x. 29.

if the existence of the warning prove the existence of the danger; if the strength of that warning be confirmed by the history of God's people aforetime; if their sins, their provocations, their chastisements, be so many commentaries upon the misery that ensued upon the despite which they did to the Spirit of Grace; if the prospect of those coming woes drew tears from the Incarnate Son of God; if the fact of Jerusalem in her desolation be evidence that not without a cause were those tears shed; if the entreaties, the rebukes, the warnings of His faithful servants be further evidence that still a contest is going on between the carnal mind and the God of holiness; if the exhortation of the foremost among them to grieve not, and quench not, the Holy Spirit, to receive not the grace of God in vain, be confirmed by the example of His own struggles, His own buffeting, His keeping under His own body and bringing it into subjection, lest that by any means when he had preached to others, he himself should be a cast away:—if all this be among the lessons which the Son of God teacheth us in His Word, who or what are we that should dwell at ease in Zion, or indolently employ the precious ordinances and means of grace vouchsafed to us?

How full, how constant, how various are those means of grace! How unceasingly does the Spirit of God dispense them for our comfort! Even

in helpless infancy the child is baptized with water and the Holy Ghost; and they who bring him to that holy baptism are encouraged to doubt not, but earnestly believe that the same Redeemer who when on earth, took young children in His arms, and blessed them, will likewise favourably receive that present infant; that He will embrace him with the arms of His mercy; that He will give unto him the blessing of eternal life, and make him partaker of His everlasting kingdom¹. The promise is sure; the work of mercy is begun. The same heavenly Father who is thus pleased to regenerate the infant with His Holy Spirit, to receive him for His own child by adoption, and to incorporate him into His holy Church, strengthens and controuls his mind, as years pass onward, by the knowledge of those glorious truths which ‘sages would have died to learn².’ The Holy Volume which contains those truths, is laid open; each counsel of Providential mercy is unfolded there; and the saving application of them is extended, in the public services of the Church, to all faithful worshippers. They are taught therein the truth as it is in Jesus; they are encouraged therein ever to look unto His example, ever to plead the merits of His name, ever to be meet and thankful partakers of those holy mysteries, which He hath instituted, as pledges of His love, and for a

¹ See Office of Baptism.

² Keble’s Christian Year; Hymn on the Catechism.

continual remembrance of His death to their great and endless comfort. "Precept upon precept, line upon line¹," is graven upon their hearts. Each season of the passing year is marked by its association with the history of their Redeemer's love, and with the work of the Holy Spirit revealing that history to the salvation of their souls. The seed-time and the harvest, the winter and the summer, mark not more surely the progress of the natural year, than do the records of Christ's surpassing goodness distinguish each 'round of holy thought,' traversed by Christ's disciples. By these the daily duties of their lives are sanctified; by these their trials are converted into instruments and means of glorying. And the fruit of the Spirit which so convinceth them of the sin to which man's fallen nature is prone, of the righteousness by which man's fallen nature is restored, of the judgment which shall await the children of men hereafter, is "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance²."

To some indeed this holy influence may seem an unreal thing: they may have heard of it by the hearing of the ear, but their eyes have not seen, their hearts have not felt, its transforming power in the renewing of their own minds. The belief in it may seem to them credulity; the trust in its support a delusive hope. But is it possible for such

¹ Isaiah xxviii. 10.

² Gal. v. 22.

men to acquiesce in the general acknowledgment of God and Christ, of death and judgment, of heaven and hell? Is it possible for them to feel that they are of the earth, earthy; and yet to be unmindful of that power which can alone cleanse them from its defilement, and release them from its burdens? Can they venture upon the troubled waters of life, and not know the haven which is to be their refuge, nor the course which is to guide them thither? Can they look upon the daily conflicts which await them, and dream that their own right hand hath strength to get for themselves the victory? Can they feel the oppression of rebellious appetites within, and the terror of adversaries around them, and plunge into the fearful strife, without the girdle of truth, or the breastplate of righteousness, or the sandals of peace, or the shield of faith, or the helmet of salvation, or the sword of the Spirit? Can any credulity be more extravagant, or any hope more delusive than this? And yet this is the miserable portion of men who lean only upon their own strength, and walk only in the light of their own wisdom. With the Laodiceans they deem that they are "rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing;" and know not that they are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked¹." No marvel that "the preaching of the cross" of Christ seemeth "foolishness²" unto such

¹ Rev. iii. 17.

² 1 Cor. i. 18.

men. Paul seemed mad in the eyes of Festus, when he spake of the light which the risen Christ should “shew unto the people, and to the Gentiles;” yet was he not mad, but uttering only “the words of truth and soberness¹.” So is it even now with every Christian combatant who is struggling through the warfare in which that Apostle was victorious. His hope may seem madness to the disciples of the world; his instruments and means of help so many vain delusions; yet are they his sure and strong defence. He knoweth them to be real and precious, by the real and precious fruits which they produce. These the evidences of present blessing, the pledges of future glory;—the tokens whereby the Spirit, which “sealeth” him “unto the day of redemption²,” shows that Christ’s promise is fulfilled; that the Comforter, which convinceth the world of sin, of righteousness, of judgment, is come; and that, through the operation of His manifold gifts of grace, that faithful prayer of the Church shall be accomplished, which beseeches the Almighty and everliving God daily to increase in His servants the Spirit of wisdom and understanding; the Spirit of counsel and ghostly strength; the Spirit of knowledge and true godliness; and to fill them with the Spirit of His holy fear, now and for ever! That prayer is now offered up for you, my brethren.

¹ Acts xxvi. 24.

² Ephes. iv. 30.

May your hearts feel the need of the petitions which it breathes! May you support them “with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watch thereunto with all perseverance ¹!” Thus may you be taught to feel that “greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world ²;” and “with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ³!”

¹ Ephes. vi. 18.

² 1 John iv. 4.

³ Rom. xv. 5.

SERMON XII.

THE TEN LEPERS.

LUKE xvii. 17, 18.

And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

THE incidents which attract our notice in the authentic histories of mankind, derive their chief interest and importance from the consideration, that we are beings endued with like passions with the men whose actions are narrated; and that their conduct is but a specimen of what our own often is, or might be, under similar circumstances. Hence it becomes not only an obvious but a needful employment to look upon those narratives as monitors and guides to ourselves.

For, if the proper study of mankind be man, it is proper only so far as it may conduce to our own

advancement in righteousness, by making us acquainted with that weakness and corruption of our nature which self-love is for ever labouring to conceal. Should we forget to apply to our own individual cases, the observations which we make in the case of others, our knowledge will not only be barren of improvement, but may even serve to engender a censorious spirit; and increase that pride and presumption which we know too frequently attends the mere possession of speculative knowledge. Our own personal improvement is the centre towards which all reflections upon the nature and actions of man should converge; and whatsoever tends to unfold and bring to light any weakness lurking in the heart, should be received on our parts with all the readiness and impartiality which becomes creatures who are conscious of their responsible condition, and of that higher and eternal destiny which is to succeed this probationary life. Under the conviction therefore, that the Scripture from which the text is taken is eminently calculated to conduce to this end; and that we may all derive from it a lesson, which, by God's blessing, may be profitable for our instruction in righteousness, I have chosen it as a fit subject for our present meditation.

We read that our blessed Lord, as He went to Jerusalem, "passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as He entered into a certain village, there met Him ten men that were lepers,

which stood afar off: And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master have mercy on us." These lepers, observe, are described as meeting our Lord at the entrance of the village: for the law of Moses had declared of every one afflicted with that malady, that he "should dwell alone; and without the camp should his habitation be¹." They were shut out therefore from the abodes of their fellow men; and from the presence of all but those who were oppressed like themselves, and like themselves forsaken. They did not venture to draw near even unto Jesus. Albeit they believed in His power to succour them, and confessed that belief in their cry for mercy; yet they "stood afar off;" and from that distance lifted up their voices, with one accord, in the loud utterance of piteous supplication. Their posture was that of humility; their language was that of faith. And, if that humility and faith were manifested in the hour of tribulation; if the burden, which oppressed their feeble frames, constrained them to look more eagerly up to Him who giveth health both to the soul and body; if the insufficiency of human aid, and the helplessness of human suffering, led their hearts to trust in, and their tongues to implore, the help which cometh from above, who will not say, that, in this very application, we have a living evidence of the use and

¹ Lev. xiii. 42.

purposes of affliction? Does it not describe to us the energy which affliction gives to our belief and to our hope; the consciousness which it awakens within us of the vanity of earthly comforts,—a consciousness which the world and the world's customs is for ever striving to extinguish,—but which never comes home so closely and palpably to the heart, as when its positive reality is felt by us in the day of trouble?

Yet this is not the main point set forth for our admonition, in the present passage of the Sacred narrative. It is not the application of the distressed, but the ingratitude of the relieved, to which our attention is directed by the text. To this end, let us consider the words wherewith our blessed Lord answered the prayer of the ten lepers, "Go shew yourselves unto the priests." It is plain that the mere act of going and shewing themselves to the priests could not in itself have carried any healing power with it. The Law had indeed commanded, that, when the disease of leprosy had left a person, he should present himself to the priest; who, after having satisfied himself as to the healing of the plague, was, with solemn rites and sacrifices, to perform his purification. But the leprosy was still clinging to the persons of the men who received the command of Christ in the present instance. It had been a mockery therefore for them to have attempted compliance with the law,

unless they had felt assured that the burden of their sorrows would be removed, in the short interval of time which should elapse, before they reached the priest. The command, therefore, given by our Lord was manifestly a trial of their faith. They encountered that trial; they proved their faith; for they obeyed His command. "And it came to pass, that as they went, they were cleansed."

The miracle, it will be seen, was wrought indifferently upon all of those who were equally afflicted, and equally importunate; and yet not in the same manner was the mercy accepted by all. All were indeed obedient to the command of Christ; but only one was thankful¹. All hastened to fulfil the prescribed directions of the ceremonial law, that thereby they might be admitted once more to the affections of home and kindred; but only one was found to acknowledge the loving kindness of Him who gave that precious boon, and through whom alone the affections of this earth are sanctified. "When he saw that he was healed, he turned back, and with a loud voice"—yea, loud as that wherewith he had just before cried out for help,—“glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks; and he was a Samaritan.” He was of that despised nation towards whom the Jews felt an hatred so unrelenting, that, nothing but

¹ See Bishop Hall's Contemplations, in loc.

the common sorrows of these ten lepers could have allowed them to tolerate him as their companion: Alien as this Samaritan was, however, "from the commonwealth of Israel, and stranger from the covenants of promise¹," he returned to the Redeemer's presence, manifesting that fervent gratitude and unfeigned faith, through which the healing influences, which had just been exercised upon his body, were perpetuated to his eternal and spiritual comfort. "And Jesus said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole."

Mark now, my brethren, the lesson which this narrative addresses to ourselves. Look to the conduct of the nine who were cleansed. They were the sons of Abraham; and yet were slow to recognise the mercy of the promised Seed of Abraham. They were eager to observe the ordinances of the ceremonial law,—ordinances which only derived their weight and efficacy from His authority who gave it; who then spake to them in His Son; and who, by the very sacrifice of that Son, was about to take away the first covenant that He might establish the second;—and yet, whilst they enjoyed the gift, they forgot the Giver. They repaired to the creature, and turned away from the Creator. And, what was still more marvellous, their forgetfulness of God's love was put to rebuke and shame by the

¹ Ephes. ii. 12.

reverential homage of one who was a descendant of the rebellious tribes of Israel ; whose blood was tainted by an idolatrous ancestry ; and whose fathers had waged such bitter warfare against the faithful of Judah, that, as we are told, it was matter of astonishment to the woman of Sychar, at Jacob's well, that one clad in Jewish garb should even have asked of her water to drink¹. That a Samaritan, therefore, *a stranger*, as our Lord designates him, should pour out with a loud voice the deep workings of his soul in acknowledgment of the truth ; that he should cast himself down at the feet of Jesus, and give thanks unto Him, who was his Lord and God, whilst they who had been his partners in sickness, and were now his partners in health, and who belonged to a nation "of whom as concerning the flesh, Christ came²," should yet not be found with him to testify their gratitude, is indeed a humiliating proof that external privileges alone are but vain things to save a man. It is a most emphatic commentary upon the assurance which our Lord gives elsewhere, that "many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of heaven, but the children of the Kingdom be cast out³."

How recently had these cleansed lepers acknowledged the power and compassion of Jesus ! How earnestly had they appealed to Him as Master, and

¹ John iv. 9.

² Rom. ix. 5.

³ Matt. viii. 11, 12.

besought Him to have mercy upon them ! Yet, now that their suffering was gone, their thankfulness was gone also ; now that their prayer was granted, He that had granted it to them, was thought of no more. “ Were there not ten cleansed, but where are the nine ? ” was the question of our Lord, as he beheld the grateful Samaritan kneeling alone at His feet. Not that He asked this question by way of doubt, but rather of reproof. ‘ Full well did He count the steps of those absent lepers. He knew where they were ! ’ His heart went with those men as truly as Elisha’s heart went with his false servant Gehazi, when Naaman turned from his chariot to meet him ; and, in the language of mild expostulation, He upbraids their ingratitude that they were not where they ought to have been.

And does not the same eye read your own hearts, my brethren, and detect every thought that lurks there ? Does it not track your own footsteps, and watch every path of your earthly pilgrimage ? And many must He see among you, upon whom His mercy has been shown in characters almost literally the same with that which marked it, in the instance now under consideration. Whatsoever may have been the malady which has assailed your bodies ; or whatsoever the means of healing which have availed to the restoration of your strength ; you must never-

¹ Bishop Hall’s Contemplations, ut supra.

theless remember the time when your hearts have been filled with trembling, and your bones with weakness ; when, with the afflicted patriarch, you have been forced to cry out, "I am made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me. When I lie down, I say, when shall I arise, and the night be gone? and I am full of tossings to and fro unto the dawning of the day¹." You must be conscious also, that, if those sufferings have now departed from you, it has only been through the mercy of Him who spake the words of health to the afflicted lepers ; and, that, without His Will, permitting it, not all the ministrations of tenderest love nor all the appliances of human skill could have availed to your support. It is He that has delivered your souls from death, and your feet from falling, that you might yet walk before Him in the land of the living². Let me enquire then of you who have been thus delivered, whether you are thus walking before God? Is the renovated strength given back to the service of Him who granted it? Does the eye, once dimmed with pain, now rest with eager and steadfast look upon the page of revealed Wisdom? Is the faltering tongue now glad to sing its Redeemer's praise? Are the enfeebled limbs now active in the path of righteousness? Does the whole man, in fact, feel that the recovery of his bodily

¹ Job vii. 3, 4.

² Ps. cxvi. 8, 9.

health, is but an emblem of the salvation which Christ hath wrought for his soul? And is he, therefore, constrained, "by the mercies of God" to present himself "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is his reasonable service¹?" Or have these gifts been given only to be abused; and all the strong energies of the renewed manhood lavished again upon the purposes of sin?

It is for yourselves to say how these questions can be answered. I beseech you, therefore, not to evade them. If you can say, with unhesitating truth, that, like the Samaritan, you have returned unto the Author of the mercy conferred upon you; that you are even now glorifying Him in your souls and bodies, which are His, and giving Him thanks not only with your lips, but in your lives;—then happy are ye. Take home the Redeemer's blessing to yourselves; and cast all your care upon Him who thus careth for you. But if the examination should bring you to read only a lesson of rebuke in the history of the nine ungrateful lepers; then where is your hope but in confessing, openly and without reserve, the danger of thus doing despite to the Spirit of Grace, of thus trampling underfoot the mercies of their God? Confess, therefore, this danger; and confessing, flee from it. Return unto Him who hath showed you His great goodness; and remember the

¹ Rom. xii. 1.

blessed encouragement which your Saviour Himself hath given, "him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out¹."

And yet not to such men only, does this part of our subject apply. It is not only to those who have been raised from the bed of sickness or of care, that the admonition, to forget not the Author of the blessing conferred upon them, is addressed. Alas! for ourselves, if we took so partial a view of the lessons of revealed Wisdom! Believe me that they who are rejoicing in their youth, and health, and strength, should hear a voice of warning speaking to them in this history, in tones as touching and as needful for them to remember, as for those who have been denied, for a season, the enjoyment of the same temporal mercies. It should call back their thoughts to Him who alone enableth them to walk thus onward in all their joyous buoyancy of spirit; and should teach them to acknowledge, that, without His sustaining power who gave it, this gladdening impulse would in an instant be turned to very bitterness, and the bright summer of their existence be chilled and darkened. And more than this. It should remind them that the same God who so giveth to His creatures "life, and breath, and all things²," hath provided for them a refuge to which the feeble and the strong, the aged and the young, the

¹ John vi. 37.

² Acts xvii. 25.

sick and the healthful, are alike invited to repair; a refuge which they all need; and which, when their temporal and earthly interests shall have ceased any longer to exist, remaineth eternal as its Giver. Be the gifts and graces of the natural man what they may, he is still exposed to dangers from which no arm of flesh can save him. The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, are ever ready and ever watchful to ensnare his affections. It is the business of the world, which originates those lusts, to keep a firmer hold upon the victims that are entangled therein. And the inevitable result of all this must be to make "the whole head sick, and the whole heart faint¹;" to expose both body and soul to ruin. We must be conscious that there is no power which our wisdom can supply, strong enough to overcome the danger which thus threatens us; that there is no security against spiritual destruction, even for those who appear the most largely stored with outward appliances and means. One mightier than ourselves must aid us, or we are lost;—one who can drive from the recesses of their hearts each unruly passion that lurks within them, and plant there the seed of His own enduring holiness. And this hath Christ done. This doth He continue to do. His Word that cleansed the lepers in Samaria, still maketh us to hear of joy and glad-

¹ Isaiah i. 5.

ness that the bones which have been broken may rejoice. By His blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, our hearts are cleansed from the leprosy of sin; and, through the merits of His prevailing intercession, we are enabled and encouraged to come before God, for the renewal of daily blessings, for the pardon of daily trespasses.

The supplication, therefore, which fell from the lips of the poor lepers of Palestine, is now made our own; and ours also is the hope that our infirmities shall be healed, and our wants supplied by Him who heareth us. "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us," is the cry we utter. We believe that we shall utter it not in vain; for it is His own blessed invitation which encourages us, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest¹." It is His own merciful declaration in which we trust, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me²." We receive these promises with joy. We go away with the persuasion that salvation is ours; and eagerly avail ourselves of those external privileges which are the signs of our souls' health. But do we go beyond this? Do we return again unto Christ, and with loud voices glorify and

¹ Matt. xi. 28.

² John xv. 3, 4.

give Him thanks? I need not tell you of the numbers who have called upon His name;—but if, from those thronging multitudes, His searching spirit should select the really thankful worshipper, and claim for itself the heart which proves its thankfulness by acts as well as words, what would our numbers be? Not ten, but countless thousands have received the tidings of everlasting joy; their anxieties have been soothed; their infirmities relieved; their sorrows assuaged; their hopes animated; but where are they? Are they seen returning to give glory to God? Are they found reverencing the ordinances of God, listening to the Word of God, obeying the commandments of God? Do they “abhor that which is evil?” Do they “cleave to that which is good?” Are they “kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer¹?” If it be so, how comes it to pass, that, in a Christian land and amid the professors of Christian truth, we hear the cry of iniquity ascending day and night to heaven? If it be so, what mean the outrages committed by the unthankful child, the scorner, the sensualist, the blasphemer, the extortioner, the deceiver? If it be so, what mean the indolence of the

¹ Rom. xii. 9—12.

sluggard, and the mockery of the mere formalist? These surely are evidences, dismal and fatal evidences of the fact, that many, who have been arrayed under the Redeemer's banner, are traitors to His service; and that, in the unthankfulness of the nine absent lepers, they may see a perpetual record of their own forgetfulness of God and Christ.

And wherefore do I dwell upon topics so humiliating as these? Most assuredly not for the purpose of indulging a morbid spirit of complaint; still less for the purpose of encouraging any one to repeat the language of invective and reproach:—but simply, that, both you and I may be impressed with the sense of our proneness to forget God; and with the necessity of cultivating every means of grace by which we can return to Him. “The secret of the Lord,” we are assured, “is with them that fear Him; and He will shew them His covenant¹.” The blessedness of that secret is exhibited in the history of the Samaritan who knelt in adoration at his Saviour's feet; and who was commanded to arise, for his faith had made him whole. Let the prospect, then, of the same mercy now extended to ourselves, prompt us to come right early to God that we may seek it, and possess it; that we “may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth,

¹ Ps. xxv. 14.

and height; and know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that” we may “be filled with all the fulness of God¹.” We have been taught the way thereunto; for the Church whereof we are members points it out clearly unto us. We know the rule which is to guide us as we walk therein; for the Scriptures which are in our hands reveal it. We have shared the means of grace which engrave that rule upon our hearts; for our admission into the Christian covenant by Baptism, our participation of the Holy Eucharist in remembrance of Him who sealed that covenant with His blood, our prayers and our praises, our reception of God’s Word, our acknowledgment of God’s Providence, are, each of them, so many signs and evidences of their reality. Let all this fulness of Divine love, then, be found to have its perfect work in you;—that “the trial of your faith,” may “be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ: 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: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls².”

¹ Ephes. iii. 18, 19.

² 1 Pet. i. 7—9.

SERMON XIII.

THE REPENTANT WOMAN¹.

LUKE vii. 37, 38.

And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

THERE is a portion of the Sacred History related by each of the other Evangelists, which possesses so many points of resemblance to this which is written by St. Luke, that, by some commentators, they have been regarded as only different relations of the same event. Thus, in both cases, we find that the person to whose house our Saviour

¹ Preached in the Chapel of the Magdalen Hospital on the fifth of May, 1835, being the Seventy-seventh Anniversary of that Institution.

came, bore the name of Simon; although to one is attached the designation of the leper¹, and to the other that of the Pharisee. In both cases, the devotedness of woman's faith is described rejoicing to pay homage to the Son of God, by the same outward acts of reverence; in both, the language of harsh remonstrance and complaint is said to have been drawn forth from the spectators; and in both, an answer is returned by the Redeemer, which rebukes the adversaries of the woman, and gives the assurance of pardon and of peace to her own spirit. But, notwithstanding these marked coincidences, it will be found, I think, upon a careful comparison of the records of St. Matthew, of St. Mark, and of St. John, with that of St. Luke in the present passage, that they refer to two separate and distinct occurrences. For St. Matthew and St. Mark agree in stating that the event which they describe took place in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper. And St. John confirms their narrative, by saying,

¹ Compare Matt. xxvi. 6. and Mark xiv. 3.—Maldonatus, in his commentary upon the former of these passages, gives another reason, in addition to those which are here enumerated, for believing that Simon the leper could not have been the same person as Simon the Pharisee: namely, that the time in which our Lord entered the house of the former at Bethany, being in the last week of His ministry, when all the Pharisees were enraged and conspiring against Him, it is highly improbable that one of their own body should at such a moment have invited Him into his house.

that, she who “anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair¹” was Mary the sister of Martha and Lazarus; and that they dwelt at Bethany, a village, that “was nigh unto Jerusalem.” Whereas, in the case now before us, we are expressly told, that the woman had her abode in the city in which our Lord then was; and, since the only places mentioned in the present chapter are Nain and Capernaum, which were situated in Galilee, the fair and obvious conclusion is, that she must have belonged to the one or the other of those cities. There is a yet further evidence in corroboration of this view, arising from the consideration of the time at which these several events are stated to have occurred. For, immediately after the narrative which is here given by St. Luke, we read that our Lord “went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God².” Whereas the other instance is related by St. John, in that portion of his Gospel which details the miracle of our Lord’s raising Lazarus from the grave;—a miracle which marked the closing scenes of His ministry;—and after which it is expressly said, that He “walked no more openly among the Jews³.” Nay, the language wherewith our Lord rebuked the disciples on that occasion, for complaining of the waste of the ointment which Mary had

¹ Compare John xi. 2. and xiii. 3.

² Luke viii. 1.

³ John xi. 54.

poured upon His body, has an immediate reference to the hour of trial which was then at hand; for He assured them that she had done that act for His burial¹. Besides which, the persons who murmured upon that occasion were the disciples of our Lord; or, to speak more precisely, the covetous and false Judas; and the plea which he urged was that the ointment might have been sold for much and given to the poor. Whereas, in the case now before us, the man who censured our Lord was neither Judas, nor any other of the Apostles, but Simon the Pharisee, in whose house He then sat at meat; and the ground of his censure was, not that an useless waste of precious ointment had been made; but that our Lord seemed ignorant of the sinful character of the person whom He permitted to draw near unto Him. Now, we no where find such terms of ignominy applied to Mary of Bethany. Weak and erring she must have been, like every other daughter of those fallen parents by whom sin entered into the world, and death by sin. Yea, the very conviction of her weakness had brought her to the feet of Jesus, to listen patiently to His truth, and to choose that good part which should never be taken from her. But still we find no evidence for believing that she ever was an open and notorious transgressor of God's law. On the contrary, we are told that

¹ Compare Matt. xxvi. 12. and John xii. 7.

Jesus loved her, and Martha, and Lazarus. In the fulness of her grateful yet trembling joy, she poured the costly ointment on the head of Him who had revealed tidings of salvation to her soul; and heard Him blessing her, and saying, "Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her¹."

Such was Mary of Bethany; and such her consolation and hope. But we have no warrant for believing that any such peculiar privilege had been extended unto the woman whose history we are about to consider². She, the Evangelist tells us, was a sinner. Of the depth and enormity of her sin, he gives no record; yet the expression which he uses³, and the repetition of it in the reproachful language employed by Simon afterwards, are evidence enough to show that she had worn the badge of infamy; that she was an outcast from home and happiness; and had become an object for the finger of scorn to point at. But, sinner though she had been, she now no longer deserves the name. Her very com-

¹ Matt. xxvi. 13.

² Lightfoot, indeed, in his *Exercitations on St. Luke*, Vol. xii. p. 82. supposes that she was the same with Mary Magdalen, out of whom our Lord had cast seven devils. (Mark xvi. 9.) But he does not affirm it as a thing certain; neither can it be so affirmed by any.

³ See Hammond in *loc.*

ing into Christ's presence, and encountering without fear or hesitation the mockery of the proud Pharisee, argues the change of her heart and life¹. Had the poison of asps still been under her lips, or her hands still eager to grasp the wages of iniquity, or her feet still swift to traverse the chambers of death, she never could have endured the sight of heavenly Truth and Purity. She would have recoiled from Jesus, as the Gadarene demoniac did, and adjured Him not to torment her before her time. But so far from shrinking from the light of His presence, we are told that she sought out Jesus, even among those who despised her. She sought Him, 'not, as did the staring multitude, to satisfy her eyes with the sight of a miraculous and glorious person²;' not, as did the trembling woman in the crowd, for the healing of her bodily infirmity; not, as did the centurion or Canaanitish woman, or ruler of the synagogue, in behalf of the child, or servant whom she loved, but she sought Him, (and it is, as far as we can discover, the only example of any one so seeking Christ,) in remorse for those sins that now stung her to the very soul. She was borne down by their intolerable burden; her heart was bursting with anguish; the tears were fast falling from her eyes; and with

¹ See Bishop Hall's *Contemplations*, in loc.

² See Bishop Taylor's *History of the Life and Death of the Holy Jesus*, Vol. iii. p. 128.

humility, with repentance, with faith, she fled to Jesus for succour. She fled to Him, offering the most precious substance that she had; for she "brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment."

What a picture is this of sin abased in the presence of the Saviour! Do we learn that repentance must be accompanied with remorse? Behold that remorse in the tears which this woman shed; and in the lowly attitude wherewith she stood behind our blessed Lord as He sat at meat, and stooped, even to the ground, that she might anoint His feet with the ointment. Do we learn that repentance must be actuated and controuled by the Spirit of faith? Behold that faith in the eagerness with which she came to Him who can alone take away sin. There was no reservation, no faltering, no trusting to herself. It was not with the blood of bulls or of goats, that she hoped to wash away her offences; it was not with thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil that she would presume to bow down before the high God. She felt that He, who sat at the table of the Pharisee, was the Redeemer who should come to Zion¹; whose righteousness

¹ Isaiah lix. 20.

should "go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth¹;" that in Him was "a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness²." Weary and heavy-laden, she came to Him that she might find rest unto her soul. She cast herself wholly upon His mercy; seeking and expecting no other aid but His who came to seek and to save that which was lost.

We know not the specific cause which led this woman thus to embrace the offer of salvation through Christ Jesus. We know not what words or works of His they were, which had thus opened the eyes of her understanding, nor what lessons of heavenly truth had thus constrained her affections with an holy desire to enter into His presence. But doubtless the words and works of Jesus had been the instruments of blessing to her soul. He, who had been feet to the lame, and eyes to the blind, who had given food to the hungry, and strength to the feeble, and health to the sick, and life to those that were dead, was now holding out the light of hope and consolation to a child of darkness and of misery. He was realizing the lessons which He had taught. He was embodying and giving forth the joy which He had described of the shepherd who brought home on his shoulders, rejoicing,

¹ Isaiah lxii. 1.

² Zech. xiii. 1.

the sheep which had wandered from the fold ; of the father who received again to his heart and home the prodigal whom he had lost ; yea, He was bringing down to earth the praises of the angelic spirits themselves, who sing a louder song of triumph over one sinner that repenteth.

But there were those present who were strangers to the fulness and the freedom of redeeming love. Wise in their own conceits, and filled with a sense of their own righteousness, they knew not how to bow down in humility before God ; nor how to have compassion one of another. They saw One, whom the people counted as a prophet, permitting a sinful woman to approach Him ; and, knowing that they would instantly have spurned such an one from their threshold, and driven her back again to infamy, they measured the wisdom and mercy of Jesus by their own. Because He neither adopted their language, nor conformed to their conduct ; because He did not share the sentiments of their proud brethren, nor say, as they would have done, to the weeping penitent, "Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou¹;" but suffered her to pour forth the faithful emotions of her heart before Him : they thought that He could neither discern the thoughts of man, nor communicate the Will of God. "This man," spake the Pharisee within himself, "if He were a prophet, would have known

¹ Isaiah lxxv. 5.

who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him ; for she is a sinner." And was He not a prophet then ? Yea, much more than a prophet ; for He was the priest to make atonement ; He was the king to rule. He was Jesus, the Saviour ; Christ, the Anointed. It was His power that had drawn the sinful woman to His presence, and taught her there to worship Him. It was His wisdom that discerned the proud thoughts of Simon, though no utterance of them had fallen from his lips. And now, it was His mercy that went on to speak this touching lesson of rebuke to the self-righteous man. " Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors : the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most ? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And He said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged ¹."

It were impossible to imagine anything more simple, more beautiful, more convincing, than this short Parable. Out of his own mouth the Pharisee is judged. He is constrained to confess, that, the greater the debt is, the greater mercy there is in its remission : and the more mercy there is in the forgiver, the more obligation and love must there be

¹ Luke vii. 40—43.

in the forgiven. And is not God the creditor of all His creatures? Are not our sins our debts? And are we not, in this respect, all debtors¹? Be the amount of the debt what it may; be it compared to the five hundred or fifty pence, we have still nothing of our own to pay; nothing that can satisfy the requirements of Divine justice; nothing that can do away with the sad catalogue of our offences; nothing that can open for us the doors of our prison-house, and set us free. The Master who, in the Parable, frankly forgave both his debtors, is He who can alone “say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves².”

Simon must have acknowledged the authority of Christ, when he received Him into his house, and hailed Him by the name of Master; but where was the thankfulness or love he owed his Master? The sinful woman whom he despised, might have owed her five hundred pence unto the Lord; but was not he, likewise, a debtor of the fifty? Were there no defalcations of duty on his own part? no sins that lay heavily upon his own soul? He might, perchance, have escaped the ignominy and derision of the world; but had he never deserved its rigour? Had he never committed deeds, which, if dragged to the light of day, would have cast him down with shame to the very ground, upon which the lowly

¹ See Bishop Hall's Contemplations, in loc.

² Isaiah xlix. 9.

penitent was then kneeling? Could he escape, by his own wisdom or strength, from the penalty due to those evil deeds? Was there any other hope of remission, but in the love of Him who even then was humbling Himself upon earth; and, in the form of a servant, working out the salvation of a guilty world? In what way, then, had the Pharisee testified his belief in this certain, this precious truth? Let the appeal which our Lord makes to him be the answer. "Seest thou this woman?" saith our Lord to Simon. "I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with 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. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins which are many are forgiven; for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And He said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven¹." Her love to Christ, you perceive, was the evidence as well as the effect of His pardoning love to her, and not the actuating cause of it. It was no consciousness of merit in herself, whereby she could procure pardon, that led her thus to come into the Redeemer's presence; but the grateful acknowledgment of His perfect and free redemption. 'The debt is not

¹ Luke vii. 44—48.

released because the debtor loves his creditor; but the debtor loves, because the debt is forgiven. Remission goes before, and love follows¹?

How is it then with yourselves, my brethren? “Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot².” Have you therefore the faith, the thankfulness, the humility, which becometh men for whom so mighty a ransom has been paid? Are your souls “purified in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren;” and do “ye love one another with a pure heart fervently³?” Or does there lurk, within any of you, the scornful spirit of the self-righteous Pharisee? That spirit, we may be assured, is not confined to the men who wore in Palestine the broad phylactery on their brow, and the spacious border on their robe. It may be seen in our own day, and amid our own people. It is the spirit common to man: even in the holiest of God’s servants, it is the last enemy that is subdued, the last

¹ See Lightfoot’s Hebrew and Talmudical Exercitations upon St. Luke, Vol. xii. p. 83. For the reasons which may be alleged to justify a departure from the ordinary interpretation of the word *ἔτι* in this passage, and to render it in the sense of *διότι*, as expressing not the cause or antecedent, but the effect or consequent; see Hammond and Whitby, in loc.

² 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

³ Ibid. 22.

stronghold that gives shelter to the man of sin, before he is bound and cast out of his dominion by One "stronger than he¹." We see, in the history before us, the fearful barrier which this spirit raised up in Simon's mind against the reception of the truth; and, believe me, it will present the same obstacle to all who, professing to walk in the path of Christian duty, are yet entangled by its influence. We may indeed receive Christ with outward reverence. So did the Pharisee. We may count him as a Prophet. So did the Pharisee. But unless we receive Him as the Saviour; and draw therefore humbly and meekly towards Him as those who have need to be saved; our hope must become a mockery; our privileges an empty name.

And think ye, that any, who thus seek to come unto Christ that they may have life; who pray that by His aid their trespasses may be pardoned, and their infirmities healed,—can be unmindful of others who, like themselves, are sinners, and like themselves have been made to hear the message of salvation? Where is your love, or your obedience, or your thankfulness, if you desire not to make others partakers of your joy? If the debt which you could never pay has been cancelled by Him who "hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God²;" if, being so brought

¹ Luke xi. 22.

² 1 Pet. iii. 18.

unto Him, you believe that you are turned from darkness to light, from error to truth, from death to life,—are you not to look for the evidence of that blessed issue in yourselves, by the impulse which it gives to help and comfort others? Should this impulse be wanting upon your part, you may be assured that you are only buoyed up with a delusive hope, and following a light that must ere long be extinguished. If you repel with scorn the hand of a repentant sinner, when it is stretched out to you for succour; if you make her path to eternal life more difficult of access by the stumbling blocks which you set up in the midst of it; if you take upon yourselves the office of ministers of judgment, and forbid with your anathemas the hope of salvation to those who with tears and cries implore it, verily you reject that distinctive badge and evidence which characterizes the true disciples of Christ. Your love to Him is cold; and no marvel that your love to your neighbour should be cold also.

Let not this be laid to your charge this day: for this day am I commissioned to appeal to you in behalf of repentant sinners;—in behalf of those who have been ensnared by the tempter's voice to ruin; who have left the home that sheltered them, the father and the mother that loved them; and have been cast on the wide world without help or guidance. Every step which they have taken has led them into deeper entanglement, and cast them

down to lower and lower depths of degradation. They know how bitter has been the fruit, how vile the wages of their sin. All that the imagination can picture to itself of the wretchedness that haunts their footsteps;—affections outraged, conscience oppressed, and hope deceived;—the tongue compelled to speak the language of iniquity, and the ears to hear it;—sickness, contempt, and poverty, ready to encompass them about;—their only prospect, continuance in sin;—their only help, companionship in sin;—their only shield, unblushing hardihood;—their only home, the abode of infamy:—all this is realized;—and O! what a state is this for the daughters of men to live and die in! The ‘moody madness’ of the poor idiot smiling in the midst of woe,—even ‘wild laughter in the throat of death,’ assails not our senses with more appalling horror, than does the spectacle of their self-mockery, beckoning them onward to the grave. Does the moment of reflection ever come to them? It comes but to overwhelm their souls with the reality of what they have been; of what they are; of what they may be. Think they of the home of their childhood? What is it but the shadowy image of a dream which vanisheth, and leaveth them possessed of nought but the dismal consciousness that from the joy and shelter of home they are shut out? Do their hearts yearn towards that God whose name

they have been taught to reverence; and whose laws, therefore, they feel that they have trampled under foot? Would they, upon their bended knees, beseech His pardon? Would they implore Him to have mercy upon them and save them from the destroyer? Truly their tongue falters in uttering the prayer; for the heavy weight of guilt oppresses it. Their hands, which the spirit of supplication has lifted up to heaven, fall down; for the cruel toils of Satan are bound and riveted upon them. What then, my brethren? Shall we say that there is no succour, no refuge? God forbid! What is our Christian profession but a perpetual summons to ourselves to flee, and to persuade others to flee with us to the stronghold of hope that is set before us? What are the many temples of Christian worship in the land, what the prayers offered up in them, what the means of grace which issue from them and are ordained to sanctify each passing incident of our lives, but so many evidences of the blessed truth, that, amid all the frightful profligacy which crowds our streets, there is a gigantic power at work which is appointed to grapple with and overthrow the enemy; that a leaven is even now spreading through the corrupt mass, which is fitted to make it healthful; and that the tidings of salvation have reached even to the ears and to the hearts of those who have been steeped in the lowest depths of the world's

abominations. "This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith¹;" and all who are engaged in this holy warfare will find that, "greater is He that is in" them "than he that is in the world²." We know that we have much to encounter; that we have much to fear:—but as long as this encouragement is with us, we will not shrink back from the work. We will rather invoke a blessing upon our fellow-labourers; and, as we see the progress of their watchful and persevering efforts, we will thank God, and take courage³.

For, is it not a cause of thankfulness to know that the Institution, in whose sanctuary we are now assembled, is one of the instruments which have been raised to heal the wounds of which we have been speaking, and perpetuate the blessing which we have been imploring?—that, for the greater part of a century, it has fixed its station on the borders of our vast metropolis, and carried on, in the Redeemer's name, the Redeemer's work?—that it has given to the weak, strength; to the ignorant, knowledge; to the desponding, hope; to the penitent, consolation?—that it has taught their hearts to feel, and their tongues to speak of joy and gladness; because it has encouraged them to draw near with faith and reverence unto Him who proclaimed forgiveness to the sinner? I stop not to point out the details of this holy, this needful work; for I speak

¹ 1 John v. 4.² Ibid. iv. 4.³ Acts xxviii. 15.

in the presence of many who have witnessed them; I speak to all who have the opportunity of making the examination for themselves, and of proving, by the test of positive experiment, that it is not, as some would tempt them to believe, a vain and unprofitable labour. No, my brethren, we possess proofs too ample, too numerous to admit of doubt: and as long as one such evidence remains; as long as one immortal spirit is saved from condemnation, so long must we rejoice to strengthen the hands of those who thus glorify their God and Saviour. Your prayers have this day been offered up at the throne of grace with those for whom we plead. You have heard their voices urging the same petitions, and repeating the same praises with yourselves. Call now to mind for an instant but one portion of this solemn service. Remember the earnest supplication which, but a short time since, you addressed in the Psalmist's language unto God, when you said, "Unto thee will I cry, O Lord my strength; think no scorn of me; lest if thou make as though thou hearest not, I become like them that go down into the pit. Hear the voice of my humble petitions, when I cry unto thee; when I hold up my hands towards the mercy-seat of thy holy temple. O pluck me not away, neither destroy me with the ungodly and wicked doers¹." Call this

¹ Ps. xxviii. 1—3. One of the Psalms of Evening Prayer for the fifth day of the month.

earnest supplication to mind, I beseech you; and if your hearts have felt the deep import of the words which your lips have uttered; if you have confessed your own need of the mercy, that shall answer the petition; if you have urged it in the name of Christ your great Intercessor, trusting that His merits shall prevail in your behalf, and not suffer your prayers to return unto you void; then have pity on those who have made the same petition, who look for the same succour. They cry unto you, and with you, also, unto the Lord their strength. Think no scorn of them; lest if you make as though you heard them not, they become like them that go down into the pit. Hear the voice of their humble petitions when they cry unto you. O pluck them not away; neither destroy them with the ungodly and wicked doers. Immortal spirits are turning unto you for help. Despise not their prayer, as you hope to be forgiven.

SERMON XIV.

THE HUMILIATION OF THE SON OF GOD.

PSALM xl. 8, 9, 10.

Sacrifice and meat offering thou wouldest not: but mine ears hast thou opened. Burnt offerings and sacrifice for sin hast thou not required: then said I, Lo, I come. In the volume of the book it is written of me, that I should fulfil Thy will, O my God: I am content to do it; yea, Thy law is within my heart.

THAT this Psalm is strictly prophetical of the humiliation and obedience which the Son of God should manifest in the achievement of man's redemption; and, consequently, a fit Psalm to be selected by the Church in the celebration of this day's service¹, is a fact which, if there were no other evidence to establish it, might safely be allowed to rest on the clear and explicit testimony to that effect, supplied

¹ Preached on Good Friday.

in this morning's Epistle. A comparison is therein drawn by the Apostle between the sacrifices under the Law, which were but "a shadow of good things to come," and "the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." The former, he reminds us, were "offered year by year continually;" and showed from the very need of their constant recurrence, that they could never "make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin, thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the Volume of the Book it is written of me) to do Thy will, O God. Above when he said sacrifice and offering, and burnt offerings, and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the Law; then said he, lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all¹."

¹ Heb. x. 1—10.

Now, the reference which the Apostle here makes to the fortieth Psalm, and to that portion of it which I have chosen for the text, is too plain to be misunderstood. It is quite decisive as to the meaning of the prophecy contained in it; and proves that the words spoken by the Psalmist must be understood as spoken in the person of Christ. There is one point, however, deserving our notice here; and that is the apparent discrepancy between the terms employed by the Psalmist, and those quoted by the Apostle. For, when the former speaks thus, "Sacrifice and burnt offering thou wouldest not; but *mine ears hast thou opened*;" the latter quotes it in this manner, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but *a body hast thou prepared me*." This is a discrepancy however more of form than of meaning. The words of the Psalmist, it must be remembered, are translated directly from the Hebrew text; whereas those of the Apostle are translated from the clause as it stands in the Septuagint, or Greek version of the Old Testament. There are commentators, indeed, who have attempted to reconcile the wide difference that exists between the original Hebrew and the translated Greek, by conjectural emendations in the text of the former¹; but I incline to the opinions of those who believe, that,

¹ Kennicott and Peirce may be referred to, among our own divines, as offering the most ingenious conjectures upon the passage in question.

notwithstanding the disagreement of verbal expression, the meaning conveyed in each clause is identically the same ; and that, a meaning indicative of the perfect obedience of the Son of God to His heavenly Father's will.

In order that we may examine the reasons which have led them to arrive at this conclusion, it would be well to refer to that passage in Isaiah's prophecy, which has already been recited in this House of Prayer during the services of this holy week ¹; and which gives so faithful a picture of the coming sorrows of the Redeemer. "The Lord God *hath opened mine ear*, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. I hid not my face from shame and spitting ; for the Lord God will help me ; therefore shall I not be confounded ²." Now, the phrase in the outset of this passage, corresponding exactly with that in the text, may justly be understood as implying a solemn preparation of the whole body for suffering patiently all the hardships that were to be inflicted upon it. By a very common figure of speech, a part is put for the whole ; the single feature of the ear for all the members of the body ; and that, because the ear is the sense of discipline, and possesses, when

¹ The portion of Scripture appointed for the Epistle on Tuesday before Easter.

² Isaiah l. 5—7.

opened, both the faculty of quickness in hearing, and of faithfulness in retaining, and thus enabling the whole man to comply with, the lessons of obedience. The metaphor contained in the expression is borrowed from the practice of the potter, who perforates, and kneads, and moulds, to his own purposes, the earth of which he makes his vessel. Even so the Almighty Lord God, the former or fashioner of all things, is represented as opening the ear¹; or, (as the Greek translators have rendered it,

¹ I subjoin the interpretation of the passage given by Genebrard, and quoted with commendation by Dr. Jackson; but which, from the present scarcity of that author's works, may not be so well known as it deserves. 'Aures mihi aperuisti, id est, corpus, per Synecdochen, è Paulo Heb. x. Mihi aptasti corpus humanum in utero virgineo. Rabbini non satis perceptâ metaphorâ, Aures fodisti sive aperuisti mihi, ad tuæ obtemperandum voluntati aurem revelasti, retexisti, ab aure abstulisti velum et tegmen, ut acutius audiret. Effecisti ut te audirem, ac tuæ voluntati libens parerem. Me docilem et obsequentem ad audiendum reddidisti. Chald. Aures ad auscultanda tua præcepta formasti mihi. Nostris congruenter. Quia enim agitur de corporatione sive incarnatione Domini, est metaphora simul et synecdoche, ad quorum troporum difficultatem explanandam Apostolus appositissimè posuit, *Corpus aptasti mihi*. Est enim primùm metaphora à figulis, qui manu fodicant et ducunt argillam è quâ cupiunt vas aptare, currente rotâ. Quare Deus et figulus, et fictor, et plastes nuncupatur, ut alludatur ad Genes. ii. quando ex humo humanum corpus duxit. Est deinde synecdoche, pars pro toto, aures pro corpore: sed aurium præsertim meminit, quia de obedientiâ agebatur." — Jackson's Works, Vol. ii. B. viii. s. iv.

in language admirably expressive of the meaning of the inspired penmen,) *preparing the body* of Him who should give (as the Evangelists have recorded of the Lord Jesus,) His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair.

Another passage there is of Holy Scripture, which may be brought forward in illustration of our present subject, which yet I would not be thought to press too closely; because it may no doubt appear to some, as it has already appeared to others, a fanciful and overstrained application of a part of the ceremonial Law of Moses. The passage to which I allude is that which occurs in the twenty-first chapter of the book of Exodus; wherein the specific laws and ordinances to be observed by the Jewish people, with respect to men-servants, are set forth. We read there, that the period of their service was, in each case, to be for six years; and that, in the seventh, they should be allowed "to go out free for nothing;" that, if any had come into his master's house unmarried, he should leave it in the same condition; but that, if he were married, then his wife should go out with him; and if, during his servitude, his master had given him a wife, and she had borne him sons and daughters, that the wife and children should be her master's, and the servant should go out by himself; but that, if the servant should plainly say, "I love my master, my wife, and my children, I will not go out free, then his master should bring

him unto the judges, and he should also bring him to the door, or unto the door-post, and his master should *bore his ear through* with an awl, and he should serve him for ever¹.”

No doubt there is a close affinity of expression between the language which describes this peculiar treatment of the Hebrew servant, and that which, by the Psalmist, the Prophet, and the Apostle, is applied unto Christ. Whether indeed any secret and mysterious analogy exists between this ordinance of the Mosaic Law, and the blessed Incarnation of the Son of God, or is meant to be inferred from a comparison of these passages, is more than I can confidently assert. I would only venture to suggest, that, as the mark, required by the enactment in question, was no sign of punishment nor badge of infamy, but simply the testimony and token of the servant's unshaken, devoted attachment to his master's service;—a token, that, howsoever arduous the struggle, or appalling the danger, or burdensome the duties which awaited the recipient of it, he was ready, nevertheless, to bear the burden, to confront the danger, to encounter the struggle, with a constancy that should feel no wavering, with a patience that should know no weariness;—so it might well be accounted a fit emblem of His meek and implicit obedience, who, though “He was in the form of God,” and “thought it not robbery to be equal

¹ Exod. xxi. 1—7.

with God," yet "made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross¹."

I am aware that the fitness of this custom as an emblem of Christ's humiliation, is denied by some expositors, on the ground that it subjected the person, whose ear was thus opened, to perpetual servitude; *i. e.* till the end of his natural life;—whereas 'our Saviour, although for a time He took the form of a servant upon Him, and was qualified for the performance of the hardest part of this service, by opening the ear, yet was He not made, nor did He become a perpetual servant, but shortly after to be made both Lord and Christ².' But was not the institution of the year of Jubilee a release to all the sons of Abraham, even to the servant who had refused to leave his master's house? Was it not ordained that liberty should then be proclaimed "throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof;" that they should then "return every man unto his possession, and every man to his family³?" If so, the perpetuity of subjection spoken of exists

¹ Phil. ii. 6—8.

² These are the very words with which Dr. Jackson denies the applicability of this Mosaic ordinance to the case of our Lord's Incarnation. See his works, *ut suprâ*.

³ Lev. xxv. 10.

no longer; and the analogy, supposed to be disturbed thereby, remains unbroken. The Hebrew servant, though loving his master's service, was yet to share the joy of the returning Jubilee. And He, who, for our sakes, "took upon Him the form of a servant;" and whose meat it was "to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work¹;" did nevertheless endure and accomplish all this, "for the joy that was set before Him²;"—no temporal or earthly joy, such as that felt by the sons of Abraham when the trumpet of Jubilee was sounded throughout the land,—but the joy of redemption accomplished, of victory achieved; the joy which awaited Him, when, "after He had offered one sacrifice for sins," He should for ever sit "down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool³:"—when "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father⁴."

It is not, however, to that exalted glory of the Redeemer in His mediatorial kingdom, that our thoughts are now directed. We have been led throughout the solemn services of the present season, to remember Him as the Man of Sorrows, and ac-

¹ John iv. 34.

² Heb. xii. 2.

³ Heb. x. 12, 13.

⁴ Phil. ii. 10, 11.

quainted with grief. Let us pause, therefore, and receive with meekness the lessons which this returning period unfolds to us. Let us stand, with the beloved disciple, at the foot of the cross, and behold with the eye of faith the immensity of that ransom which, amid darkness and fearful signs, amid the rending of the rocks, and the bursting of sepulchres, was paid for our redemption from the bondage of sin.

Even so, in the Volume of the Book, had it been written of the Son of God that it should be. And is not this assurance the most signal evidence which could be given of the mercy and long-suffering of our Heavenly Father? To know that, "from the beginning of the world," there had been "hid in God ¹," a mystery which comprehended the salvation of His fallen children;—that, from the day when its earliest promise was made known to the exiles from Paradise, until the fulness of its perfect revelation, the instrument through which that salvation should be accomplished, was declared to be the Incarnate Son;—that "to Him give all the prophets witness ²," testifying "beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow ³;"—that concerning Him the Volume of the Book, the roll of Sacred Inspiration was written, and in Him its blessings realized;—how deep, how overwhelming is

¹ Ephes. iii. 9.

² Acts x. 43.

³ 1 Pet. i. 11.

the conviction herein forced upon us of God's great goodness! That generation after generation should pass away, and yet the counsels of His redeeming love move onward; that sinners should rise up to mock at His clemency, and provoke His anger; that they should set at nought His threatenings and trample underfoot His laws, and yet that He should multiply His promises of saving grace; giving substance to the shadows of the coming good, and utterance to the dumb elements of His appointed ritual; and that, "when the fulness of time was come," He should send "forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons¹;"—herein indeed is love;—love which may well constrain us all to bow down as one man in deep humility before the Lord, and to say with one heart and voice, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out²!"

And yet, great as was the evidence of Divine Mercy, thus manifested in the Incarnation of the Son of God, a greater evidence still remains to be considered. It is not only that He should have left the glory which He had with the Father, before the beginning of the worlds;—but that, having left it,

¹ Gal. iv. 4, 5.

² Rom. xi. 33.

He should have descended to the lowliest and most despised condition which even man could know; that He should have submitted thus to shame and suffering, and have “endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself¹ :”—this it is which constitutes the vastness of the Divine mercy. That He, who “in the beginning was with God, and was God;” by whom “all things were made;” and “without” whom “was not any thing made that was made,” should have been “made flesh,” and have “dwelt among us;” and that His glory should have been seen by the eye of mortal sense, “the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth² ;”—were itself a mystery indeed “which angels” might “desire to look into³ ;” but, that even the earthly tabernacle which veiled this unspeakable glory, should itself have been assailed with the fiercest onset of the world’s oppression; that the head⁴, which had been encircled with rays of Heavenly Majesty, in the waters of Baptism, and the brightness of the transfiguration, should have been bruised and lacerated by the crown of thorns;—that the ears, which then heard the voice of the Almighty Father testifying, from on high, His pleasure in His beloved Son,

¹ Heb. xii. 3.

² John i. 1—3. 14.

³ 1 Pet. i. 12.

⁴ It is scarcely necessary to observe, that this passage is taken, with but slight alteration, from Bishop Hall’s *Contemplation on the Crucifixion*.

should have been made to smart with the buffetings and reproaches of inhuman persecutors;—that the hands which had dealt out bread to the hungry in the wilderness, which had healed by their very touch the dumb, the deaf, and the blind, and the feet which had borne Him on the liquid pavement of the waters, should have been nailed to the beams of the accursed tree;—that the lips which had commanded the winds and waves of the tempest to be still, which had proclaimed consolation to the mourner, and peace to the frantic, and pardon to the faithful penitent, should have implored that the cup of bitterness might pass from Him, and, in the distraction of severest agony, have cried out, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?”—this indeed presents to our view a complication of mysterious suffering, which, even if angelic spirits could unfold, could never be fully apprehended by us, the weak children of earth. Mysterious, I say it is; for it was throughout the course of voluntary obedience. It was the subjection of Him who was Lord of all things; the death of Him who was “the Prince of life¹.” Had He been only man, it would have been no humility to have submitted unto death; for death is the lot of all men². And yet the Apostle tells us

¹ Acts iii. 15.

² See the third part of Bishop Sherlock’s Discourse on Phil. ii. 6—11. See also Bishop Hall’s “Passion Sermon.” ‘Like a champion that scorns to be overcome, yea, knows He cannot be,

that He “*humbled Himself*, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross¹.” Yes, He humbled Himself, because He was very God; because in His human form there dwelt “the fulness of the Godhead bodily².” When He therefore submitted to indignities, He submitted to that which He could have avoided. He laid down His life of Himself. He had “power to lay it down, and” He had “power to take it again³.” Had He but spoken the word, legions of angels would have flown to His rescue, and dashed His enemies to the ground. “But how then” would “the Scriptures” have been “fulfilled, that thus it must be⁴?” How especially would that signal declaration of His saving purpose have been made good, which had been revealed in the text, ages before, saying, “Sacrifice and meat offering thou wouldest not: but mine ears hast thou opened. Burnt offerings and sacrifice for sin hast thou not required: then said I, Lo, I come. In the Volume of the Book it is written of me, that I should fulfil

(our Saviour) yieldeth in the midst of His strength, that He might by dying vanquish death. He bowed, and gave up: not bowing because He had given up; but because He would. Nature was strong, He might have lived; but He gave up the ghost, and would die, to show Himself Lord of Life and Death.’—Hall’s Works, Vol. v. p. 41.

¹ Phil. ii. 8.

² Col. ii. 9.

³ John x. 18.

⁴ Matt. xxvi. 54.

Thy will, O my God: I am content to do it; yea, Thy law is within my heart¹.”

We have seen the unshaken constancy with which that purpose was carried out even to the end. We have seen that the salvation of man, the salvation of ourselves, was involved in the mighty issue. And we have met here this day to commemorate its accomplishment. What then, my brethren? Do we feel that we have profited thereby, or that we are still cold, and careless, and impenitent? Shall it be for us to ask, in the murmuring and repining spirit of those men whom the prophet Malachi describes, “What profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts²?” Or are our hearts softened by the contemplation of His adorable goodness, and our lips opened to confess it? Let us search ourselves truly and impartially in this matter; for our souls’ welfare depends upon it. We have turned

¹ ‘Sacrifices are here spoken of as not pleasing to God. But it is manifest, on inspection of the context, that this is only intended in a *comparative* sense, and as abstracting from those concomitants, without which sacrifice never could have been acceptable to a holy and righteous God. This is further confirmed by the manner in which similar declarations are introduced, in Is. i. 11, 12. lxvi. 3. Prov. xv. 8. and Amos v. 21, 22. See Archbishop Magee’s Appendix to Discourses, &c. on the Atonement. Vol. ii. pp. 82, 83.

² Mal. iii. 14.

away, remember, this day from the ordinary occupations of life, and come into the courts of the Lord's house, that we may testify thus publicly our need of His saving help, and our belief, that, in Christ crucified, that help has been secured. Is it possible, then, that we can go forth from this solemn assembly, and mingle again in all the busy interests of the scene around us, without a feeling of shame for our transgressions, or of devotion unto Him who hath opened to us a way of escape? Is it nothing to us, all we that pass by and behold the sorrow wherewith the Lord hath afflicted Him in the day of His fierce anger? Can we go our way, the one to his farm, and the other to his merchandize, and think no more of Him who hath invited us to partake of His mercy? Why, the very Centurion who witnessed the things which have now been read in our ears, and in which we profess to believe,—heathen though he was,—glorified God in the confession of His Son. Yea, “all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts and returned¹.” And shall we return without one rebel thought restrained, or one holy aspiration kindled into life? If this be so, what impious mockery have we made of God and of His ordinances? What desperate defiance have we hurled against

¹ Luke xxiii. 48.

His righteous counsels? Surely that withering rebuke must be our portion in such a case, which He commanded the son of Amoz to deliver against His rebellious people aforetime; "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity even the solemn meeting¹." It were impossible to imagine a more perilous provocation of Divine wrath; a more sure or "fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries²."

Let not this be laid to our charge, I beseech you. If there be around us those who deny "the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction³," let us, casting ourselves upon the promise of redeeming mercy, "come out from among them, and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing⁴." Nay, let us not despise them; but rather pray for them again, as we have already prayed, that the merciful God, who hath made all men and hateth nothing that He hath made, may have mercy upon them, and take from them all ignorance, hardness of heart, and contempt of His Word, and so fetch them home to his flock, that they may be saved among the remnant of the true Israelites, and be made one fold, under one Shep-

¹ Isaiah i. 13.

² Heb. x. 27.

³ 2 Pet. ii. 1.

⁴ 2 Cor. vi. 17.

herd, Jesus Christ our Lord¹." And then, coming with renewed faith and hope to the contemplation of the gracious mystery this day presented to our thoughts, let us adore the unsearchable goodness which hath so presented it. It was a work wrought out but once, but to be thought upon for ever:—a work which here we have no strength to measure in its length, or breadth, or depth, or height; but which, nevertheless, through the widest limits of the world, from generation to generation, shall cause its saving power to be known and felt. "If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me²," is the gracious declaration of our Lord himself. Behold then His words fulfilled. Behold our refuge, and the way to it secured. He hath been lifted up on the cross; and by the word of His cross³, by the doctrine of His Gospel, doth He draw all men unto Him. Yea, by virtue of this work, we believe that the Word of God hath been accomplished, which saith, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions; and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee⁴;" and therefore will we take up the language of the inspired Prophet which follows it, and say, "Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O

¹ See Collect for Good Friday.

² John xii. 32.

³ ὁ λόγος τοῦ σταυροῦ. 1 Cor. i. 18.

⁴ Isaiah xliv. 22.

forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel¹.”

And yet, even in the accents of our joy, let us not be “high-minded, but fear².” Knowing and confessing that the Son of God was “delivered for our offences³ ;”—that, in the strength of these, consisted the bitterness of His Cross and Passion; and that, by the repetition of these, He is still crucified “afresh, and put to an open shame⁴,” let us “mortify therefore our members, which are upon the earth⁵,” and suffer not the lusts of sin to reign in our mortal bodies. Let us cast “down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ⁶.” If we be tempted to do any thing “through strife or vain glory⁷,” let the spectacle of Christ’s humiliation lead us to “lowliness of mind.” Again, if we be assailed with trouble, sickness, or any other adversity, let us remember that ‘there should be no greater comfort to Christian persons, than to be made like unto Christ, by suffering’ these with patience. ‘For He Himself went not up to joy, but first He suffered pain; He entered not into His glory before He was crucified. So truly our way to eternal joy is to suffer here with Christ; and our door to enter into

¹ Isaiah xliv. 23.

² Rom. xi. 20.

³ Rom. iv. 25.

⁴ Heb. vi. 6.

⁵ Col. iii. 5.

⁶ 2 Cor. x. 5.

⁷ Phil. ii. 3.

eternal life is gladly to die with Christ ; that we may rise again from death, and dwell with Him in everlasting life¹. Thus chastened, and thus supported, let us commit the keeping our souls to God, “in well-doing as unto a faithful Creator² ;” and be “persuaded that He is able to keep that which” we “have committed unto Him against that day³.”

¹ See Exhortation in The Order for the Visitation of the Sick.

² 1 Pet. iv. 19.

³ 2 Tim. i. 12.

SERMON XV.

ON THE DEATH OF HIS LATE MAJESTY,
KING WILLIAM THE FOURTH¹.

ROM. vii. 23.

The wages of sin is death ; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

THIS concluding sentence of the Epistle for this morning's service, may well be described as comprehending within itself a summary of Christian truth. For what is Christian truth, but that which leads us unto Christ? and by what other constraining principle does it lead us to Him than by the conviction of sin? Our weakness, therefore, and our strength, our fall and our stay, our danger and our defence, our fear and our hope, are here placed side by side before us ; and holiness,—undeviating, patient, and stedfast holiness,—is the result which the Apostle

¹ Preached at St. George's Chapel, Brighton, on the 9th of July, 1837, being the Seventh Sunday after Trinity, and the day after the Funeral of His late Majesty.

would impress upon the believer's heart, from the joint contemplation of them both.

I seek not to dwell this day upon the terms in which this humiliating yet consolatory declaration of the Apostle is expressed. I seek not to point out its close connexion with the object which he is pursuing in the present portion of his argument; (and which you have had already pressed upon your notice in the Epistle which has been read upon this, as well as upon the preceding Sunday);—because I trust, that, week by week, and year by year continually, I have been employed in putting this truth before you, under one or another aspect;—and that your own participation in those means of grace which the Church dispenses for your comfort, your own daily self-examination, your own daily prayers, your own daily searching of the Sacred Oracles, has taught you to confess the force of its unchanged, its unchangeable reality.

I take the words of the Apostle, then, whilst the recollection of them, and of the context, is yet fresh upon our minds, not so much for the purpose of following out the specific consideration of the doctrines which they teach, as of finding in them a suitable and safe guide to our thoughts, at the present moment, when “we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts¹,” and behold, not only in

¹ Mal. iii. 14.

this House of Prayer, but whithersoever our footsteps turn throughout the land, the outward tokens of a nation's woe. Is not this an occasion which opens in our hearts afresh the springs of tender sympathy and of serious thought? And are we not bound to profit by it? Most assuredly we are. For we are the creatures of time and of sense; and, living every instant within the sphere of their influence, are in danger of forgetting the certainties of the future and of faith. Bitter as are the wages of sin, we yet toil and waste our energies in its service, unmindful of the issue. Precious as is the gift of God, the gift of "eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ," we grow careless in its possession; and suffer it to fall, with all its distinctive graces and requirements, from our grasp. Our own experience must confess that this is so; that, whilst the existence of these truths is admitted by our very profession of Christianity, to be an undoubted certainty, their actual form and character are nevertheless lost sight of by many who make the profession. Death reigns, for instance, in our mortal bodies:—we hear, we see, we confess this sad reality. It is the wages of sin:—this too we know and we confess. And yet, this conviction which no argument can shake and no time destroy, is thrust aside by every passing incident of the day or hour. In the midst of danger we dream that we are safe. The enemy is close at hand, and his

weapons are drawn to strike us; and yet we can sleep on and take our rest. Assuredly, then, that voice is one of mercy, which startles us from this slumber; which bids us arise, and watch, and pray; which tells us of the foe that is ready to fall upon us, of the Saviour that is able to help us.

And such a voice, my brethren, has been heard even now in the midst of us:—heard in the announcement of our Sovereign's death;—heard in the solemn accents of confession and of prayer which, from the hearts and lips of his subjects, have, but a few hours since, followed him to the grave. In this event we believe that God addresses to the hearts and consciences of us all, a lesson of more than ordinary import. For, although we admit that a lesson similar to it is heard, whensoever any of our friends and companions in life are removed from the sphere of its existence, and are no more seen;—and, although we admit further, that, as far as our future destinies are concerned, the consequences which ensue upon the decease of the mightiest potentate upon earth, are no more than those which await the removal of its lowliest and obscurest children;—since, in either case, the immortal spirit, stripped of all the distinctions which once covered its earthly tabernacle, is gone to render its account, and to abide the irreversible judgment of the Lord;—yet, with reference to ourselves, to us who are still travelling onwards in

our pilgrimage,—that warning must, no doubt, be felt the most deeply, which holds forth the most prominent evidence of our perishable estate.

And, that there is such a gradation of evidence,—that some points of it are more prominent than others, is obvious from the very fact that there is a gradation in the different classes of mankind ; and, that, from the constitution of our being, we are affected the most deeply by that which relates to the most distinguished of those classes. It is with the social system, as with the material universe. The lofty, the noble, the majestic,—be they exhibited in the works of nature or of art,—(and what is nature but the art of God¹ ?)—are always those objects which, through the medium of the senses, excite the imagination with wonder, and impress the mind with reverence. The mountain that lifts up its summit to the clouds ; the tree that casts forth the broadest shadow in the forest ; the wide spread ocean ; the embattled fortress ; the gorgeous palace ;—these are the objects which, with the great mass of mankind, arrest the attention, and awaken in the heart associations of awe and grandeur. And when the Almighty God shows that He can change even these ; when we see the deep fissures which the earthquake and the torrent make upon the mountain's side ; or the tree hurled up from its roots, and its branches scathed

¹ See Sir Thomas Brown's *Religio Medici*, p. 9. Folio ed.

by lightning ; or the waters of the ocean lashed into fury by the storm ; or the fortress crumbling into ruin ; or the palace clothed with mourning ;—we acknowledge God's hand more implicitly ; we bow down before the ensigns of His power with feelings more trembling and submissive than any which can possess our hearts, whilst looking only to lower and to more familiar objects.

Just so in the social system. The diversity of ranks pervading it, creates a diversity of feeling. The diversity of ranks proceeds from God's own appointment, whereby He giveth unto all men severally as He will ; to one man ten talents, to another five, and to another one ;—to each, as we are assured by our Lord, “ according to his ability ¹.” It is a diversity among the members of the body politick, as needful for its preservation and welfare, as that of the natural limbs is needful for the use and exercise of the body to which they belong. The hands execute the counsels of the head which governs. The feet follow the direction of the eyes which see, and of the tongue which speaks. And as long as there remain similar distinctions in the constitution of man's moral nature ; as long as the laws of civil society, based upon the mutual wants of those of whom it is composed, recognize and are framed in accordance with these distinctions ; giving

¹ Matt. xxv. 15

to 'all men equal rights, but not to equal things¹;' so long must our instinctive sympathies be impressed with reverence towards the exalted of the earth. This is no slavish or abject adulation, but a sober and respectful homage, felt and expressed towards those who, "like a city that is set on an hill, cannot be hid²." When the light of such men therefore is set; when, from that conspicuous elevation, they descend to the lowest crowd; when the strongest become weak, and the richest poor; the very greatness of their fall, deepens the consciousness of our common frailty, and stamps a more solemn authority upon that sentence pronounced on man, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return³."

I admit, that, in applying these considerations to the instance of fallen greatness now before us, we cannot speak of the lesson conveyed in it, as enforced by any circumstances of an unlooked for, and peculiar character. Time was, indeed,—and many of you who now hear me must remember it,—when the voice, which speaks from the grave of princes, burst with a more appalling sound upon the land; when the young, the beautiful, the happy, glittered but for a moment, before our eyes, and was gone; and she, to whom in our imagination we entrusted the future

¹ See Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 121.

² Matt. v. 14.

³ Gen. iii. 19.

destinies of Britain's empire, was summoned, before she had swayed the sceptre of her ancestors, to share their sepulchre. Yea, the joy, which causeth mothers to forget the anguish of their travail, was denied to the sole daughter of a king. At the very time when her cup of happiness seemed full, and her visions of fairest hope realized, the darkness of death came over her, and she departed; leaving a whole nation amazed and bowed down with grief; the house of her father desolate; her husband a widowed and a childless man. Not such, I admit, is the bereavement which has again befallen us. The associations of such overwhelming and perplexing calamity, cannot be said to characterize the loss which we have now sustained. For "the days of our age are threescore years and ten¹;" and these, we are to remember, had already been attained by the Ruler who is now gathered to his fathers. The shadows of his life's evening, therefore, were at hand, even when he ascended the throne. His sun was going down, even when its light was first seen to shine upon the counsels of this kingdom. Not long then could we have looked for its continuance among us. And yet few, I believe, who witnessed, but a short time since, the clearness and tranquillity of its setting rays, could refrain from indulging the hope,—no vain or visionary hope, as they might have

¹ Psalm xc. 10.

thought,—that, for some brief season further, it might have remained to enlighten and cheer the horizon of their prospect. But that hope is ended; that light is quenched; that tale is told. Another day now dawns upon us; another field of vision is opened to our view; another page is begun in the annals of England's history.

And is it not from the lives of our rulers, that the materials of our country's history are supplied? Can we, therefore, think upon his reign which has just been terminated, and be unmindful of the events which marked it? Not that it is my purpose at present to enter into any discussion of them. I seek not even to draw an outline of their progress; for it would involve the consideration of many subjects alien altogether from the feelings which, I trust, to you, as well as to myself, have been suggested by this time and place. If such a discussion could help to illustrate those grand and comprehensive and enduring principles of Christian truth, which, affecting man as a member of the Christian community, might, if occasion required, be fitly brought within the compass of Christian exhortation, I would freely and willingly enter into it. But from questions of mere temporary political interest I shall refrain, from a persuasion that they can but ill accord with the present tone of mournful harmony. Let those who would disturb this tone of feeling, call to mind the language of one of the fore-

most of the Christian philosophers and statesmen, whom the last generation claimed for its own, when he declares, in language to which we must all respond, that ‘politics and the pulpit are terms that have little agreement;’—that ‘the cause of civil liberty and civil government gains as little, as that of religion by this confusion of duties;’—that ‘those who quit their proper character to assume what does not belong to them, are, for the greater part, ignorant both of the character they leave, and of the character they assume;’—that, oftentimes ‘unacquainted with the world in which they are so fond of meddling, and inexperienced in its affairs, on which they pronounce with so much confidence, they have nothing of politics but the passions they excite. Surely the Church is a place where one day’s truce ought to be allowed to the dissensions and animosities of mankind ¹.’

This, let us remember, was the rebuke passed by the immortal Burke, upon a political harangue delivered from the pulpit by a non-conforming minister of eminence in his day; and truly not less than this will the ministers of the Gospel deserve, in the present day, if, either from the pulpits of our dissenting brethren or from our own, the breath which should proclaim, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will

¹ Burke, *ut supra*, pp. 42—43.

towards men," go forth to fan the flame of party spirit and of public discord. We will not expose ourselves, therefore, to the accusation nor to the rebuke. We will acknowledge rather with thankfulness the facts about which there can be no dispute;—and confess, that, whatsoever be the character of the blessings which have resulted during our late Monarch's reign, from the continuance of peace, from the mitigation of our criminal code, from the abolition of slavery in our West Indian Colonies, or from any other benefit extended to us, during that short but eventful period, his name is to be connected with them all; as giving to those measures the confirmation of a Sovereign's will, not in any spirit of formal or indolent acquiescence, but with the earnest desire that they should work together for the good of his subjects throughout every portion of the Empire. He uniformly bestowed upon them, to that end, the benefit of his own experience, his own watchful and impartial attention. In saying this, observe, we utter no language of ignorant and unmeaning eulogy; but simply repeat that which the joint testimony of the most experienced servants of the Crown authorizes us in believing to be just and true. For call to mind the declarations which have been lately made, to this effect, in the face of the whole country, by men of opposite principles and parties,—at a time when he, of whom they spake, was deaf to the voice of censure or of praise. Is

it not the testimony of one who now holds the chief reins of government, that the Royal Master whom he served, ‘displayed in all the details of practical business, a knowledge as extensive as it was correct;—that his attention to them was zealous and unremitting;—and that a man more fair or more just he had never met with in his intercourse with the world¹?’ Is it not the testimony of another who has held the same station, that the character of the King was ‘distinguished by firmness, by discretion, by candour, by a spirit of conciliation²?’ Is it not the testimony of a third, that ‘none was more sincerely devoted to the interests of his country,—none more conversant in the knowledge of whatsoever was necessary for the attainment of that object, none more patient in considering every circumstance connected with those interests,—none more diligent in the discharge of the duties resulting from them³?’ Is it not the testimony of a fourth, that ‘the reins of government were never committed to the hands of one who bore himself as a sovereign with more affability, and yet with a more true dignity;—to one, who was more compassionate for the sufferings of others, or whose nature was more utterly free from all selfishness;—

¹ See the Speech of Lord Melbourne in the House of Lords, reported in the Times, June 23, 1837.

² See the speech of the Duke of Wellington, *ut supra*.

³ See the speech of Earl Grey, *ut supra*.

that, in the most exalted or most humble station, there could not be found a man who felt more pleasure in witnessing and promoting the happiness of others¹? Is it not, once more, the testimony of another, who, although he stands not in the same station which those, to whom I have referred, have occupied, fills nevertheless an office which enabled him to see and judge intimately the character of his Sovereign;—and does he not distinctly say, that, ‘whatever may have been the difference of opinion between him and his responsible advisers, he, in the first place, treated with the utmost possible kindness, those who had the honour to approach him;—that, in the next place, he always stated his opinion to them frankly, fairly, and fully;—never seeking by any means that were indirect; never seeking by any means that were not the most straightforward and manly, to impress on others the opinions which he himself entertained;—that his kindness to others was evinced by his readiness to afford them access to himself, by his promptitude in relieving the wants of the distressed;—that, throughout his last short, but distressing illness, he still continued to transact the business of the country;—that even amid the pressure of pain and weakness, he was mindful of the promise which he had given to make a permanent provision for an officer whose

¹ See the speech of Sir Robert Peel in the House of Commons, *ut supra*.

limbs had been mutilated in his service, and that he fulfilled his promise to the very letter ;—yea, that the last formal act of his sovereignty, was to sign an instrument by which he exercised the royal prerogative of mercy to a convicted criminal¹?' Such testimonies, my brethren, speak not the lan-

¹ See the speech of Lord John Russell, *ut supra*. Since the declaration of the above testimonies, another has been added which tends so directly to illustrate and confirm the integrity of the late King's character, that it may well find a place here. It occurs in the speech delivered by Lord Stanley, at Lancaster, on the day of nomination of the candidates for the Northern Division of that County. 'Those who knew least of his late Majesty did not for a moment hesitate to ascribe to him an ever anxious delight in being kind and affectionate to his people, attached to their wishes, and determined to administer to their comforts. Those who had ever an opportunity, as he (the noble lord) had had, of coming into immediate contact with the late sovereign, could justly appreciate his excellent qualities. His attention to business, his candour of manner in listening to the arguments of his advisers, manifested a full knowledge of his constitutional duties, and he never let his own opinions interfere with those of his ministerial advisers, but waived them always with deference to the opinions of those to whom he had entrusted the management of public affairs. He (Lord Stanley) had witnessed how his late Majesty, in forgetfulness of power and kingly dignity, had declined asserting his prerogative when it in the slightest degree seemed to interfere with public officers in the discharge of their public duties. In the discharge of his (Lord Stanley's) duties, as a minister of the crown, it had happened on three occasions, that his Majesty had felt a deep interest in the appointment of three individuals to offices ; and it did so happen that he could not meet the private wishes of the sovereign in making those appointments, and he intimated to his Majesty the public

guage of vague and fulsome compliment. They are actual, they are positive realities. It is for the future historian to record the measures which form the basis of them ; for ourselves to mourn for the departure of the Sovereign to whom they bear witness.

And need I remind you, who are dwelling in this Town, that you also have a testimony to bear unto him ; that, here you saw and revered his person ; that, here you felt and enjoyed his bounty ? Let the statesman speak of the kindness, the frankness, the impartiality, of your departed King. You have witnessed, in this place, the exercise of these qualities. You know the description to be true. You look around you, and see his name and the name of his illustrious Consort, giving encouragement and sanction to every Institution that has for its object the promotion of spiritual blessing, or the relief of bodily distress, to yourselves and to your fellow-townsmen. Our churches, our schools, our hospital, our dispensary, our district visiting society ; —every Institution, in short, which, whether upon a comprehensive or contracted scale, had been raised up for the purpose of mitigating the sorrows or increasing the happiness of their subjects, was by them welcomed, by them assisted. Nay, every individual application made by the most indigent or

grounds on which he would rather they were not made. His Majesty immediately with pleasure declined pressing his own views, which he said were secondary compared with the public business of the government.'—The Times, August 2, 1837.

lowly of our brethren, was by them regarded with compassion. Wheresoever the means existed of verifying the statement received, there, I have reason to know, was the enquiry carefully made ; and there, if the enquiry justified it, was the assistance promptly rendered. You feel, therefore, and feel justly, that, in losing the King, whom you revered, you have lost the Friend, the Benefactor, the Patron, whom you loved.

But others, my brethren, have lost more. They who knew him best, now mourn him most. And one there is above them all, to whom our thoughts now turn ;—one, pre-eminent in station, pre-eminent, alas ! in sorrow. Surely in her bereavement we recognize a claim upon our sympathy and our prayers, beyond every other that can be named or thought of. What can I say to enforce that claim ? I know that you acknowledge it with a sincerity too deep, too earnest, too decisive in the instantaneous working of its conviction, to need the weight of argument to confirm the sacredness of the appeal. Your hearts and mine are swelling with emotions which we cannot, if we would, repress. I can but give them a feeble utterance. It is the widowed Queen for whom we mourn :—for her who was the joy, the honour of her Consort, as long as he was spared to receive the public homage of his subjects ; who was his support and solace, when sickness removed him from their sight. Her strength, you know

full well, had been enfeebled, and her health impaired. Her spirit also had been saddened by the loss of the only surviving parent to whom, in the land of her nativity, her thoughts and affections were so often turned; and who, but a few short weeks before, had been numbered with the dead;—yet did she devote every faculty of soul and body to sustain the drooping energies of the King¹. Day and night she watched over him. Her arm supported him; her voice consoled him. The supplications and thanksgivings which, in the days of health and strength, they had offered up before the footstool of the King of kings, she again renewed².

¹ The great rapidity with which the various trials of her Majesty succeeded one another, may be best understood by noticing the fact, that the first day on which her Majesty joined at table the guests who were then staying at Windsor Castle, after her long and dangerous illness, was the last on which his Majesty appeared among them.

² ‘At no period from the commencement of his attack, had his Majesty been insensible to his critical state; but when he alluded to the subject, it was evident that any anxiety which he felt, arose less from personal apprehension than from solicitude for the country, and from a contemplation of the embarrassment into which it might be thrown by his early dissolution. It was to such reflections as these that his Majesty gave expression on the morning of the 16th (of June,) when he observed to the Queen, “I have had some quiet sleep; come and pray with me, and thank the Almighty for it.” Her Majesty joined in this act of heartfelt devotion, and when the King had ceased, said, “And shall I not pray to the Almighty that you may have a

The very ground on which those supplications were urged caused the accents of thankfulness to be

good day?" To which his Majesty replied, "Oh do! I wish I could live ten years for the sake of the country. I feel it my duty to keep well as long as I can."

'On the morning of Sunday, 11th, grateful for the blessing of some refreshing rest which he had enjoyed, his Majesty's mind was impressed with the most pure devotional feeling. Seeing Lady Mary Fox occupied with a book, he inquired what she was reading, and being told that it was a Prayer Book, his countenance beamed with pleasure, but he said nothing. After a considerable lapse of time, the Queen asked whether it would be agreeable to him if she read the prayers to him. His Majesty answered, "O yes! I should like it very much; but it will fatigue you." He then desired to be informed who preached that morning in the Chapel of the Castle, and when Lady Mary had ascertained and told him that it was Mr. Wood who preached, he directed that he might be sent for.

'When Mr. Wood entered the room, the King said, "I will thank you, my dear sir, to read all the prayers till you come to the prayer for the Church Militant." By which words his Majesty intended to include the Communion Service, and all the other parts of the Liturgy used in the celebration of public worship.

'It was equally an affecting and instructive lesson to observe the devout humility of his Majesty, fervently dwelling, as could be perceived from his manner, and the intonation of his voice, on every passage which bore even the most remote application to his own circumstances. His mind seemed quite absorbed in the duty in which he was engaged, and to rise for a time superior to his bodily infirmities, for during the whole service his attention was undisturbed, and he experienced none of those fits of coughing and oppression which for some days past had formed an almost uninterrupted characteristic of his complaint. As Mr.

mingled with them; for, albeit that the wages of sin is death, yet they felt and confessed that “the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” It was the hearty reception of this message of redeeming mercy which gave ardour to the hope, and steadfastness to the patience, both of him who suffered, and of her who shared, whilst she sought to mitigate, his suffering. We are persuaded that it was. No vague or momentary feeling could then have comforted them. The hope to which they fled for refuge, they must have been able to lay hold upon “as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast¹,” or the deep waters of affliction would have overwhelmed them. This hope was theirs. And

Wood withdrew, his Majesty graciously expressed his thanks, and afterwards said to the Queen, “It has been a great comfort to me.”

‘Nor was this a transitory feeling. To this pure and scriptural source of spiritual consolation his Majesty recurred with unfeigned gratitude; and on each day of the ensuing week did Lord Augustus Fitz-Clarence receive the King’s commands to read to him the prayers either of the morning or evening service. On one of these occasions, when his Majesty was much reduced and exhausted, the Queen, fearful of causing any fatigue to him, inquired hesitatingly, whether, unwell as he was, he should still like to have the prayers read to him. He replied, “O yes! beyond every thing.” Though very languid and disposed to sleep, from the effects of medicine, his Majesty repeated all the prayers.’
—Some Recollections of the last days of his late Majesty, King William the Fourth, p. 17—20.

¹ Heb. vi. 19.

when, in the full conviction of its reality, they partook, for the last time, of those holy mysteries which the Author of their hope, their Master and only Saviour Jesus Christ, had 'instituted and ordained, as pledges of His love, and for a continual remembrance of His death to our great and endless comfort ¹':—when they, from whose brow the earthly diadem was not yet removed, bowed down in meek humility before the Almighty God, Maker of all things, Judge of all men,—not trusting in their own righteousness, but in His manifold and great mercies;—acknowledging themselves not worthy to gather up the crumbs under His table; confessing the remembrance of their misdoings to be grievous unto them, the burden of them to be intolerable; and imploring the gracious Lord to grant them so to eat the flesh of His dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink His blood, that their sinful bodies might be made clean by His body, and their souls washed through His most precious blood, and that they might evermore dwell in Him, and He in them ²:—can we think that they, who thus duly received those holy mysteries, were not supported by the assurance given thereby of the Divine favour and goodness towards them, and cheered by the blessed light of their Redeemer's promise, even when the darkest hour of

¹ Exhortation in the Holy Communion.

² See the Confession and Prayer in the Holy Communion.

the world's tribulations was at hand¹? That hour soon came ;—not in terror, but in peace ;—not until

¹ ' The King was very calm and collected—his faculties were quite clear, and he paid the greatest attention to the service (of the Holy Communion,) following it in the Prayer Book which lay on the table before him. His voice, indeed, failed, but his humble demeanour and uplifted eye, gave expression to the feelings of devotion, and of gratitude to the Almighty, which his faltering lips refused to utter.

' The performance of this act of religion, and this public attestation of his communion with that Church, for the welfare and prosperity of which he had more than once during his illness ejaculated short but fervent prayers, was the source of great and manifest comfort to his Majesty. Though the shorter form had been adopted by the Archbishop (of Canterbury), his Majesty was, nevertheless, rather exhausted by the duration and solemnity of the ceremony ; but as his Grace retired, the King said, with that peculiar kindness of manner, by which he was so much distinguished, and at the same time gently waving his hand and inclining his head, " God bless you—a thousand, thousand thanks !" There cannot be more certain evidence of the inward strength and satisfaction which the King derived from this office of religion than that, in spite of great physical exhaustion, his Majesty, after the lapse of an hour, again requested the attendance of the Archbishop, who, in compliance with the wishes of the Queen, read the prayers for the evening service, with the happiest effects on the King's spirits. This being done, the Archbishop, naturally fearing the consequences of so much mental exertion on his Majesty's debilitated frame was about to retire, when the King motioned him to sit down at the table, on the opposite side of which he himself was seated. His Majesty was too weak to hold any conversation, but his spirits seemed soothed and comforted by the presence of the

the prayer for help had been again addressed in the name of Jesus Christ, to the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort ;—not until the promise of His saving love had been again heard ;—not until the expression of stedfast unshaken faith in those blessed truths had been again repeated by the lips of the expiring King ¹.

Archbishop, on whose venerable and benign countenance his Majesty's eye reposed with real pleasure. The King at this interview stretched his hand across the table, and taking that of the Archbishop, pressed it fervently, saying, in a tone of voice which was audible only to the Queen, who was seated near to his Majesty, "I am sure the Archbishop is one of those persons who pray for me." The afternoon of this day (Sunday) witnessed a still further diminution of his Majesty's strength ; but in proportion to the decay of his bodily powers, was the increase of his spiritual hope and consolation.'—*Recollections, ut supra.* p. 25—28.

¹ 'At nine o'clock, (on the morning of Monday the 19th,) by the desire of the Queen, the Archbishop again entered the King's room, and read the service for the Visitation of the Sick. The King was seated, as usual, in his easy chair ; the Queen affectionately kneeling by his side, making the responses, and assisting him to turn over the leaves of the large Prayer Book, which was placed before him. His Majesty's demeanour was characterised by the most genuine spirit of devotion. Though unable to join audibly in the responses which occur in the service, yet, when the Archbishop had rehearsed the articles of our Creed, in the fulness of his faith, and labouring to collect all the energies of sinking nature, enunciated with distinct and solemn emphasis the words, "All this I stedfastly believe."

'During the whole service his Majesty retained hold of the

Still did his affectionate Consort kneel, and watch, and pray, by his side. The feeble and harassed frame knew no weariness, whilst any office of love and tenderness remained to be performed. She received his last look. She heard his last sigh. And, if even to his long home, she has been enabled (as her desire was) to attend him¹;—if, on the sad procession which last evening wound its way

Queen's hand, and in the absence of physical strength to give utterance to his feelings, signified, by his fervent pressure of it, not only his humble acquiescence in the doctrines of our holy faith, but his grateful acknowledgment of those promises of grace and succour which so many passages of this affecting portion of the Liturgy hold out to the dying Christian, and the belief of which his Majesty so thankfully appreciated in this his hour of need.

‘With the other hand his Majesty frequently covered his eyes and pressed his brow, as if to concentrate all his powers of devotion, and to restrain the warmer emotions of his heart, which were so painfully excited by the distress of those who surrounded him. His Majesty did not allow the Archbishop to withdraw without the usual significant expression of his gratitude, “A thousand, thousand thanks.”

‘It was when the Archbishop pronounced the solemn and truly affecting form of blessing contained in the Service for the Visitation of the Sick, that the Queen for the first time in his Majesty's apartments was overpowered by the weight of her affliction. The King observed her emotion, and said, in a tone of kind encouragement, “Bear up—bear up.”—Some Recollections, *ut suprà*, p. 33, 36.

¹ It is scarcely necessary to remark, that, the circumstance here referred to, and which, when the Sermon was preached,

through the courts of the Royal Castle, and beneath the sanctuary's 'high-embowed roof,' she has been enabled to direct her gaze—what think ye were her feelings? There were the escutcheons and banners of England's noblest chivalry shrouded beneath that veil of mourning which proclaims the emptiness of the world's honours. There were the plumes and folds of lofty canopies waving amid the torch light; and the wise and mighty of the land passing in array before her. There did

‘ the pealing organ blow
To the full-voic'd quire below,
In service high, and anthems clear;’

and many an eye was fixed with stedfast look upon the solemn pageant; and many an heart was throbbing with deep emotion; and many a tear was shed whilst earth was committed to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. And yet, was not she who witnessed all these things, taught not to be sorry as one without hope? Did she not hear the assurance of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, saying, “I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die¹?”

could only be supposed as likely to have taken place, did actually occur; and that her Majesty was enabled to join her prayers with those who attended their departed Sovereign to the grave.

¹ John xi. 25, 26.

Did she not hear, yet further, the faithful servant of the Lord, declaring, that “since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead;”—that, “as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive¹ ;” that the same power of God which giveth to the “bare grain” that is cast into the earth, “a body, as it hath pleased Him,” which clotheth “celestial bodies and bodies terrestrial” with their own and proper glory, shall even so accomplish “the resurrection of the dead;” raising “in incorruption,” that which was “sown in corruption;” raising “in glory,” that which was “sown in dishonour;” raising “in power,” that which was “sown in weakness;” raising “a spiritual body,” that which was “sown a natural body² ?” And was not all this a ground of sure and certain hope to one who then drank the cup of trembling to the dregs? True, “death is the wages of sin.” She saw and felt the heavy burden of the penalty. It had been exacted to the uttermost. There was no mitigation, no reprieve, which the world could offer, of the fearful sentence. Its sting had pierced her to the very soul. And all that was then passing around her seemed but to proclaim a more emphatic testimony to the victory of the grave. And yet, even at that moment, a mightier victory still sent forth its note of triumph;—a victory which had overthrown the powers

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22.

² 1 Cor. xv. 37—44.

of death and hell, and which had been achieved by Him “that liveth, and was dead; and behold,” He is “alive for evermore¹.” “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 Christ².” Yes, my brethren, the mourner could thank God, I trust, for the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ, even whilst she was enduring the bitterest pains and perils of the conflict which led to it. And the voice which spake from heaven unto the beloved Disciple, saying unto him, “Write, from henceforth blessed are the dead which die in the Lord: even so saith the Spirit; for they rest from their labours³,”—was ready to strengthen the spirit of meek and thankful resignation.

We believe that, by the help of these great mercies, the Spirit of the Lord God bindeth up the broken-hearted, and giveth “unto them that mourn in Zion, beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness⁴.” And these, let us hope, shall be found to have their perfect work in her of whom we now speak. For, from the palace and from the sepulchre of kings, she hath gone to her secluded home; and there, the light of this tranquil Sabbath Day has arisen to soothe her sorrows, to refresh her weariness. May it be to her the prelude of that eternal Sab-

¹ Rev. i. 18.

² 1 Cor. xv. 54—57.

³ Rev. xiv. 13.

⁴ Isaiah lxi. 3.

bath, that “rest¹” which “remaineth to the people of God!” We, my brethren, have joined in the public services of this holy day. And, if she, of whom we have been speaking, hath been enabled, in the stillness of her chamber, or amid the members of her diminished household, to bear her part in the same, think ye that the Psalmist’s praises which have already fallen from our lips, when testifying the mercy of God in delivering His Church from dangers, will not have been felt by her and every other suffering member of His Church, as testifying His mercy towards them also? We have said, “God is our hope and strength²: a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be moved: and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea. Though the waters thereof rage and swell: and though the mountains shake at the tempest of the same. The rivers of the flood thereof shall make glad the city of God: the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most Highest. God is in the midst of her, therefore shall she not be removed: God shall help her, and that right early.” This has been the language of confidence in God’s mercy which, from generation to generation, has been uttered by His faithful people. This has been the language, which we have uttered

¹ *συνῆλπισμός*. Heb. iv. 9.

² This Psalm, the forty-sixth, occurred in the Morning Service for the day.

this day. The ground of it hath been strengthened by the accomplishment of Christ's work ; and, therefore do we repeat it now ; yea, therefore, do we pray that the joy, the hope, the constancy which it breathes of unshaken trust in God, may be the solace of the mourner.

And wherefore do I dwell so long upon this part of our subject ? Is it because the instinctive sympathies of our hearts are brought out into action by the spectacle of another's sorrow ; and because the Word of Inspiration tells us of the warning and encouragement to be derived from it ? Is it that, in the present instance, these circumstances are heightened and enforced by associations which to ourselves never can recur ? Is it that I am speaking of one who, year after year, has bowed down in the midst of us, within the very sanctuary in which we are now assembled, and joined her prayers and praises with our own ? Is it that all these things come home to my heart, at the present moment, accompanied by the recollection of many a gracious act of kindness to myself ? And do I, upon these considerations alone, venture to give this utterance to the sentiments which we all feel ? Not upon these considerations alone, believe me. But rather, that both you and I may find, in the expression of such sentiments, a more constraining motive to draw near more closely unto God ; and, whilst we think of the sorrows and the consolations of the believer, to re-

member more deeply our exposure to those sorrows, our need of those consolations; and to pray, that the lesson of the text may stamp its indelible impression upon our minds;—"The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

And still, another word of warning remains to be spoken on the subject which has been presented to our thoughts this day. The sceptre of our land has departed from him who is at rest; but another hand now wields it. The tidings, which announce the one event, proclaim the other. The messenger of the Sovereign's death is the herald of the Sovereign's name. So passeth away "the fashion of this world¹," and the glory of it. The waves which beat upon our shore chase not each other with more quick succession, than do the changes and chances of this mortal life. They roll their ceaseless tide: and, even whilst we are watching their form and motion, they are gone; and others follow. And yet how many are there living in the midst of these continual changes, who dream that they never shall be changed! They raise up the airy fabric of their hopes, as if it were based not on sand, but on the rock; and, from the scattered fragments of the wrecks around them, calmly gather up the materials of further ruin. "They think that their houses

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 31.

shall continue for ever: and that their dwelling-places shall endure from one generation to another; and call the lands after their own names¹." Verily we may be reminded of the pages of Holy Writ, as we contemplate these things, and find, in that simple narrative which saith, "So Tibni died, and Omri reigned²," the testimony of our frailty, the rebuke of our presumption.

But, brief and uncertain as is the tenure of earthly things, we must remember, nevertheless, that it is the tenure of things entrusted to us by Almighty God, and that the limits which He hath fixed for its duration, are those within which He has commanded us to exercise them to His glory. Hence is derived an importance even to our short span of life; and an authority imparted to its fleeting interests, which no man can safely disregard. Looking therefore to her who now is raised up to controul the interests of the Empire, shall not our hearts and our voices be lifted up to the Throne of Grace in her behalf? She stands upon a perilous and dizzy height. Perilous it is for all. Not less perilous, therefore, can it be for one whose age is tender as her sex,—who, in the very instant, when the world has spread before her its most alluring attractions, when the fancy is most willing to believe them, and hope most eager to embrace them, is summoned to trials and duties

¹ Psalm xlix. 11.

² 1 Kings xvi. 22.

which not all the faculties of enlarged experience and of ripened manhood are adequate, at all times, to meet or to discharge. Thankful are we, indeed, that she hath been nurtured in the sanctuary of our holy faith, and trained in the observance of its saving ordinances, and confessed the authority of its solemn duties. Thankful are we that a parent's love hath watched over her, and that a parent's example hath directed her. For indeed she needeth every aid which heaven or earth can give. The happiness or misery of millions is bound up with her own. Like the pilot, who steers the vessel, she can neither run it upon a rock, nor bring it home to the haven of its joy and safety, without jeoparding or rescuing the lives of all that are embarked with her. Pray for her, therefore, my brethren. Pray that her faith fail not;—that the wisdom of the Lord may be her guide, and that His arm may strengthen her;—that 'justice, and truth, and holiness, that peace, and love, and all those virtues that adorn the Christian profession, may flourish in her days.' Pray also for yourselves that you may have 'grace to obey her cheerfully and willingly for conscience sake; that neither your sinful passions, nor your private interests may disappoint her cares for the public good; that she may always possess the hearts of her people; and that they may never be wanting in honor to her person and dutiful submission to her authority¹.'

¹ See Collect in the Accession Service.

Lose not sight of this your personal, your needful duty, I beseech you. Remember that the terms of ruler and of subject are relative¹; that the consideration of the duties of the one, involves that of the duties of the other. If you, therefore, have been led, at the present moment, to think more closely upon the difficulties and obligations of the one, from the circumstances of interest that are associated with her who has just entered upon them; be ye, from the same cause, led to examine well the requirements laid upon yourselves by the other, and shrink not from the burden. Forget not the claims which are demanded from yourselves, in your desire to see how others acquit themselves of theirs. Know that a nation's character is the character of the individuals who compose it; that the righteousness of each exalteth a nation's righteousness; and the iniquities of each fill up the measure of a nation's guilt. Ye, therefore, who would pray for the peace of our Jerusalem; ye, who would desire to see peace within her walls, and plenteousness within her palaces; and, for your brethren and companions' sakes, would wish her

¹ 'As in Divinity, so in Humanity too, *relations* constitute one another; king and subject come at once together into consideration. Neither is it so pertinent a consideration, which of them was made for the other's sake, as that they were both made for God's sake, and equally bound to advance His glory.'—Donne's Sermon, preached at Paul's Cross to the Lords of the Council, March 24, 1616. Vol. iii. p. 323.

prosperity; remember, that, as the benefits of such blessings extend to each, so must the duties, which, under God's counsel, are directed to promote them, be performed by each. Go forth then to your appointed work, obeying His law, trusting in His promise. Ye that are wise, glory not in your wisdom. Ye that are mighty, glory not in your might. Ye that are rich, glory not in your riches:—but glory rather in this, that ye understand and know the will of the Lord your God; and confess that it is He which exerciseth “loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth¹.” Let the subject, presented to your thoughts this day, engrave more deeply the impression of this truth upon your hearts. Let it make you humble, yet joyful:—humble, in the consciousness that death is “the wages of sin;” and, that, from the grave of princes, it has sent forth now a warning to each of you, in tones as solemn and as touching as that which once came to the ears of the king of Judah, “Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live² :”—yet let the assurance also set before you, that “the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord,” fill you with all joy and peace in believing. The joy, which this assurance giveth, believe me, is not like “the laughter of fools,” vain and momentary as “the crackling of thorns³” in fire; but like “the shining light, that

¹ Jer. ix. 24.² Isaiah xxxviii. 1.³ Eccles. vii. 6.

shineth more and more unto the perfect day¹." It awakens the sluggard from his dreams, and the careless from his presumption. It gives confidence to the timid, and energy to the weak, and makes the "prisoners of hope"² flee with eagerness to the stronghold that is set before them. It rescues the slaves of sin from the heavy bondage of those lusts that "war against the soul"³, and teaches them that they are not their own; for they "are bought with a price;" and that they should "therefore glorify God in their body, and in their spirit, which are God's"⁴. What can we pray for, then, my brethren, with greater urgency, than that this joy may be our portion and our inheritance for ever; that, "being made free from sin, and become servants to God," we should have our "fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life"⁵?

¹ Prov. iv. 18.

² Zech. ix. 12.

³ 1 Pet. ii. 11.

⁴ 1 Cor. vi. 20.

⁵ Rom. vi. 23.

THE END.

2

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